

AN APPLICATION OF THE REFERENCE GROUP THEORETICAL APPROACH
IN THE STUDY OF THE VIETNAMESE COUP D'ETAT IN 1963

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INTRODUCTION

The political history of the contemporary period is replete with pages concerning the military interventions in politics. The prevalence of this intervention however rarely takes place in the developed countries, but curiously it is a common occurrence in the underdeveloped regions. This occurrence has been the common theme of literature concerning military procedure by political scientists and scholars as they view the military organization to be the primary source of considered military involvement in politics. Because of the modern aspect of the military organization, these political scientists have come to believe that it is capable of playing an effective modernizing role in the developing countries. However, this theoretical expectation contrasts with what happens in reality. Empirical facts show that the performance of the military leaders as modernizing agents, as national builders is discouraging. Because of this situation the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the contrast between theoretical and empirical facts is the consequence of excessive reliance on the military organization model as a magic wand. The people think that because of the nature of the military organization it constitutes an effective tool for modernization and that the military organization serves as a pool of technological and managerial skill in which its members learn to accept a rational outlook, a puritanical asceticism and a dedication spirit to foster

national modernization. These characteristics are the source of inspiration for a military model in the developing countries. This organizational model when transferred to the developing countries undergoes what some writers call the "ocean gap". The transplantation of the organizational model from a modern setting to a traditional setting produces the consequence which discredits the practitioners of the organizational model theories. John Slessor in a foreword of Armed Forces in New States said that things are different in Asia and Africa from what they are in England. Things we think are wrong are regarded quite differently under the tropical sun.¹

Because of this situation theories which deal with the organizational model are misleading in the developing countries. In a volume of essays edited by John J. Johnson, Lucian Pye in his article maintains that in the new states the military organization represents the most effective modern institution capable of accepting modernization.² In the same volume of essays, Guy J. Pauker concludes that the military organizations are able to give countries the guidance, direction, and inspiration necessary for constructive development.³ Samuel P.

¹William Gutteridge, Armed Forces in New States (London: Oxford University Press, Amen House, 1962), p. VII.

²Lucian W. Pye, "Armies in the Process of Political Modernization," in The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries, ed. by John J. Johnson (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 83.

³Guy J. Pauker, "The Role of the Military in Indonesia", in The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries, ed. by John J. Johnson (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 221.

Huntington uses a critique of the military organizational properties in the study of the military's role in the process of modernization. He believes that the social and political conditions of the society determine the role played by the military but not of the army's organizational characteristics.⁴ The main thread that runs through his study of the military intervention in politics gravitates upon the political institution. He states that the greater the social mobilization and the less the political institutionalization, the greater the likelihood of there being military intervention. Huntington's new discovery of the political institution as a determinant of the military intervention in politics is an undeniable improvement for the literature of the military in politics. To him the political institution determines the modernizing role of the military forces as radical, or participant or guardian. His dismissal of statement that the organizational factor plays a role independent of the state of political participation is an overstatement. His idea that a military elite's orientation toward political participation is the only determinant of its role in the modernization process is not tenable when he assumes that the military forces at all times and in all places are oriented toward political participation. His assumption is reflected in his classification of praetorianism, when he

⁴Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 192-263.

distinguishes three types of praetorianism: oligarchical, radical and mass praetorianism.⁵ In Huntington's definition praetorianism means the participation of the military and other social forces in politics.⁶ In oligarchical praetorianism the main power is in the hands of the great landowners, the church and the military. The ruling elites embodied political, religious, military, social and economic leadership roles. In the praetorian oligarchy, politics is the struggle for power among personal and family circles. The so-called revolution the military advocated in their move into politics is merely palace revolts, palace intrigue, fights for the spoils of office within the officer corps in which civilian elites would unite to have their share. Huntington calls this kind of revolution "governmental coups".⁷

In radical praetorianism the gap between city and country is wide open.⁸ People in the countryside are poor and illiterate. They live their traditional life by scraping from the

⁵Samuel Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 199.

⁶Ibid., p. 195.

⁷Samuel P. Huntington, Changing Patterns of Military in Politics (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), pp. 32-33.

⁸Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 209.

earth their meager living. They rarely have the time or the means to interest themselves in the action and the programs of the central government. People are more immediately concerned with their local landlords or with their village headmen. Isolated and traditionally conservative their loyalty and allegiance does not reach beyond the border of their village. In politics they are still dormant, unaware of their rights and believing that what is happening in politics is due to fatalism in which they are powerless.

In the city, the majority are also poor, living in slums on the periphery of the city. Nevertheless these "lumpenproletariats" are aware of their lot because they are in direct contact with the modernizing life of the city. Politically awakened, coupled with unemployment and poor living conditions, the city dwellers are the source of political instability and political radicalism.⁹ Radical praetorianism is characterized by city instability, mob demonstration, violence, labor strikes, and student riots. In this society the military and the intelligentsia and particularly the students participate in politics. Radical praetorianism is therefore the upsurge of the politicized intellectuals and the military in face of changing social conditions.

As a result, the intrusion of the military in politics is

⁹Ibid., p. 278.

a function of the weakness of political institutions such as political organizations and the inaptitude of the civilian leaders to deal with the problems of change in the society.

As society evolves, the political masses become politicized, conscious of their strength and hence eager to voice their political demands. This situation results from rapid industrialization and urbanization which add their fuel to create sharp discontinuities in producing unattached and alienated rootless masses.¹⁰ Because of the weakness of the existing institution due to its simplicity to adjust to the new situation through an independent group which plays the role of intermediary between the state and family to protect the masses from manipulation and from mobilization by other groups, mass movement turns to extremist symbols and extremist demands.¹¹ In mass praetorianism, classes and social movement dominate the political stage; the number of social groups and forces multiplies. The society becomes more stratified and complicated by the proliferation of diverse groups. This situation produces a more difficult situation for the military power to exercise effectively and then to seize power successfully. The military forces therefore, content themselves with their conservative and guardian role.¹² In mass praetorianism, the role of the

¹⁰William Kornhauser, The Politics of Mass Society, (California: University of Berkeley Free Press, 1959), p. 148.

¹¹Ibid., p. 161

¹²Samuel Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 229.

army is that of a doorkeeper.

This classification shows that Huntington tends to view the military intervention in politics as inherent in all stages of social evolution.

The organizational approach by Lucian Pye, Guy Pauker, Stanislaw Andreski has its merit in distinguishing a military organization from other organizations such as the church, a bureaucracy, or a political party within the society. On the other hand the social and political approach by Huntington and Samuel E. Finer is partly explanatory concerning the military involvement in politics. Finer holds that "the propensity for military intervention is likely to decrease with increased social mobilization."¹³ By social mobilization, Finer refers to the development of urbanization, the rise of mass education, mass communication and increased mass participation in social and political activities. He also points out that military intervention decreases with increasing strength and effectiveness of political parties, political interest groups, and civilian governmental institutions.

Morris Janowitz's study of the same problem stresses the size and structure of the military establishment as the source of the military intrusion upon politics. He points out a variety of internal characteristics of the military establish-

¹³Samuel E. Finer, The Man on Horseback: Role of the Military in Politics (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 32.

ment and formation such as political ideology, social and political cohesion, career and recruitment patterns as vehicles for military intruding upon politics.¹⁴

The approach utilized by the above writers either organizational or socio-political failed to do full justice to the analysis of the phenomenon of military intervention in politics. By studying the military intervention in politics from another approach in order not to give as granted the modernizing role to the military organization in all cases and at the same time in order not to reject the organizational and socio-political factors this paper utilizes the reference-group theory approach and illustrates it with an empirical case of the military intervention in South Vietnam in 1963.

¹⁴Morris Janowitz, Sociology and the Military Establishment, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1965).

CHAPTER I

NEW STATES AND MILITARY ORGANIZATION

In the pre-independence period of the 19th and 20th centuries, the countries in Asia, in the Middle East, in Africa and Latin America were intruded upon by the might of the military strength. In ruling their new territories directly or indirectly the colonial powers developed a military establishment and structure to keep internal and external security and to provide a reserve of manpower in case of war against their western rivals. This military structure was built on the model of the metropolitan army. It is visible in training, in habit, in structure, in ideology and in outlook. When these powers departed, they left behind an intact military organization. In building up an army the foreign powers were careful to put the soldiers groups composed of native recruits under the command of European military officers. This precaution explained the absence of military coups in the colonial period. According to western tradition the transfer of government was turned over to the native civilians rather to the military. The new government rapidly moved to create a national army by substituting their native officers for the European officer corps, who were soliders trained in the colonial army or graduates from the European military academies. They embodied the ex-metropolitan army officer in mind and in taste. Nevertheless the copy of the European model whatever its similar-

ities, the consequences are not the ones expected from the officer corps trained in the European military mold. Because of the transplantation of the organizational model from western settings to transitional societies, this model underwent transformation in the process of change over the ocean voyage. The failure of taking account of the change from one milieu to another milieu, the analysis of the military intervention in politics in the developing countries by ways of formal organizational model is weakened because it is not able to explain the deviation of behavior from the origin model. As one looks at a number of theories and propositions derived from the organizational model one finds some ideologies of military concept are inherent in the model. The military officer is viewed as a professional on the same footing as a lawyer or a physician. Like a lawyer or a physician the military officer is concerned with his professionalism and with the exercise and the development of his military skill. The military ideology reflects the severity, austerity, regularity and discipline characteristic of a religious order.¹⁵ Echoing the expression of military ideology, Finer in The Man on Horseback writes: "By the very nature of its task as national defense, the military is impregnated with nationalism."¹⁶

¹⁵Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 71.

¹⁶Samuel E. Finer, The Man on Horseback: Role of the Military in Politics, (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 33.

The organizational approach shows that these military ideologies are inherent in its organization. But the military behavior in the developing countries call into question the inherent ideologies of the organizational model. The copy of the model when transferred into a traditional setting produces an unexpected result. It is no longer a separate and autonomous organization. It is no longer a nationalistic and a puritanical attitude. It becomes a subordinate organization affiliated with politics, non-nationalistic and non-puritanical.

In the field of military reform, the policy of the newly independent states is to send their most promising officers for training to the military academies of their former rulers. The most prominent among them are Sandhurst in England and St. Cyr in France. In these well known military academies the officers in the developing countries take their courses together with their comrades-in-arms of the host countries. In this western society they try to adjust themselves because they do not want to be alienated. The training in the pattern of western model and its consequence will be described in terms of reference-group theory.

Reference-Group Theory and Officer Training

The common meaning of reference-group designates a reliance on certain rules, norms and laws which people in the group follow. The individual in the group relates himself psychologi-

cally to the group with which he identifies. In the psychological sense, it implies a behavior patterned according to its norms, rules and laws. Of course a person may identify with a group within which he is socially passive, or conversely he may be a member of a group with which he does not psychologically identify. In terms of group identification it should be recognized that identification is only one feature of the socialization process. In the case of military training the officers undergo, the training is a socialization process which cuts off their previous association in their country and replaces it with the new association in their host country through military organization. The consequence of this socialization which is likely to be influential on the military officers, is the development of reference-group identification with the officer corps of the host country. Military ideologies and military traditions are carefully observed by the cadets without exception in the military school. The effect of this training is to produce a socialization process capable to shaping the attitude and the behavior of the participants. In the host country environment, in a modern military academy, the ties of the officers with their home setting are severed. They are engulfed in the stream of modern life, enmeshed in a network of new group and organization characterized by high level of cohesiveness and ideological homogeneity with its norms and regulations. The trainees

know that conformity to these molds is rewarding, while deviation is sanctioned or alienated them under the eyes of their counterparts. The officers of the developing country behave in such a way to cope with the standards of behavior of their host military academy. It is known that the importance to a reference-group when it conforms with group norms and acceptance of their standard is to give its membership a sense of the importance of value achievement to be in the group. Besides the opportunity to be admitted to a western military academy which is known over the world, to be chosen for a trip abroad makes them the envy of their fellow countrymen and adds prestige and elite status to the officers when they return to their home country.

Old Soldiers

In the developing countries most of the senior officers are long service "old soldiers"¹⁷ appointed. For these old officers who have worked their way up through the ranks of the colonial army, in which the socialization process is somewhat different but the result is the same. In the colonial army they were promoted by the western officer corps and their eligibility for promotion was based on the western standard. As a result, promotions were given to those who showed good performance and behavior appropriate to the army requirement from the standpoint

¹⁷John J. Johnson, The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), p. 401.

of the European military profession. In spite of the disadvantage of not having had complete training at the western military academy, most of them were abroad for a short period of military observation or training. The training undergone by the officer corps of many developing countries either formally or informally is to produce association group identification with the officer corps of the western military.

The product of this association group identification if transferred to an alien soil with its traditional symbols and values may become positive or negative. Positively it results in an ultra-nationalistic, ultra-puritanical outlook. Negatively it results in a non-nationalistic, and non-puritanical view. These aspects are not explicable or predictable in terms of the organizational model. The following pages will offer some understanding of empirical validation through analyzing the 1963 military coup in South Vietnam through the use of the reference-group theory.

CHAPTER II

South Vietnam was a former French colony. It won its independence in 1954 after the Geneva Conference took place. Along with other developing countries South Vietnam moved rapidly to build a national army by substituting the native officers for the French officers in command of the army. By the time of the coup d'etat in 1963, the officer corps was entirely made up of the Vietnamese. The initiator was Major General Duong Van Minh who was also the leader of the coup. Major General Minh was working with Major General Tran Van Don, Brigadier General Ton That Dinh and other Generals to form a military junta called the National Revolutionary Council (N R C) to rule the country.

Nationalism and Military Intervention

According to the proponents of the formal organizational model the military organization is the cradle for such ideology as nationalism and puritanism. The validity of such a model is weakened when its actor should be viewed as nationalist in orientation. Nationalism, to Rupert Emerson is no more than the assertion of a particular "we" arraigned against the "they" of the rest of mankind.¹⁸ To Hans Kohn, nationalism involves

¹⁸Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation, (Cambridge, Mass.: Beacon Press Boston, 1966), p. 213.

a state of mind regarding those defined as inside and outside of the nation.¹⁹ In general it can be said that nationalist orientation is one dealing with national self-assertion and self-reliance. In the following discussion, we make our assessment of the nationalist orientation of the Vietnamese military officers of the 1963 coup by reference to both their nationalism and their affective mode within which they express their preferences.

The man who constitutes the soul of the military coup was Major General Minh, a professional soldier with a hero's record, a product of the French army. He rose from the rank to lieutenant and later attended the French Military School. He also went to the United States to study at the Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. Major General Minh became prominent after a series of victories over the religious dissidents and armed religious sects. He was promoted to the rank of Major General for his performance, but his popularity within the armed forces hampered him. He drew suspicion from the late President Ngo Dinh Diem who transferred him from one position to another and finally to the powerless post of Military Advisor to the President.²⁰ In close collaboration with General Minh

¹⁹Hans Kohn, Nationalism: Its Meaning and History, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1965), p. 10.

²⁰M. Sivaram, The Viet Nam War: Why? (Ruland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co. Publisher, 1966), p. 112.

were Major General Don and Brigadier General Dinh; however the master mind behind the 1963 coup was Major General Don who held the post of Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. He was an aristocratic graduate of St. Cyr, the French Westpoint. Another prominent member of the revolutionary junta was Brigadier General Dinh who was commander of the capital military region. Dinh rose meteorically to the rank of Brigadier General. Like other generals, Dinh was also the product of the French army. Within the framework of the formal organizational model, these generals were to observe the ideology of nationalism and puritanism and serve in silence the country as their counterparts in France or in the United States are supposed to accept the supremacy of the civilian government authority. In fact Minh is not a political general, nor are the others. On many occasions, Minh turned down the idea of overthrowing the civilian government by force. He believed in properly constituted civilian authority and refused to participate in politics.²¹ The organizational model thus showed that the comprehensive behavior of the generals was to stay in their barracks and to obey the authority of the civilian government. But the model is not flexible enough to explain why the generals moved out of their barracks to get involved in politics and to plan to

²¹M. Sivaram, The Viet Nam War: Why? (Ruland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., Publisher, 1966), p. 112.

overthrow the government. The deviation from the military norms and ideology resulting from the organizational model may be better understood when referred to the reference-group theory. Conformity and deviation are two main aspects of the reference-group theory. Conformity is always conformity to something. It refers to a behavioral appraisal according to a favorable light shed by the group. Deviation is always departure from something which is condemned as inappropriate or wrong under the norms of the group.²² The deviation from the norms and values of the military formal organization of the West results in the behavior of the Vietnamese generals in interfering in politics. The intervention in the coup d'etat in 1963 by the Vietnamese generals may be viewed as a deviation from the norms and ideology they acquired in their training in the former metropole. The reference-group theory is so flexible as to explain the new attitude of the generals who either cling to their model by abstaining themselves from politics to remain in conformity with that with which they were inculcated or to act differently in a way which could be called deviation by involving in politics through the use of their monopoly of force.

²²Muzafer, Sherif and Carolyn W. Sherif, Reference Groups, (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964), p. 4.

Civil Military Relationship From the Point of View of Reference-Group

In the formerly colonial countries, the officer corps was created and trained by the metropole country. The ideology of the army of the Western country is to stand aloof from politics, to follow the tradition of political impartiality and to be loyal to the government of the day, whatever its political color.²³ The training instills this aloofness and loyalty in the officer corps. Nevertheless the tension between civil and military groups takes place if the leaders of the new states follow a policy which is in conflict with the officers' psychological commitments to their foreign reference-group. In the South Vietnamese case this conflict is critical in generating the coup. When the late President Ngo Dinh Diem's policy hurt the Buddhist religion, the Buddhists launched a large scale protest against the President's autocratic rule. The government reacted by becoming strict with the Buddhists. Then religious conflict increased in intensity. Several monks burned themselves in protest against the government's hard measures. The protest turned into riots which were followed by governmental measures in which the army played the major part in suppressing the riots. Troops were used to disperse a Buddhist rally and to raid pagodas. In the midst of this crisis, Ngo Dinh Nhu, a political advisor to President Diem and also his brother, convoked the Generals to sign a remonstrance calling on the

²³William Gutteridge, Armed Forces in New States, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. VI.

government to seize and silence the Buddhist ringleaders.²⁴
The signatories included, besides some others, General Minh,
Don and Dinh.²⁵

It is no surprise that the Vietnamese generals placed in a situation of role conflict should feel uncomfortable. The sense of honor and the idea of freedom of religion with which they had been impressed during their training were in conflict with the real situation they had to face. In their role of suppressing the unarmed Buddhists, the military officers were in conflict with their reference-group which was producing hostility and resentment toward the civilian authorities. This civil military conflict deteriorated because of the new policy of orientation advocated by the government. The Presidential Political Advisor Nhu let it be known that he entered into exploratory negotiations with Hanoi, North Vietnam. He was doing this through a French diplomat in North Vietnam who came to Saigon on a visit and had been introduced to Nhu by a Polish member of the International Control Conference.²⁶ Here identification with the foreign reference-group is reflected in the orientation of the Generals not to compromise with the Communists.

²⁴New York Times, 20, August, 1963.

²⁵Dennis J. Duncanson, Government and Revolution in VietNam, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 336.

²⁶David Haberman, The Making of a Quagmire, (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 278.

A deal with the Communists added its fuel to the smouldering situation. In addition the security is far from desirable. By October 1963 the Communists kept making a major advance in the Mekong delta.²⁷ Being involved in the fighting, the generals knew that the situation was deteriorating and that action to change the government procedure must be taken or the war would be lost to the Communists because the government no longer had the support of the people.²⁸ They realized that President Diem was more of a liability than an asset to the anti-communist cause.²⁹ So any bid to overthrow the Diem government would have the backing of the people. This heightened awareness of the political, social and national security awakes in the generals a desire to do something about the situation. So there emerges a strong sense of honor and duty to intervene in the correction of the mistakes of the civilian government. The 1963 coup was justified by a necessity to save the country and the people.

Governmental power is based on the trust of its people like the trust of the citizens when they deposit their money

²⁷Ibid., p. 277.

²⁸Neil Sheehan, Hedrick Smith, E. W. Kenworthy and Fox Butterfield, The Pentagon Papers, (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1971), p. 214.

²⁹Richard Butwell, Southeast Asia Today and Tomorrow, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), p. 149.

in a bank.³⁰ "A run on the banks," says Claude E. Welch, "would empty the available funds."³¹ Consequently once binding decisions, rules and law compliance are no longer respected; coercion is repeatedly used to stabilize the situation. "The shift from power to force", says Zolberg, "as the only measure of the government to eliminate disruptive demands, makes the government over dependent on force embodied by the military."³² This over reliance on force is used up when it is repeatedly resorted to. A "run on the bank" ensues. Parsons presents his argument in a similar way when he describes the situation of "power deflation."³³ Hobbe's analogy between politics and a game of cards expresses the same idea when he says that the participants must agree upon what constitutes legitimate power and which cards are trumps. If nobody agrees upon the rules, then clubs become trumps.³⁴

³⁰Karl W. Deutch, The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control, (New York: Free Press, 1963), p. 121.

³¹Claude E. Welch, Jr., Soldier and State in Africa, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 20.

³²Aristide Zolberg, Creating Political Order: The Party States of West Africa, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966), pp. 73-77.

³³Talcott Parsons, "Some Reflections on the Place of Force in Social Process," in Internal War ed. by Eckstein, p. 44.

³⁴Cited in Dankwart A. Rustow, "The Military in Middle Eastern Society and Politics," in The Military in the Middle East: Problems in Society and Government, ed. by Sydney Nettleton Fisher, (Columbus; Ohio State University Press, 1963), p. 4.

The analysis suggests that the organizational model theory which produces intense nationalism and military ideology inherent in its organization has little application in dealing with the phenomenon of the military intervention in politics in the South Vietnamese coup d'etat in 1963. In the reference-group theory, the Vietnamese Generals revealed strong identification with the United States in perceiving the danger of communism if they accepted the terms the civilian government handled the situation. Unfortunately their nationalistic orientation towards the United States coincided with non-nationalistic view, and contrasted with the idea of nationalism which stirs up the developing countries. From the intense nationalist expectation of the organizational model stressing the distrust toward foreigners, the Generals who behaved themselves in a way that suggested a great deal of trust and respect for outside groups, seemed to be non-nationalistic. Major General Minh in this respect emphasizes the continuation of American military and economic aid as necessary.³⁵

In addition to nationalism the organizational model also views puritanism as inherent in the military ideology. This orientation is supposed to adopt policies of austerity, self-sufficiency by the military who rule the country. This concept

³⁵Neil Sheehan, Hedrick Smith, E. W. Kenworthy and Fox Butterfield, The Pentagon Papers, (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1971), p. 214.

as in the case of the alleged nationalism of the Vietnamese Generals, failed to take into consideration the reference-group identification of the Generals when they considered the situation under the eyes of their reference-group. Even they hold a predisposition toward a puritanical outlook and an austere life. The standard of living they saw or passed through during their training reflects the life they are living. This way of life may hardly be characterized by austerity and puritanism under the eyes of their people. Being austere in one affluent society may be a luxury in a poor society. Therefore the proponents of the formal organizational model maintaining nationalism and puritanism as ideological themes of the military organization fail to see the validity of their model in South Vietnam. The Generals in the country use their counterparts in the developed country in the West as a comparative reference-group and therefore adopt their standards that become alien, non-nationalistic, non-puritanical in the setting of their underdeveloped country. According to the formal organizational model it results that military government, imbued with the ideology of Puritanism will implement a policy of austerity by tightening the belt, by self-reliance for the purpose of national dignity and economic development. None of these is seen in South Vietnam. The American aid which was cut on the eve of the fall of President Diem as a measure to compel Diem to change his policy was restored and increased

after the military coup. The South Vietnamese case is better demonstrated in working with the reference-group approach, is more understandable, more predictable through the reference-group model than through the organization model. It follows that the reference-group approach would assume that the officers' commitment to the standards of Western reference greatly hampers if not completely nullifies their orientation toward austerity in government and society, their nation building role.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the empirical case of South Vietnam demonstrates that the formal organizational model needs the reference-group theory to shed light on the behavior of the generals involved in the coup. Its theoretical assumption fails to explain the non-nationalistic, non-puritanical appearance of the military leaders. The deviation from the Western military ideology is understandable by means of reference-group theory and is anomalous from the point of view of the formal organizational model. As a consequence of foreign reference-group commitment, the military tends to be considered as alien in their own society. This situation shows the reason why the government fails to integrate people under its banner in spite of its tremendous capability of using force. The relying on the martial rituals and symbols of a foreign cultural milieu is not consonant with an indigenous setting which values its own symbols, its own goals which have meaning in its own society, particularly when this society has a background of a brilliant civilization.

The analysis in this paper along the line of reference-group theory suggests that states which have a colonial past are characterized by heavy reliance on foreign participation of a financial and technical nature, and by limited mobilization

of indigenous resources. The political concomitant of such reliance would produce a "low profile" approach to nation building and political integration. But it denotes a political laissez-faire strategy in which foreign capital and technical assistance will produce reorientations in identifications and values so as to create gradually political integration at the national level.

The greatest strength of the reference-group approach is that it does not ascertain that military organization will perform similarly in all new states, when the formal organizational model assumes that the military elites in all states and all times tend to break the barrack gate to step into the political arena.. On the contrary, the performance of the military officers in political roles is functional for the reference-group identifications and these in turn are dependent on the socialization process undergone by the officer corps of the developing countries. The socialization process of officers in new states which differs from country to country explains the different nature of passive or active involvement of the military officers in politics. Finally, in newly independent countries without having a pre-colonial military training, officers who do not receive training in foreign academies, or who are not socialized in the colonial army, are expected to have fewer intense psychological commitments to foreign reference-groups than those of the other nations which have received such training.

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AN APPLICATION OF THE REFERENCE GROUP THEORETICAL APPROACH
IN THE STUDY OF THE VIETNAMESE COUP D'ETAT IN 1963

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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The idea behind the report is to show that the organizational model of the military advocated by some writers and political scientists is not an overall explanation of the military intervention in politics. This model although has its validity in explaining the phenomenon of the military in the developing countries needs the reference group theory as a supplementary tool in the study of the military. South Vietnam military coup d'etat in 1963 is a case in point.