

# Is a Military Coup Considered Among the Styles for Seizing Power in Islam? (1)

(Translated)

<https://alwaie.org/archives/article/20544>

Al Waie Magazine Issue No. 483

Forty-first Year, Rabi' II 1448 AH corresponding to September 2026 CE

Bassam Farhat – Tunisia

By examining the Seerah (biography) of the Messenger (saw) in Makkah—tracing the stages he (saw) traversed until establishing his state and the prominent actions he (saw) undertook at each stage—Hizb ut Tahrir derived its own methodology, comprising specific stages and actions. It did so by emulating the actions of the Master of Messengers, Muhammad (saw), during the Makkan period, regarding them as Sharia rulings that must be followed, just like any other ruling established by the noble Sunnah.

Accordingly, the Hizb defined its path of action in three stages. The first is the stage of tathqif (culturing) to mature individuals who believe in its ideology, methodology, and project, forming the nucleus of the Hizb's structure. The second is the stage of tufa'ul (interaction) with the Ummah to convey Islam to it, such that the Ummah adopts it as its own cause and works to bring it into reality. The third is the stage of assuming power, implementing Islam in a general and comprehensive manner, and conveying it as a message to the worlds.

## Distinguishing Between the Method (الطريقة At-Tareeqah) and Style (الأسلوب Al-Usloob)

An examination of the incidents in the Prophetic Seerah (السيرة النبوية) reveals to the Hizb that when the Messenger (saw) faced a dire situation of brutal persecution in Makkah, he began to supplement the action of conveying the Message with a new action: seeking nussrah (نصرة military support) from those possessing military power, protection and might. He persisted in this endeavor—despite the hardship and rejection he encountered—until the Ansar (الأنصار the Military Supporters) responded to his call. From a fundamental perspective, this elevates the action to the status of a permanent method of execution for carrying out the task.

A study of the evidence regarding the establishment of the state clearly shows that it was established on a single occasion through the method of seeking nussrah at the conclusion of the tafa'ul (interaction) stage. Yet, although the Messenger (saw) specifically sought this nussrah from those possessing military power, protection, and military might (أهل القوة والمنعة والشوكة ahl al-quwwa wa al-mana'a wa al-shawka)—and stipulated that they protect him just as they protected their own nobles, women, and children, even if it entailed fighting—and although the Ansar had prepared for war and formed a battalion of 500 horsemen, they ultimately handed over authority to him in a peaceful manner, without resorting to bloodshed.

Thus, it becomes clear that armed action is a style (أسلوب usloob) adopted when necessary, instead of an obligatory method (طريقة tareeqah); otherwise, the Messenger (saw) would have refused to assume authority until after an armed confrontation. So, we must distinguish between relying on—and gaining the support of—those possessing military power, protection and might—that is, seeking nussrah from them as a means to establish the state—and the actual use of that military might, or resort to armed action, as a style to assume power and bring the state into existence. Indeed, the use of military force might not be required at all, or it might not go beyond mere threats and displays of strength intended to thwart any intent to resist or defy. Consequently, the Hizb has recognized the distinction between seizing power, as a style, and establishing the state, as a method. While the styles of seizing power remain open to various available options—influenced by the nature of the work, the circumstances, and the context—the method to establishing the state is unique and restricted to seeking nussrah; it is a specific Shariah ruling that we cannot transgress, nor do we have the liberty to choose otherwise. Accordingly, since 1961, Hizb ut Tahrir has engaged in seeking nussrah across all the areas of majaal (domain of work), in parallel with its work among the Ummah to generate general awareness of Islam and public opinion in its favor. The Hizb sought nussrah from both the de facto ruler and from those capable of seizing power, as well as from those who could bring the de

facto ruler or the potential power-seizer to the table. The Hizb pursued this course with all its might until 1965. By early that year, it perceived a growing rapport between the Dawah carriers and society; the state had formed within the womb of the Ummah, and nothing remained to complete its construction but the actual assuming of power. The only obstacle was the unnatural foreign backing that empowered agents and obstructed the state's birth.

### **The Caesarean Section**

Since waiting would only complicate the birth and threaten to miscarry this precious fetus, the Hizb decided to undertake what it termed a "Caesarean section"—an operation to seize power by force. Consequently, it began seeking nussrah (military support) from those capable of executing this Caesarean section—an undertaking that entailed physical action, military might, and a combat-oriented nature.

Thus, as we advanced and engaged practically in the field, the range of styles for seizing power narrowed to align with the specific type of work at hand. Civil and popular options—such as civil disobedience, general strikes, and demonstrations—were ruled out, though they retained their value for exerting pressure and garnering support. The focus shifted exclusively to targeting those possessing military might and power who are capable to execute the Caesarean section. While the scope of styles is theoretically broad and contingent on the nature of the work, the specific style for seizing power had to correspond to the nature of the nuqtatul irtikaaz (نقطة الارتكاز) the support point—considering its regional and international ties, the security (أمان amaan), regarding whether security rested with Muslims or non-Muslims, and the nature of the authority (سلطان sultan) involved, whether it is independent or acts as in agency for colonialism. One must also consider the reality of the military establishment itself, regarding its strength, armament, interests, loyalties, military doctrine, relationship with the ruling authority, and responsiveness to the people. Amidst conditions of subservience, dependency, a lack of genuine independence, reliance on foreign powers, and fierce international rivalry over the country and its resources—and given the military establishment's ties to the ruling authority, in terms of interests, privileges, and loyalty, and its reliance on foreign major powers for weaponry, training, and doctrine—it becomes evident that power must be wrested rather than simply handed over. Consequently, a "Caesarean section"—a forced intervention—becomes the necessary style for assuming power, making it imperative to seek nussrah from those possessing the material power and military might capable of executing such an operation.

Given that the military establishment is the most prominent representative of this group in our time, seizing power through it could easily be conflated with a military coup. Does the term "Caesarean section" specifically refer to a military coup? Or is a coup merely one available possibility—one style among others—within the scope of a Caesarean section? Or do they represent distinct and contradictory concepts? To answer this central question, our methodological starting point must be to define the technical meaning of a "military coup," identify its constituent elements, and distinguish it from related terms with which it might be confused—thereby paving the way for applying these concepts to the realities of nussrah and the Caesarean section. It is essential for this study to define terms precisely and rigorously examine the underlying concepts to elucidate the fundamental differences between them.

### **What is a Military Coup?**

A fundamental requirement of address is to adhere strictly to the meaning originally established by those who coined the term, regardless of our own stances or beliefs—for there is no dispute over terminology itself. Furthermore, we must use the technical term precisely to convey its specific meaning, thereby preventing misunderstanding and preserving the clarity of the idea. This requires an awareness of the conceptual nuances—distinguishing them from the differences between related terms—especially in this sensitive arena where politics and Shariah intersect. Regarding the military coup, it has been defined in various academic, sociological, and political terms; below, we attempt to review the most significant of these definitions and summarize the common elements among them:

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, a military coup is "a violent and immediate seizure of state power by the armed forces, carried out in an undemocratic and unconstitutional manner." The Encyclopædia Britannica describes coup d'état as "the sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group. The chief prerequisite for a coup is

control of all or part of the armed forces, the police, and other military elements.” Meanwhile, Wikipedia defines coup d'état as “typically an illegal and overt attempt by a military organization or other government elites to unseat an incumbent person or leadership.” This covers the academic perspective. Military coups have also been defined through political descriptions that are similar in substance:

It has been defined as the “overthrow of an incumbent government through illegitimate means—specifically, the use of military violence or the threat thereof.” It has also been characterized as an “insubordination led by the military establishment—or a powerful faction within it—resulting in the ousting of the existing regime,” and as a “forcible change of the system of government against the will of the incumbent administration, followed by the installation of a replacement government.” The nature of this concept becomes clearer when examining contemporary real-world examples: an analysis of the Coup Belt (French: Ceinture de Coups d'État, Arabic: حزام الانقلابات) reveals shared catalysts and patterns characteristic of military coups. This broader perspective enables a comprehensive and precise definition: a “political act—neither constitutional nor legal—carried out via military means, targeting the ruling authority and its officials; it is characterized as a clandestine, factional, and sudden move driven by specific demands. In practice, it entails a rebellion by the military establishment or a segment thereof against the incumbent power—using armed violence or the threat of it—to depose the previous government and install a new one, whether civilian or military, provisional or permanent.”

This is a general overview. In the following section, we will deconstruct the constituent elements of a military coup, precisely defining their meaning and intent, and then compare them with the elements of a “Caesarean section” to highlight the fundamental differences between the two concepts. The question arises: does seizing power via a “Caesarean section” constitute a military coup? In other words, would the military action—through which power is seized and an Islamic state is established—be considered a military coup?

### **The First Element: An Unconstitutional and Undemocratic Act**

The primary characteristic of a military coup is that it is illegal, unconstitutional, and undemocratic—a self-evident fact. Constitutionally, no constitution—nor the laws derived from it—grants the military the authority to intervene in governance or to employ military force to oust rulers, dismiss governments, and install others. The universal principle affirms the subordination of the military establishment to elected civilian authority; while modern constitutions define the military as a national institution that protects the state and the constitution, its intervention must occur within the framework of the law and under civilian oversight, not above it. Consequently, any provision authorizing the military to forcibly dismiss a government would be considered an anomaly or evidence of direct military rule, rather than an established constitutional norm.

As for the military interventions seen globally to oust governments, these are predominantly military coups occurring outside the bounds of constitutional legitimacy; they do not stem from an explicit constitutional article authorizing the use of military force against a civilian government.

From a democratic perspective, democracy upholds the sanctity of the peaceful transfer of power, respects the will of the majority, establishes elections as the legitimate path to governance, and treats all of these as inviolable principles. It is hardly surprising, then, that this act has been characterized as a coup—an event requiring tangible military force—thereby placing the coup leaders at odds with the expectations of the international community and the norms and laws governing it. Consequently, the perpetrators refuse to acknowledge the act as a coup—that is, an unconstitutional and illegal maneuver—seeking instead to justify it through democratic slogans intended to legitimize and lend it a veneer of constitutionality. Furthermore, they rush to forge alliances, ties, and strategic maneuvers to break their political isolation and lift the economic blockades imposed upon them; such moves often exact a ruinous price, entailing concessions that compromise independence, authority, and natural resources—and even fundamental identity and allegiance—as evidenced by current developments in the Sahel-Sahara region.

### **A Matter of Shariah Textual Discourse, Not Rational-Democratic Discourse**

As for the “Caesarean section,” it is a style dictated by the realities on the ground and adopted when necessary, based on the Shariah principle, (ما لا يتم الواجب إلا به فهو واجب) “That without

which an obligation cannot be fulfilled is itself obligatory.” Beyond being a political act executed via military means, this operation is a style aligned with the nature of the nuqtatul irtikaaz (نقطة الارتكاز the support point)—encompassing power, authority, security, cohesion, loyalties, and affiliations—because it is the method determined by the specific type of action available when seeking nussrah (military support).

An examination of the Arab and Muslim region and its political landscape reveals—without difficulty—that it lies entirely under Western influence. Power and governance there do not stem from indigenous authority rooted in the people's strength; instead, the governing regimes function as a proxy of agency for the disbelieving colonialist, and the security prevailing there is not one that serves its Muslim inhabitants. Furthermore, the military establishment displays blind loyalty to the ruling authority and is deeply complicit with it. Its personnel are meticulously selected, isolated from the populace, and groomed under the watchful eye of the disbelieving colonialist; the colonialist tailored their military doctrine to his own specifications, turned them against their own Ummah, and bound them inextricably to the regime. The colonialist intertwined their interests and privileges with the regime's survival—linking their very existence to its own—making it virtually impossible for them to abandon the authority and side with the Ummah. Given a reality characterized by dependency, a lack of independent authority, insecurity, and subjugation to foreign powers—politically, economically, militarily, and culturally—amidst a fierce international struggle for the country and its resources, it becomes evident that power must be seized rather than merely handed over. The necessity of a “Caesarean-style” operation to seize power becomes clear, as does the imperative to direct the seeking of nussrah toward those possessing material power and military might—those capable of executing such an operation. They serve as the natural backing for the new authority and the effective, potent means to dismantle the foreign support that keeps collaborators in power.

By examining the Mana'at (مناط Shariah reality) of seeking nussrah, this approach is confirmed; it becomes indisputably clear that the Messenger (saw) sought nussrah and persisted in doing so, despite the hardship and rejection he faced. This elevates the practice—in terms of Usool (Shariah fundamentals of Fiqh)—to the status of a tareeqah (طريقة method), which is a permanent, Shariah way of performing the action. The Messenger (saw) actively sought out military might, power, and might among those from whom he requested nussrah—inquiring about their strength, their defensive capabilities, and their aptitude for warfare. The Messenger (saw) sought nussrah either directly from the sources of such power, the strong, martial tribes or fortified cities, or indirectly through those capable of mobilizing such force, the tribal chieftains, influential leaders, or figures of significant material and moral weight. The concern for military might remained with the Messenger (saw) as he prepared to assume power; he keenly anticipated the possibility of a “Caesarean-style” operation and never ruled out relying on armed confrontation to seize authority, prompting him to take precautions and make the necessary preparations. The Messenger (saw) secured guarantees for himself and his mission, stipulating that the Aws and Khazraj Tribes protect and defend him just as they would their own nobles, women, and children—even if doing so required combat and the shedding of blood. The Ansar demonstrated their readiness for battle within the transfer of authority, forming a battalion of 500 horsemen to anticipate emergencies and safeguard against the potential complications attending the birth of the state. Consequently, the style of seizing power is not a matter of mere rational discourse left to man-made constitutions and laws—where democracy serves as the arbiter—but rather a matter of Shariah textual discourse determined by Shariah evidence.

The “Caesarean section” style of seizing power does not derive its legitimacy from the paradigm of separating religion from life—which would label it against man-made law, constitution and democracy; indeed, from a Shariah perspective, this man-made “unholy trinity” holds no weight. Instead, it is a pivotal act in the construction of the Islamic state—a style dictated by the realities of the situation and adopted as an obligation when other options are exhausted, in accordance with the Shariah principle (ما لا يتم الواجب إلا به فهو واجب) "That without which an obligation cannot be fulfilled is itself obligatory."

## **Second Element: Targeting the Regime and Its Officials**

The second element of a military coup is that it targets the ruling authority and its officials; its objective is to usurp power by neutralizing the rulers—whether through arrest, imprisonment, and

trial, or through assassination, expulsion, or exile. This is because leaving the head of state and their ruling team free poses a serious threat to the coup's success, the stability of the situation, and the safety of the coup plotters. A military coup does not aim to establish governance based on a specific overarching ideology; the plotters do not possess a mission or ideological cause they wish to impart to the Ummah, nor do they seek power merely as a vehicle to implement a specific societal vision. Instead, they target the public face of authority—the government and its officials—while leaving untouched the underlying force that sustains that authority and grants it legitimacy: the people, or the most powerful faction thereof.

Consequently, given that the public is unpredictable, unprepared for sudden changes, and open to various reactions, a fundamental tenet of any coup is the immediate declaration of a state of emergency and a curfew. This entails securing firm control over the country and its population by deploying the army across all regions and safeguarding critical sites—such as airports, seaports, radio and television stations, state command centers, and certain foreign embassies, particularly in the capital. Crucially, this involves the rapid dissemination of the initial coup communiqué and subsequent statements—a preemptive move designed to capture public opinion, domesticate the populace, win them over, mold their perceptions, and steer them toward accepting the new reality.

### **Seizing Power Is Not the Ultimate Goal**

The “Caesarean section”—the process of seizing power—is neither a mere usurpation of ruling governance nor an isolated strike against the material façade of authority, divorced from the true loci of power and its natural base of support. Seizing power is not an end in itself, nor should it be pursued for its own sake. Instead, the ultimate goal is the resumption of the Islamic way of life and the conveyance of the Islamic message to the world.

Hizb ut Tahrir seeks to seize power in order to establish ruling upon the Islamic ideology; it strives to take the reins of authority as a means to actualize within society the views and ideas it has adopted. The matter, therefore, goes deeper than merely attempting to topple the ruling figures through material force. It is about winning over the people by making Islamic ideas dominant in society—a process that leads to the moral and political dismantling of the ruling figures, rendering their physical removal a foregone conclusion. Indeed, if rulers align themselves with the Ummah, engage in its project, and adopt the Hizb's ideas, they may be permitted to remain in their positions—a measure intended to win over hearts, much like the Prophet (saw) did with Badhan (بإذان), the Persian governor of Yemen. Badhan embraced Islam, pledged allegiance to the Prophet (saw), and accepted subordination to the Islamic State. While the fundamental principle in dealing with entities whose authority rests on external foreign power is to target and attack the source of that authority, the people—whom the regime uses as an instrument of its own power—must be detached from the puppet authority and transformed into active participants in the confrontation alongside the confronters. This process goes beyond a mere military coup d'état; it requires a political structure that operates among, with, and through the people, engaging in political struggle, establishing public opinion rooted in general awareness, building a popular base, and fully immersing itself in the process of societal integration... **[To be continued]**