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Thailand

State-Building, Democracy
and Globalization

About the Author



CHAI-ANAN SAMUDAVANIJA was Professor of Political Science at Chulalongkorn University from 1975 to 1995. He became Headmaster of Vajiravudh College in 1996, the position he holds at present.

Chai-Anan was an active participant in many political events during the period of which he writes in this book. He was one of the drafters of the 1974 Constitution and Chairman of the Joint Senate-House Committee to amend the 1992 Constitution. He served as an adviser to two prime ministers (General Prem Tinsulanonda and General Chatchai Choonhavan) and was a leading member of a number of government and parliamentary committees. He was also a senator and a judge of the Constitutional Court.

He sits on the governing councils of Chulalongkorn, Chiang Mai, Silpakorn, King Mongkut and Mahidol universities. He is also a member of the National Education Commission, the National Civil Service Reform Commission and Chairman of the National Educational Technology Committee. He was formerly Chairman of Thai Airways International and is currently a member of the company's board.

Chai-Anan is President of the Institute of Public Policy Studies (IPPS) and Vice-President of the Royal Institute. He has written over ninety books and undertaken several research studies on Thai political history and politics, public policy, and strategies for higher education.

Thailand

State-Building, Democracy
and Globalization

Chai-Anan Samudavanija

IPPS Institute of Public Policy Studies
Bangkok, Thailand

2002

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To My Parents

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Foreword

Established in 1985, the Institute of Public Policy Studies (IPPS) is one of the main partner projects of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. For nearly two decades, the Foundation has cooperated closely with this policy research institute to develop an extensive program of civic education through seminars, research studies, publications and multimedia presentations.

The publication of *Thailand: State-Building, Democracy and Globalization* makes available to an English-speaking public a unique selection of studies from Professor Dr. Chai-Anan Samudavanija, covering Thai politics from the 1932 Revolution to the present, based on a compilation of articles, essays and lectures presented to international audiences from 1989 to 2002.

After clearly defining a theoretical and conceptual framework in Part One, in the second part of the book the author provides a description of the development of the Thai nation state as well as of the creation of its state identity, followed by a very comprehensive analysis of the historical, political and economic framework of the development of democracy in Thailand. Included is a comparative assessment of the process of democratization in Asia, focusing on the key issue of the interdependence of democratization and economic development. External factors such as security issues, cultural forces, and the role of foreign aid as influences affecting prospects for democratization are also considered. The third part analyzes the impact of the phenomenon

of globalization on Thai politics, including the relationship between globalization and good governance.

The present publication gives the reader a very valuable, structured and comprehensive overview of Thai politics in its various aspects; its presentation in English will further contribute to the regional and international presence of IPPS.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation is proud to have contributed to this endeavor, and I would like to express my highest respect for the work of Professor. Dr. Chai-Anan Samudavanija.

Furthermore, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my utmost thanks to him in his capacity as Chairman of IPPS, as well as to IPPS co-directors Mrs. Yosavadee Boonyakiat and Mrs. Thippaporn Tantisunthorn and the whole IPPS team for their continuous support of our common activities: their dedicated commitment in the dialogue with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is indispensable.

Dr. Beatrice Gorawantschy
Representative of
Konrad Adenauer Foundation to Thailand
Bangkok, December 2002

Preface

THE DRAMATIC AND BLOODY EVENTS of May 1992 showed Thais, as well as a shocked television audience of millions around the world, that Thailand is at a critical point in its political development. For outsiders it can be a perplexing country; since the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932, Thailand has had almost fifty governments, fifteen different constitutions and twelve military coups; and yet despite this surface evidence of chronic instability, the country has enjoyed many years of sustained and strong economic growth. Indeed, Thailand seems to be unique among Asian countries in maintaining real continuity within a chaotic political structure.

In this series of essays, which I presented at international conferences and seminars between 1989 and 2002, I have attempted to reconcile some of the apparent contradictions in Thai political and economic development, showing that the present position has its roots firmly in Thai history, and presenting a unique three-dimensional model of the imperatives of Security, Participation and Development to explain the Thai state's historical attitudes and *raison d'être*. The periodic turmoil in the Thai political and social scene appears as a natural phenomenon, of which more can be expected. The more critically I analyze Thai politics, the more I am inclined to believe that fluctuations do not necessarily cause political decay; on the contrary, they are signs of dynamism and life. More superficially stable and ordered states, such as

Myanmar, may lack the very dynamism which has afforded Thailand such remarkable growth.

This had been obvious as early as the 1930s: in the third essay in this collection, I suggest that the Pibul administration's renaming of the country "Thailand," in place of the former ethnically nonexclusive "Siam," was in part a deliberate attempt to exclude the economically powerful Chinese middle class from the political life of the country. There was a concerted effort to create a state identity, and this was to be ethnically Thai. Similarly, in the years of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) insurgency, great efforts were made to persuade the population that the guerrillas were not really "Thai" at all, but outsiders. While such policies may have been effective in the past, they are not compatible now with the growth of a more heterogeneous middle class and the encouragement of laissez-faire capitalism, and would lead to a national identity crisis in the 1990s, which mere economic success may not be enough to counter.

As the legitimacy of the authoritarian state appears to fade, and the military searches for a new role, other sections of society have yet to establish themselves firmly in positions of power. Thai political development is now at a crossroads, and at a stage which can be characterized as "institutionalized anarchy" or "uninstitutionalized soft authoritarianism," it is fair to conclude that despite such ingrained problems as the lack of grassroots political organization, corruption, under-representation and urban-rural conflict, Thailand has the potential to become both free and democratic.

However, it is too simplistic to establish a positive linkage of democratization and industrialization, so beloved of some—chiefly Western—commentators. In Thailand, economic institutions are strong, while political ones are weak. The relationship between democratization and industrialization, far from being causal or complementary, is in fact opposing and evolving. This in itself should serve to remind us that political development in Thailand is far from straightforward and far from predictable, and that further fluctuations are inevitable.

Readers should note that chapters 1–6, comprising Parts One and Two of this book, were written from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s and have been reproduced in their original forms; accordingly the text sometimes reflects events that were ongoing at the time of writing. The three chapters making up Part Three are keynote addresses delivered in 1999, 2001 and 2002, in which I discuss some of the big issues we shall have to deal with in the new millennium.

Over the years that I have participated in conferences, seminars and workshops on Thai politics and globalization, I have benefitted greatly from the many scholars, friends and students who read and provided insightful comments on one or more drafts of the papers. I would like to thank Craig Reynolds, Kevin Hewison, Larry Diamond, James Manor, Bruce Koppel and Medhi Krongkaew who organized seminars at which my papers were presented and published in the books they edited. Kosit Panpiemrath, Somsakdi Xuto, Rungsun Thanapornphan and Sondhi Limthongkul were very helpful in giving their views and information on various aspects of the Thai political economy. Keokam Kraisoraphong and Nyle Spoelstra checked the text and put it into final shape, for which I am grateful. The index was designed by Supamit Pitipat and the cover by Pasuntra Dhebpunya.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Colin Durkop and Dr. Beatrice Gorawantschy of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, whose continuing support of the Institute of Public Policy Studies has made possible the publication of this book.

Chai-Anan Samudavanija
Vajiravudh College
December 2002

PART ONE

FOUNDATIONS

1

THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL STATE

AFTER NEARLY THREE DECADES of searching for general theories of political development, most Western and Western-influenced scholars still have not abandoned their preoccupation with studying the causal relationships between democracy and socioeconomic development, thus maintaining the fundamental assumption that political development is essentially a two-dimensional phenomenon. This is evident, for example, in a recent major work on democracy in developing countries, where one of the editors, a prominent political scientist, wrote in his introduction to the volume:

Generations of theory have grappled with the relationships between democracy and both the level and the process of socioeconomic development. The evidence from our ten cases cannot settle the spirited theoretical controversies that remain with us. Nevertheless, some important insights do emerge. The most obvious of these is the simple static observation that democracy is not incompatible with a low level of development. (Diamond, Lipset and Linz 1988)

Paper presented to a German Federation for International Development conference in Berlin 1989; published as chapter 1 in *Rethinking Third World Politics*, edited by James Manor (London: Longmans, 1991).

This preoccupation reflects a certain poverty of ideas in Western political science. This in turn is rooted in its epistemology, which is essentially based on an Aristotelian concept of politics, and rendered more permanent by the influence of the positivist behavioral scientists of the 1960s, who incorporated structural-functionalism into the study of comparative politics.

“The *polis* is by *physis*,” wrote Aristotle in his *Politics*. The concept of *physis* implies the whole process of growth and the concept of being “grown” as well as the beginning of growing. The whole organized political community (both the center and periphery) is capable of growing, and can also be decaying, declining, degenerating.

The Aristotelian concept of “Dynamic Nature” leads to the attempt to classify and typologize societies and political systems. Hence political development and modernization theories, as Lucian Pye correctly observes, have generally been heuristic theories; the focus has been to spell out concepts and identify factors and processes so as better to guide empirical work. By providing preliminary bases for classification and typology building, the theories set the stage for case studies with comparative dimensions (Pye 1985, 10).

This in turn has three major consequences. One is the tendency to conceive of political development in terms of two general dichotomies, that is ‘modern’ versus ‘traditional’ societies, and ‘democratic’ versus ‘nondemocratic’ political systems. The second is the predisposition to analyze political development in terms of *qualitative* changes in values, structures and functions of given political systems, where new values, structures and functions are seen to replace existing ones. The third is the notion that the process of qualitative change is characterized by conflict, whereby opposing forces—for example, tradition and modernity—interact in a dialectical mode of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

The modernizationist theorists, both the structural-functional and political cultural schools, have been similarly caught up in this “Aristotelian trap.” Political culture theorists have been criticized as being culturally deterministic as well as psychologically

reductionist. It has also been pointed out that their theory suffers from a lack of dynamism since studies of political culture have failed to deal with the dialectical forces of change. More importantly, their concept of change is inextricably linked with incrementalism and gradualism which carries the political system to its natural end, to the ideal civic culture (Chilcote 1981, 234–5).

Studies of political culture in the past three decades have relied heavily on analyses of the political socialization process. The problem is that the mainstream of research focuses almost exclusively on the development of children's political attitudes in stable democratic societies, while adult experiences are treated as only marginally significant.

Gabriel Almond (1990) has argued that the cultural deterministic approach is a distortion of his and other theories of political culture and democracy. Political culture has never been viewed by this school as a uniform, monolithic and unchanging phenomenon, but rather as a "plastic" phenomenon that is open to evolution and change over time. "Political culture affects political and government structure and performance—constrains it, but surely does not determine it." This observation is confirmed by the empirical evidence from a recent comparative study of democracy in twenty-six developing countries. This study demonstrates that the political culture of a country, while it may affect the character and viability of democracy, is itself shaped by the contemporary political, economic and social structures, as well as by the historical and cultural inheritance of the past. In other words, the political culture may be as much a consequence of the political system as a cause of it (Diamond, Lipset and Linz 1988).

Perhaps the criticism of cultural determinism stemmed not from the charge that the political culture theory lacks dynamism but rather from its preoccupation with only one direction of change, that is, along more democratic lines. While it is widely accepted that democracy is the least evil form of government, and democratic institutions are better than others that might be established, one may fail to understand the nature and dynamics

of change in developing nations if a “core component” of democratic culture is rigidly used as a *single* frame of reference.

The main problem of political development theories is the tendency to conceive of political development in terms of two general dichotomies; “modern” versus “traditional” societies, and “democratic” versus “nondemocratic” political systems. There is also the predisposition to analyze political development in terms of qualitative change in values, structures and functions of given political systems, where new values, structures and functions are seen to replace existing ones. Any study of state elites and mass political culture in non-developing nations must first confront this epistemological issue.

In a recent study (Ichimura and Morley 1988a) of the experience of nine states in Asia and the Pacific (China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand), it was recognized that neither the classical Marxist approach nor the liberal structural-functional theory which lay behind much of the modernizationist approach was adequate in understanding the dynamism of changes in that region. The study views the state as relatively autonomous, and focuses its attention on the relationships between the state and society in the allocation and exercise of power. Although this study veered away from conventional approaches, it still suffers from the traditional tendency to make a typology of regimes based on Aristotelian concepts modified by Dahl. Hence the nine states in Asia and the Pacific are categorized into

1. Leninist states representing essentially a monopoly of power by the state or party as master of the state.
2. Democratic states representing a regime in which the officers of the state are selected by society by contestation in a free environment.
3. The authoritarian, semi-authoritarian and semi-democratic states representing varying degrees in between of the state’s influence over society or society’s influence over the state.

This study has also tried to establish a paradigm of political trends based on the above-mentioned model illustrated in Figure 1 (Ichimura and Morley 1988, 44–45).

Figure 1
Paradigm of Political Trends

Direction \ Extent	Reformist	Transformationist
Liberalizing	Consultation	Democratization
Conservatizing	Co-optation	Authoritarianization

Although this typology has incorporated a paradigm of political trends to reduce the mechanical nature of the model, it nevertheless neglects the *arena* or policy areas in which the state and society interact. The extent to which each regime performs its tasks may be a combination of both reformist and transformationist means, and it is debatable whether a liberalizing direction is pursued in *all* policy areas. In other words, while China, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Laos have shown some liberalizing trends in economic activities (the development dimension), party leaders in these countries are less keen to pursue the same approach in other policy areas (security and political participation).

A Three-Dimensional Model

The paradigm rooted in Aristotelian epistemology is inappropriate for studying Asian political systems. For in these systems the relationship between state and society is more complex and multidimensional than in Western ones. And liberal democratic values, structures and functions—if they exist at all—constitute only *one dimension of state-society relations*. Furthermore, in

Asian societies, change largely involves adjustment and coexistence between opposing forces, rather than conflict playing itself out through an objective dialectical process. Or to put it another way, in Asian societies, political cultures, structures, functions and processes are mixed.

The relationship between state and society in developing nations is a three-dimensional one, namely security (S), development (D) and participation (P), and the resultant political processes involve interaction among these three dimensions. Here “democracy” is not a form of political system or a type of regime à la Aristotle, but a dimension of state-society relations which are in flux, adjusting to or coexisting and interacting with other dimensions of the state-society relationship.

The dominance of one dimension over the others is due to four major variables related to the state: ideological domination, institutionalization of structure, the capacity to control and utilize resources, and the adaptive capacity (or the capacity to escape the surrounding societal forces).

Hence, instead of using the Aristotelian concept of political change and development which views changes in terms of societal forces opposing and replacing one another in a progressive unilinear direction, the three-dimensional state model argues that Third World states encompass within themselves many apparent *contradictory* characteristics and structures, for example those of development and underdevelopment, democracy and authoritarianism, civilian and military rule, *at the same time*. These contradictory characteristics of Third World political systems are a reflection of their economic and social structures and the different modes of production—feudal capitalism and even socialist—that coexist within Third World societies. At the political level such structures and characteristics struggle against each other, but most of the time they also come to terms with each other and continue to coexist in uneasy harmony.

Figure 2 shows major characteristics of the Three-Dimensional State coexisting, interacting, without any single dimension or mode being capable of completely replacing the other.

Figure 2
The Three-Dimensional State: Major Characteristics

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Security Dimension</i>	<i>Participation Dimension</i>	<i>Development Dimension</i>
<i>Dominant Values</i>	Unity Stability Order Discipline Honor Valor	Equality Liberty Freedom Justice Participation	Modernity Progress Wealth Stability Continuity Efficiency
<i>Operating Structures</i>	Military Police Paramilitary	Participant political institutions	Bureaucracy Public enterprises The private sector
<i>Modes of Operation</i>	Unified operations command Hierarchical Authoritative	Contestation Bargaining Peaceful mutual adjustment Decentralized	Synoptic Centralized planning Technocratic Managerial
<i>Relationships with the Public</i>	Closed Mobilization Co-optative Suppressive	Open Voluntary Participatory	Dualistic (semi- open) Co-optative

The result is not synthesis which exists in one form (democracy, authoritarianism), but an evolving admixture with three dimensions coexisting.

Because there is no single enduring synthesis, it is impossible to speak of a political *system* and *politics* as an authoritative allocation of values of society. It is also difficult to apply concepts of legitimacy and consensus in such a complex situation, as in the cases of Burma and Kampuchea, since there are not only competing “primordial” loyalties (ethnic, cultural) but also highly complicated ideological values, operating structures, modes of operations and relationships which each group has with the public. The unsettled conflict in Kampuchea is a classic example of a

situation in which the Eastonian concept of politics became analytically “dysfunctional.”

The Three-Dimensional State model recognizes a long-standing fact: that a regime, no matter what type of power distribution it has, must pursue at least three goals in order to maintain its power.

Third World States’ Attempts for Legitimacy

It is this relatively all-encompassing legitimacy formula that forces rulers of Third World states to express concern for two other dimensions of the political systems—development and participation—that have gained increasing importance during the twentieth century in the world at large, and in the last four decades in the decolonized parts of the globe in particular. The rulers’ interest in these two dimensions of the political system is principally based on their recognition that they cannot achieve a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of their subjects (which would allow them to sustain themselves in power without excessive use of force) unless their preoccupation with security is tempered by their concern for the economic development of the people over whom they rule or, alternatively, their commitment to enlarge their popular base of support by providing increasing avenues for the participation of the citizenry in the political life of the country and in the choice of its rulers. Better still, if they are able simultaneously to appear committed to both developmental and participatory values, in addition to their commitment to the security of the state, their legitimacy among their countries’ populations is usually greatly enhanced.

This emphasis on development and participation in addition to security and state-building immensely complicates the task of Third World leaders for, as a result, the demands upon them have increased threefold as compared to the demands on the rulers of the early period of the absolutist state in Europe (for that is the comparable stage of development in terms of state-building that

most Third World states are at today). Those European rulers could single-mindedly pursue their goal of state-building without being bothered about escalating demands for political participation and economic redistribution. While the generation of national wealth was one of their major goals as well, this was pursued for the sake of augmenting the power of the absolutist state and, therefore, was an instrument of state-building and was accompanied by a strategy for the centralization of control over economic resources. It was not perceived by the rulers of the absolutist state as a part of a welfare ideology that was essential to their legitimacy formula.

Today the demonstration effect produced by the existence of the representative and welfare state in most parts of the industrialized world on the populations of the Third World states makes it imperative that Third World leaders swear by the values of development and participation if they are to achieve the minimum legitimacy necessary for them to carry out the work of governing their societies without the use of excessive and brutal force. The different ways in which they do this provide the variations on what can be called the SDP state, where S stands for security, D for development and P for participation. Theoretically these variations can range from SDP, where security is the paramount value, followed by development and participation in that order, to PDS where participation is the paramount value, followed by development and security in that order. The possible variations lying in between are, once again theoretically, SPD, DSP, DPS and PSD.

However, most post-colonial and most Southeast Asian regimes are likely to assign the highest value to security among the three objectives mentioned above. But, in some cases and for limited periods, participation—in the case of the Philippines just after the overthrow of Marcos—can temporarily reach the top of a particular government's political agenda. Such an ordering of priorities usually does not last very long and the insecurities of post-colonial state structures as well as of their regimes soon reassert themselves to make security the prime consideration once again. This happened in the Philippines once the euphoria generated

by the “People Power” revolution had declined. This means that for all practical purposes, there are only two types of states and regimes that we need to be concerned with in our analysis: the SDP state, where development takes precedence over participation, and the SPD state, where participation takes precedence over development. In both cases security remains the foremost objective of the governments concerned.

Nevertheless, even when in normal times security is accorded pride of place in governmental agendas around the Third World, including in Southeast Asia, there are two characteristics that distinguish one polity from another and one regime from the next. The first of these is the ordering of the development and participation priorities. In most Third World countries, development (at least as measured by GNP) takes precedence over participation. But there are enough Third World polities—like India and, currently, the Philippines and Argentina—where this equation between development and participation is reversed and maintained for a long enough period for the analyst to conclude that they form a subcategory of Third World polities in their own right.

The second distinguishing characteristic is the difference in the weightage accorded to security in relation to the other two objectives. Crudely put, this difference could vary from the order of ten to one (or more) to two to one (or less) between security and the next most important objective on the regime’s agenda. This difference in the relative weightage of objectives is, in fact, of greater importance in determining the character of a state and of its leadership than the ordering of developmental and participatory priorities vis-à-vis each other. This conclusion emerges from the simple consideration that the development-participation relationship, however important in its own right as an analytical problem, is in the case of the overwhelming number of Third World states basically a relationship between two secondary objectives. However, the relative importance of security on the one hand, and development and participation on the other, involves the relationship between a regime’s primary and secondary objectives (for further details see Ayoob and Chai-Anan 1988).

Each of these three objectives always influences the character and direction of the other two. It is, therefore, important to keep in mind the nature of contradictions in Third World polities and societies which are always in disequilibrium. Events tend to proceed not in a unilinear direction, but in a gyric manner. The principal object of politics, I believe, is a ceaseless effort to create an equilibrium which is at best conditional and short term in nature.

2

DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN ASIA: EVOLUTION OR IMPOSITION?

Introduction

THIS PAPER DISCUSSES ISSUES concerning the prospects for democracy and processes of democratization in Asia. The paper is based on a series of commissioned research papers which explored processes of political evolution in Southeast Asia.¹ A specific focus of the papers was on processes of political

Paper based on an “International Workshop on Democratization and Economic Development in Asia,” Foundation for Advanced Studies in International Development, Tokyo, 2–3 July 1992. With Bruce Koppel, Vice-President for Research and Education, East-West Center, Honolulu.

1. The papers are: Mohammed Jawhar, “Problems and Prospects for Transitions in Governance and Democratization: Malaysia”; Mikoto Usui, Yasunori Sone, Shinsuke Hirai, Ken Fujimura, Naonobu Minato, and Yumi Horikane, “Challenges and Opportunities for Innovations in Policy Dialogue and ODA Management”; Djisman Simandjuntak and Amir Santoso, “Problems and Prospects for Transition and Democratization in Indonesia”; Muthiah Alagappa, “The Political-Security System in the Pacific: Towards a New Equilibrium”; Chai-Anan Samudavanija, “Problems and Prospects for Transition in Governance and Democratization in Thailand”; Carolina G. Hernandez, “Problems and Prospects for Transition in Governance and Democratization: A Case Study on the Philippines”; Doh C. Shin, “On the Global Wave of Democratization; A Synthesis of Recent Research Findings.”

liberalization and democratization in selected countries and the domestic and regional factors which appear most significant in shaping these processes and their outcomes. The studies were designed in July 1992 at a seminar which reviewed perspectives on democratization in Asia and which considered the roles of bilateral aid donors in domestic and regional processes of democratization. A key objective of the research focus which followed was to examine processes and problems of democratization as issues within individual contexts of political evolution, as well as manifestations of the international diffusion and adoption of specific political ideologies, institutions, and practices.

Placing definition of democratization issues in the context of individual domestic processes of political change represents an important and distinguishing difference from many recent studies—which have concentrated heavily on determining degrees of conformance with particular institutional arrangements, practices, and standards—and was in fact a key reason why new studies were deemed necessary. This is not to say that the realities of international diffusion and adoption of democratic values and practices were to be ignored, but rather that they were not to be assigned preeminence *a priori*.

Consequently, this paper directly engages crucial questions about how to define and interpret domestic democratization processes in Asia as well as how to identify and assess the influences of external forces on these processes. The thrust of these questions can be stated this way: Is it meaningful to speak of processes of political democratization as if there is a single universal model which is operating or unfolding—albeit with some variation—or is it more substantive to speak of processes of political evolution which may share certain “universal” issues and properties in terms of democratic content, but the fuller evaluation of that content requires serious reference to both internal as well as external criteria? This question in turn leads to a second question: if external criteria are only of limited value in assessing the democratic content in specific patterns of political evolution, then which “local” norms should be used and how can we determine

and defend the authenticity of the processes which are shaping and maintaining these norms?

These questions are not simply grist for intellectual debate. They are potentially pivotal elements of both domestic and international political discourse on democracy and democratization. They speak, for example, to questions of legitimacy in domestic political organization and activity as well as to the concepts of conditionality and intervention in international political relations. Recent discussions of human rights and democracy in Asia (e.g., at the World Conference on Human Rights) have brought forward arguments that Western standards are culturally bound (i.e., not directly transferable) and that Western prescriptions for democratic choices are political anachronisms (i.e., imperialistic) in a post cold war world. These arguments stand in sharp contrast to views that there are already (as implied in the 1948 United Nations Declaration) or should be universal standards of human rights—including political rights—and that there is an undeniable international movement in support of political democratization—democratization, it should be added, with a limited set of conforming meanings.

But is this a debate about different principles or competing nuances? For example, is this a discourse which *overestimates* the requirements democracy in Asia has for appeals to universal norms by *underestimating* the authenticity of indigenously-formed democratic norms (what could be called the “orientalist” fallacy)? Is this a debate about the dictates of international interdependence and assumed rates and degrees of political convergence, or is the debate principally about the possibilities of a more open international system and the opportunities it would create for political diversity? Do the arguments represent opposing interpretations of contemporary history and what the consequent imperatives are for political evolution, or is the matter much simpler and are these arguments essentially between those who support and those who resist the extension of democracy and democratization?

The countries covered in the studies which underlie this paper are Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. We are

fully aware and completely accept that this is not a representative sample for Asia as a whole. Nevertheless, we do believe by speaking to themes which cross the cases rather than to the details of each case, we can lift the discussion to a higher plane where one can consider the wider relevance of issues.

Themes in the Democratization Debate

This paper will not offer a review of the resurgent interest in democracy and democratization issues among academic analysts. That would be a large task indeed inasmuch as that interest is quite vigorous and prolific. What is useful, however, is to convey a sense of the themes that occupy much of the discussion.

To begin with, it is important to note that discussions in the United States and Europe on issues of democracy and democratization have been strongly invigorated by developments in Eastern Europe in particular, but also by events within Asia—especially in the Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, and China. In contrast to an earlier period when experiences throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America generated serious pessimism about the prospects for democratization in what was then called the “developing world,” events in the 1980s led to a resurgence of academic interest in the causes, character, and consequences of democratization.

One important theme in these discussions is an optimism that democratic political evolution is a matter that can be encouraged and supported—a position that is tantamount to saying that democratic institutions and practices are possible virtually anywhere provided that they are appropriately designed and that there is sufficient political commitment to sustain them. This is in contrast to a deep pessimism that pertained for several decades, namely that various prerequisites for democratization were not widely distributed. A focus on prerequisites implied that where prerequisites were insufficient, democratic institutions and practices could not reasonably be expected to survive. Indeed, qualitative

studies of democracy have shifted away from a focus on identifying the necessary conditions for democracy as an end state and have moved toward more attention on *processes* of democratization.

There are three facets to this new optimism. The first, as discussed above, is that *democracies can be created*. This implies that the growth of democracy is not a peculiar or idiosyncratic cultural product. This leads to considerable attention to what can be called constitutional issues—how to design a democracy. The second is that *political variables are important*. This point may seem obvious, but a pessimism rooted in ideas about cultural prerequisites and economic determinism relegated political variables to marginal roles in analyses of democratization. This point says that while culture, economics, and history certainly matter, democracy is also a product of political variables. This leads to considerable attention to issues of legitimacy and renewed interests in comparative politics as a perspective on democratization. The third is that *strengthening civil society is both essential and feasible*. The new assumption is that a civil society can be strengthened through deliberate acts of institutional innovation and that the possibilities for these acts and for positive outcomes from them are not wholly constrained by existing social and cultural habits. This is a crucial point because while it acknowledges the importance of how a society is functioning for processes of political democratization, it does not concede that the social basis of democracy is immutable or even predictable. This leads to considerable attention to such matters as the roles of a free press, the importance of an equitable and efficient legal system, the need to overcome gender discrimination, and the significance of patterns of free association.

However, this leaves open numerous complex issues associated with the conceptualization of democracy and democratization. For example, as implied in the previous paragraph, there are understandings of democracy as a political system and there are interpretations of democracy as a way of life, implying a specific set of cultural and moral preferences. In recent years, buoyed perhaps by the fall of authoritarian regimes across a range

of cultural settings in Europe and Asia, minimalist definitions (focused on democracy as a political system only) have gained wider acceptance. However, within the terms of this apparent agreement, new issues have arisen.

One issue is a frequently confused distinction between political liberalization and democratization. There are often cases of political liberalization (e.g., civil service reforms, electoral reforms, deregulation of political parties and the press) which by themselves do not necessarily alter the fundamental responsiveness or accountability of a political system or of a specific government. Democratization, as a process, will undoubtedly include processes of political liberalization, but it will also include deepening the democratic content of existing political institutions. This can have implications ranging from conceptions of citizenship to the full range of relationships between a political system and civil society. The confusion between political liberalization and democratization stems, at least in part, from a continuing strong preference for international classifications and comparisons based on the common properties of political systems and quantitative indicators of democratic status. Such methods, based as they usually are on lists of attributes, inevitably focus on particulars at the expense of the whole. As analysts are discovering, specific policy changes and institutional innovations (e.g., electoral reform) from different political systems cannot always be treated as discrete or equivalent events for purposes of comparative assessments, at least not without extensive loss of confidence in the conclusions so generated. These changes need to be evaluated in the context of the political arrangements of which they are part and arguably from which they draw the majority of their content. For example, the significance of electoral reforms have to be assessed in the context of patterns of participation and financing.

Closely related is the important issue of democratic consolidation. Democratic consolidation does not amount to simply measuring stability, persistence, or duration of specific democratic political arrangements, although these are certainly important. These are not irrelevant indicators, but their focus tends to be

quantitative and as such they court the risk of confusing the persistence of specific democratic political arrangements with the democratic significance of those arrangements. The former may be important as benchmarks in transitions to democracy. The latter, in contrast, is the issue of democratic consolidation. Democratic consolidation refers to the longer-term quality of a political system's performance where quality refers to responsiveness, accountability, and orientation. Indeed, in some opinions, the challenge of democratic consolidation will prove to be a more difficult and time-consuming one than the transition issue. What is unclear is whether this caveat should be accepted at face value or whether it is a Trojan horse for the old cultural prerequisite argument.

The point is not simply one of academic musing. Understanding the causes of democratization (as compared to determinants or prerequisites of democracy) is a compelling issue: what is propelling democratic political change? The analysis is not so simple. To start with, a focus on processes of change (rather than on conditions or states of a system) raises several measurement issues. For example, many traditional measures of political democratization (e.g., rights of assembly and speech, functioning representative institutions, "rule of law," etc.) are static properties and are not readily amenable as indicators of a democratization process—except in the limited and sometimes erroneous sense of being presumed outcomes of that process. In other words, the presence of these attributes does not tell us categorically about the processes which yielded them, or more importantly, whether they are the products of processes of democratization or, for example, the consequences of various forms of authoritarian accommodation.² Concerns about this point are leading to the concession that for any specific case, there will most likely be

2. For example, the establishment of the *Batasan Pambansa* by Ferdinand Marcos did create a representative institution, but the process which did this had far more to do with the consolidation of authoritarian power in the Philippines than it did with democratization.

both internal and external (or domestic and international) causative and influencing factors. What is less clear—both conceptually and empirically—is what these are, how they function, and how they relate to each other.

Perspectives from Southeast Asia

The individual country studies on which this summary is based cover a wide range of issues, many of them idiosyncratic to the specific countries. As we noted in the introduction, we are drawing several major themes from the papers to organize our discussion. These themes are central to the countries covered in the papers and, we believe, are central issues for considering democratization issues in Asia generally. The issues we consider are democratization and economic development, NGOs, democratic consolidation, and external factors (security questions and democracy as an international cultural commodity).

Democratization and Economic Development

An assumption is often made that economic development is not simply a prerequisite for democracy, but that economic development inexorably leads to democratization. This is associated in particular with strong confidence in market-oriented economic processes as the best path to both economic development and political democratization. Asian experience, however, suggests that while there is an association between the adoption of market-oriented economic processes and the pace of economic development, the association between economic development and political democratization is much less certain. One reason is that market-oriented economic development in Asia has not meant the absence of a significant state role in the economy—compared to the ideology on this point in American and Europe. A second major reason, and one given special attention in the studies under review, is that there are two strong intervening variables in the relationship

between economic growth and political change: the structure of economic development (e.g., sectoral composition of productivity growth) and the political economy which governs the distribution of the benefits of economic development.

What is clear throughout the region, for instance, is that there is a significant association between economic inequalities and inequalities in the distribution of and access to political power. Put differently, political power is frequently mobilized and exercised to ensure that the advantages which accrue to concentrations of economic power are maintained. These political inequalities, in turn, are not simply associated with hierarchy in the political systems in which some systematically have more power than others. Hierarchy would only imply unequal distribution, but would not necessarily imply rigidity in that distribution—for example, through substantial constraints on mobility up (and down) the hierarchy. However, in the Asian context, the distribution of political power is frequently characterized by high degrees of segmentation. Segmentation means that hierarchies are defined by distinct levels that fix discontinuities in the distribution of power. Movement from one level to another is difficult at best. One important implication is that, effectively speaking, the hierarchy of political power is mirrored by a hierarchy of policy arenas. There are multiple political arenas with constraints on what kinds of issues can be mediated in which arenas, who are eligible to participate in which arenas, and what rules govern decision-making within each arena. This means that issues of democratization can be defined both within specific arenas as well as up and down the entire hierarchy.

Two additional important points follow. First, an overlay of democratic institutions and practices does not imply that these have equivalent political significance across the entire political system. This is crucial because it means that democracy cannot be viewed as a uniformly distributed political attribute associated with an assumed homogenous economic system, but rather that the progress of democratization has to be measured with explicit reference to the heterogeneity of an economy. And second, economic inequalities (and associated political inequalities) are often

neither temporary nor self-correcting. This is crucial because while many of the central requirements of economic development in Asia are frequently depoliticized (often at the urging of donors)—this to protect the imperatives of concerns such as macroeconomic stability, economic policy reforms, and market-oriented adjustment processes—issues in the structure of economic development nevertheless are fundamentally political because they build on and have consequences for the distribution of political power. Depoliticization in these circumstances has the direct effect of suppressing open discussion of the direct political consequences of economic adjustment. More than that, though, in a context of concentrated political power associated with concentrated economic power, depoliticization tends to perpetuate a myth that economic and political inequalities will adjust “of their own accord.”

In the Thai case, for example, economic development has been substantial and rapid but it has not led to fundamental changes in the character of the state. Thai society remains seriously bifurcated with a large proportion of the labor force still in agriculture, extensive landholding problems which have contributed to the growth of a substantial level of rural unemployment and rural and urban underemployment, and an overwhelming primate city in which is concentrated much of the country’s wealth and the vast majority of Thailand’s middle class. Discussions about prospects for the growth of a civil society and what kind of civil society can grow cannot ignore this bifurcation.

The characteristics of a civil society growing in the medium of a bifurcated state include the rise of what can be called *authoritarian pluralism*. Patterns of industrialization which depend strongly on natural resource exploitation but which occur in social contexts characterized by severe inequalities in control over those resources can seriously inhibit the emergence of a more participatory democracy. This point has been seen throughout the region, including all four countries covered in the papers being summarized here. This pattern will often lead to close alliances between business, military, and political power in order to ensure continued control of access to natural resource supplies at favorable

prices. One result is that industrialization becomes a source of intersectoral conflict—but not simply, as much development literature would have it, between the supporters of modernity and the followers of tradition, or between urban interests and rural interests. Intersectoral conflict in the context of authoritarian pluralism is between a corporate sector (military, bureaucrats, and business) and a people sector (agriculture and labor). For this reason, one of the challenges of effective democratization resides precisely in this intersectoral conflict and, more precisely, in the need to restructure the terms of this conflict.

A second result is that in an activist bureaucratic state, democratization is often viewed as a direct challenge to the continued hegemony of the bureaucracy and its allies. Here it is important to note that strengthening the political role of the private sector (i.e., the private corporate sector)—the thrust of much political and economic liberalization under the rubric of privatization (again under donor urging)—does not equal democratization, but rather, in the political economies of Asia, often yields instead what can be called *technocratization*, where politics is viewed as problematic and not related to the judicious use of political power. One part of society is empowered (although it is debatable whether this is more a case of reallocation between corporate interests and bureaucratic interests rather than any redistribution between the state and society), but the empowerment is associated with a depoliticizing of economic development. There is no evidence of a democratic political trickle down from technocratization, but rather of a further consolidation of political power by bureaucratic and corporate interests and often, further segmentation of the political system to ensure the security of that consolidation. For example, the levels of political power concentration in Indonesia appear to be higher than what would be required by the imperatives of macro-economic stability or even of economic growth more generally.

The success of the depoliticization project as a surrogate for democratization does frequently depend on economic performance. As long as the economic performance is there, the surrogate strategy of depoliticization appears defensible. If economic

development falters, however, elites are not inclined to blame the surrogate strategy of depoliticization but rather are often eager to blame democratization. The issue can be seen in the relationship between economic growth and the legitimacy of existing political arrangements in Malaysia. As long as the size of the overall economic pie continues to expand, it is possible for the political arrangements now in place to remain fundamentally acceptable to most parties. In effect, gains of one are not always seen as exclusively the loss of another. However, if the pie does not grow fast enough—or worse, if growth reverses—the legitimacy of the various arrangements which characterize Malaysian governance could be seriously shaken. Similarly, in the Philippines, a debate continues on the relative merits of democracy and “discipline,” with the latter appearing more attractive to many elites whenever economic performance falters.

In this context, the concept of good governance assumes several specific meanings. In the Malaysian case, for example, it means an attempt to achieve some leveling between the principal ethnic groups. It also means a fundamental paradox. The Chinese in Malaysia apparently accept Malay domination, but the principal ruling Malay party, UMNO, cannot rule by itself. The recognized need to become one nation has been viewed with the government’s economic aspirations in the form of the Vision 2020 plan which essentially says that Malaysia will be a fully developed economy by that time. The political challenges that lie ahead therefore are to establish one nation (and Malay identity), fostering and developing a mature democratic society, and promoting values that are consistent with Malay culture. These and a number of other challenges together reflect the government’s concept of comprehensive security, a security which refers to the requirement that Malays overcome their insecurity. This, in turn, permits a single nation to emerge. For example, in earlier years, the threat to internal security was connected with a communist insurgency. That was defeated and today the threats to security come from federal-state relations and from a growing constituency for Islamic fundamentalism.

An important implication which follows is that structuring democratic institutions and perfecting definitions of democracy are not enough. As the Philippine case illustrates, it is equally important to focus on the outcomes of democratization. What are the consequences and for whom? While as noted above, patterns of economic development structure the possibilities for democratization (a position which would see a positive relationship between breaking up excessive concentrations of economic power and opening up the possibilities for effective democratization), patterns of democratization also have to be assessed in terms of their consequences for economic processes and the welfare of specific social groups. In the Malaysian case, there is an “official” concern about ownership of economic assets and in the Indonesian and Philippine cases there have been high public challenges by the governments to the most egregious forms of economic concentration. Nevertheless, throughout the region, these two issues—the political consequences of high concentrations of economic power and the economic consequences of democratization—have not received much sustained or serious analytical attention.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Given the strong concerns throughout the region about trajectories of depoliticization which tend strongly in elitist directions, it is understandable that increasing interest has emerged in the political significance and roles of NGOs. This interest comes from within the countries, as well as from a variety of external sources ranging from many Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) donors (many of which are very enthusiastic about working with and through NGOs) to private and charitable foundations and NGOs in the United States and Europe. Both the assumption and the hope are that NGOs help to build a foundation for participative rather than elite democracy. The basis of the assumption and the hope is that NGOs are the leading edge of an emerging civil society, i.e., of voluntary and private forms of politically significant association in the public interest.

An interesting theoretical and practical issue which arises in Southeast Asia is deciding when and if NGOs are distinct from political parties. The usual consideration is that political parties are organized in order to contest and acquire political power and control the government. NGOs, in the distinction frequently offered, are seen as interested in how power is exercised and by whom, but as not being interested in the direct acquisition of power, especially at the national level. This leads to such distinctions as between service-oriented NGOs (which tend to focus on welfare) and advocacy-oriented NGOs, which might focus on political reform. However, all of this appears less compelling on closer examination. Clearly, NGOs can have political significance highly analogous to that associated with political parties. In the same way, some political parties can clearly have political interests highly comparable to those associated with NGOs.

For example, in the Philippines during the Marcos years, the NGO community was often the base of the noncommunist political opposition to Marcos. In some interpretations, the NGO movement in the Philippines was a key element in ending the Marcos period and bringing Corazon Aquino to power. In fact, the NGO community expected much from the Aquino government and was prepared to work closely with her government. When, in the NGO view, the Aquino government failed to deliver on several fundamental items (e.g., agrarian reform), the community increasingly went off on its own. The Aquino government, in its final year, sought to re-energize the alliance between government and NGOs through initiation of the *Kabisig* (literally “holding hands”) movement, and there was some success in terms both of voter mobilization and ultimately electoral success in the 1992 Presidential elections. In effect, the NGOs—while not political parties in terms of fielding their own candidates and directly contesting for power—nevertheless played important roles in the infrastructure of political competition.

While the Philippine NGO community today is not in a confrontational relationship with the government, neither is it tightly wedded to the government. However, increased attention to the political potential of NGOs (in terms of voter mobilization) along

with increased attention from the donor community led to the emergence of many NGOs whose authenticity as peoples' organizations was suspect. For example, local elites began forming their own NGOs, not least in order to gain a share of various outside and domestic funding pools allocated for NGO support. Indeed, this led to a distinction in the Philippine parlance between NGOs and POs (people's organizations). The split was symptomatic of a broader problem in the political significance of the NGO movement throughout many parts of Asia: the relationships between the growth of NGOs on one hand, and on the other hand the emergence of new elites and the re-sanctification of old elites—legitimized in both instances by their NGO affiliations but not necessarily responsive to or supportive of democratic forces.

NGOs operate in sociopolitical contexts which both help to explain their form and function and which play important roles in defining their possibilities. Several issues emerge. One, already noted, is assessing the political significance of NGOs and beyond that, assessing their significance in terms of democratization. Here it is instructive to consider continuities within specific countries in terms of the political roles of nongovernmental organizations. One place to look for continuities is in the traditional roles of religious-based organizations. The role of the Catholic Church in the Philippines traditionally extended into the political arena. Traditionally, the church did this essentially by defending and even rationalizing the political order. It is important to recognize that the Philippine revolution in the early years of the twentieth century was channeled through religious-based organizations. Similarly, some of the most powerful criticism of Marcos came from the church, a critique which played an important role in undermining the regime's legitimacy.

Both Indonesia and Malaysia face the issue of how to manage Islamic organizations whose political agendas are potentially quite explicit in terms of de-secularizing the state. In the Indonesian case, the national ideology of *Pancasila* is a basis for precluding explicit political roles by Islamic organizations. In the Malaysian case, the issue is more contentious and indeed, is a major theme in

contemporary politics. By comparison, the role of the temple in Thai society has been much more focused on social welfare issues. The temple has not been associated with either defense or criticism of state power. The types of roles NGOs have assumed in the four countries have been strongly influenced by this background. For example, NGOs have assumed explicit political roles in Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, but in these cases there are important differences in the continuities and discontinuities represented by this form of group action.

A related and more general point is that throughout Asia, NGOs often reflect characteristics of the societies in which they function. This point has to be carefully assessed in considering the significance of NGO umbrella organizations. These organizations have several origins, ranging from experience with foreign donors on one side to government-sponsored affiliations and sponsorship on the other. In many cases, these organizations exhibit the same hierarchical preferences that can be seen in the broader political and bureaucratic systems.

Other issues relate to the localism of NGOs. Grassroots organizations may be NGOs, but not all NGOs are grassroots organizations. There are questions about the role of NGOs as extensions of domestic political forces as compared to NGOs as extensions of external political and economic forces. There is the question of linkages between first-world and third-world NGOs. These linkages often take the form of significant financial subsidization, but also can take the form of ideological orientation as well. Similarly, there is the issue of interrelationships among large NGOs and small NGOs within a country as well as between countries.

For example, Malaysia has an estimated 100 issue-oriented NGOs. In the government's view, many of the NGOs are foreign supported and represent attempts to inject foreign-supported positions into the Malaysian situation. Examples include Iranian-supported Islamic fundamentalist NGOs and NGOs with Western support who press for various positions within the Malaysian political arena. As a result, for some time the government's attitude

towards NGOs was highly restrictive. Lately, the government is relaxing this position somewhat and NGOs are being invited to participate in various government-NGO consortia. Nevertheless, the government maintains a substantial suspicion of the NGOs.³

Democratic Consolidation

The transition to more democratic politics and political organization is an important theme in political evolution throughout Asia. However, the political transition is not the only major transition underway. There are three principal transitions which can be seen operating throughout Southeast Asia: economic liberalization, political democratization, and redefinition of citizenship. The first two are widely recognized and their interrelationships are the subject of the now classic *glasnost-perestroika* formulation. However, as experience in Eastern Europe has also demonstrated, the formulation is profoundly incomplete without reference to ongoing transitions in the redefinition of citizenship. The redefinition of citizenship refers to processes which establish the boundaries of nationhood, not simply in spatial terms but in ethnic, racial, religious, gender, class and other social and cultural terms. The boundaries of nationhood are crucial because they establish the basic social and political space for political evolution. Expanding the boundaries of citizenship can be associated with a broadening of civil society and more inclusive democratic politics. Restricting the boundaries of citizenship can be associated with patterns of exclusion and discrimination which narrow the articulation between democratic politics and the broader society and arguably, in more extreme cases, subordinates the political order to the dictates of citizenship.

3. Along with China and Bangladesh, Malaysia took the lead in pushing for the exclusion of NGOs from the Vienna conference on human rights.

The challenge of democratic consolidation is to negotiate the terms of a balance among these multiple transitions, a balance that needs to embody the clear priority of democratic content across all three transitions. The studies point out that questions of democratic consolidation need to be placed firmly in the context of state-society relations. This says that while minimalist definitions of democracy may be acceptable as characterizations of the democratic content in processes of political evolution, processes of democratic consolidation cannot be assessed in narrow or mechanistic terms. The notion of democratic consolidation implies no less than a relationship between the political system and the society of which it is part. This is the reason that consolidation also stands to be a more complex challenge than what can be called the transitional challenge.

Consolidation means developing linkages between a political system and a society which ensure that the democratic content in the political system will be nurtured, protected, and respected. This implies economic practices which do not systematically subvert principles of open competition, and this implies concepts of nationhood and citizenship which do not systematically assign differential rights based on social or cultural attributes. Two types of consolidation strategies follow from the notion of democratic consolidation as a balance, and both can be seen in Asian political debates.

Democratic consolidation as a balance can be viewed partly as a social compact which establishes basic relationships among the multiple transitions. This can be seen as a constitutional strategy. Constitutional strategies seek to combine an acknowledgment of contemporary differences in forms and levels of power with the values of stability and predictability in future relationships among the transitions. It is a fundamentally conservative strategy which treats deviation from a defined balance as problematic.

Democratic consolidation as a balance also has to be viewed as an agreement that democratic principles and qualities will characterize both the processes which adjust relationships across the transitions as well as the objectives of those processes. This can be seen as an ideological strategy. Ideological strategies view

existing relationships among transitions as passing and are focused more on establishing agreement about where change is going and how the change will occur.

It is in the context of these strategies—both constitutional and ideological—that one can ask questions about whether democratic processes can be introduced, and whether they can be sustained. At this level, the issue of democratic consolidation basically asks: What factors and indicators are most crucial in supporting a judgment that democratic innovations can be sustained, whether they were endogenously formed, borrowed from elsewhere, or both? Consolidation clearly refers to institutionalization and maintenance, at the least within the political system and ultimately between the political system and a committed civil society. There is also a crucial additional criterion: democratic consolidation implies a very low likelihood of reversibility.

However, in Southeast Asia, these guidelines have to be tested in political crucibles where civil-military relationships have not all been settled in a manner or to a degree that ensures the security of democratically-determined political choices; where concentrations of significant economic power along with the persistence of significant levels of poverty and social exclusion raise serious concerns about the implications of an incomplete civil society for the durability of democratic processes; and where questions about the relationships between the growth of middle classes and their demonstrated commitment to the values of stability raise concerns about premature closure on democratic consolidation.

External Factors

Three external factors appear to be especially important as influences affecting prospects for democratization. One is the question of security issues and how these relate to statism, the role of the military, and the values placed on unity. A second area is cultural and focuses on the question of democracy as an international cultural commodity. And the third is foreign aid and the roles of donor countries in particular as explicit agents of change.

Security and Democratization

Concerns about internal security have been a well-established feature of both support for and resistance to democratization in many parts of Asia. Concerns about internal security have led to the adoption of political liberalization and democratic reforms in several cases. These steps have been taken as part of efforts to strengthen regime legitimacy (in both domestic and foreign circles) and to weaken support for insurgent elements in particular—for example, by holding out the possibility of orderly government change. The problem frequently encountered in these cases, both in Asia and elsewhere, is that the commitment to these steps has tended to erode as the challenges presented by insurgents have receded.

Concerns about internal security also have been associated with persistent resistance to political liberalization and democratic reforms. This is because problems of internal security are seen as making open political competition potentially destabilizing and divisive, especially in multiethnic societies. In other cases, concerns about insurgent ideologies have placed a high value on indications of loyalty and support and have significantly depreciated the legitimacy of opposition politics. Finally, the requirements of political stability for economic growth and confidence have generated cautious reactions to political evolution which would introduce external perceptions of domestic political instability and thus threaten the continuity of economic growth policies.

Concerns about regional security have been an important element as well in political debates about democratization in Asia. Before the end of the cold war, discussions of regional security and the discussions of prospects for democratization within specific countries were distinct discussions. This distinction reflected the low institutionalization (compared to Eastern Europe) of the security discussion, and the hostility throughout the Asia-Pacific region to political conditionalities in international relations. The latter theme still functions (e.g., the Thai-Myanmar relationship). However, rudimentary relationships appear to be developing in Asia among

three issues: economic interdependence, regional security, and political development.

There are important changes underway in the structure of international political, economic, and security relations in the region and in the prospects for domestic political evolution in specific countries. These changes include the increasing power within the Asia-Pacific region of China and Japan. There are also the increasingly important indicators of growing regional interdependence, but a regionalism for which the United States by itself cannot be a prime supporter—as was the case in the emergence, for example, of ASEAN. This is due to the growing economic power of the region, the strains on the American economy, and the growth of middle rank powers (Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Indonesia) whose rise weakens American hegemony. This also reflects an important underlying change in the structure of international relations within and affecting the region: there is the absence of a permanent political and security polarization overlay. Against this background, overall political change is likely to be incremental. Changes in the structure of interaction between states, however, will lead to changes in the structure of international relations in the region. This will make the question of regional norm-setting in matters related to security, human rights, and democratization increasingly important. This point has been recognized through recent regional initiatives on security and human rights.

Democracy as an International Cultural Commodity

There is a substantial body of opinion in Asia which argues against the direct transfer of democratic standards and strategies from external sources. This argument actually takes two forms. One form says that each country needs to discover and apply its own unique democratic definitions and solutions. This does not exclude the possibility of borrowing parts of these from the experience and practice of others, but the validation would lie not in the practices themselves or where they came from, but rather in the determination of their appropriateness in the cultural and historical

circumstances of a particular country. The notion of a universal democratic norm is only accepted in the broadest sense—that it legitimates local determinations of what the norm means. There is a second view which agrees that there cannot be a successful literal transfer of democratic strategies from one cultural and political context to another. However, from this perspective, there are reservations that a relativist position about the meaning of democracy implies that there are no widely accepted standards or norms as to what constitutes democratic institutions and behavior. For example, there is the idea of an ethical universalism in support of democratization which cannot be falsified because a particular government or party finds it inconvenient.

The debates on this point appear most vigorous where there are difficulties in the transitions affecting concepts of citizenship. Implicit in Western concepts of democracy are standards regarding human rights. These rights are only narrowly political. They have broader reference to social and cultural expression and are therefore foundations of citizenship as well as political democracy. In Asia, the individualism associated with these standards is often attacked as incompatible with many Asian cultural emphases on the group. In other cases, explicit concerns are raised, especially in multiethnic situations, that acceptance of a conflictual political process, based on the legitimacy of opposing individual views along with rights of free association, would be formulas for communal conflict and severe internal instability.

For example, in evaluating how much democracy Malaysia has achieved, the argument is often made that progress has to be measured in terms consistent with Malaysia's situation and not against criteria that may be acceptable in other more advanced settings. For example, there are difficult issues of culture and education and the issue of the role of vernacular education. To what degree does vernacular education perpetuate ethnic differences that are problematic? Arguments such as these have led to discussions about a communitarian rather than a Western liberal perspective on democratization. The communitarian perspective defines rights in terms of social groups and the

importance of stable relations (i.e., non-conflictual relationships) among groups. The significance of participation in political democratization rests on definitions of citizenship. Those definitions are made in terms of membership in social groups. To use the distinction made earlier, democratic consolidation in this mode is principally constitutional: it seeks to fix intergroup relations as a framework within which democratic content can be defined and institutionalized.

Proposals for communitarian democracy should be distinguished from concerns about “over-democracy.” In some cases these are expressions referring to dangers of instability and can be associated with a minimalist perspective. They are often associated with underdeveloped party systems, difficulties of managing political conflict, policy gridlock, indecisive governance, etc. There is also a maximalist perspective on problems of over-democracy which is closely tied to a fundamental critique of the liberal model of democracy. This critique focuses on the association between liberal democracy and what are frequently viewed as social and cultural excesses. Rather than a democracy characterized by the clash of individual interests and the consequent dissolution of social and moral standards, a democratic process is needed that is characterized by stability, peace and order, the upholding of shared moral and cultural values, and the priority of communitarian interests.

The question of communalism versus individualism also needs to be addressed in the context of economic scarcity. Cultural diversity often appears to be more tolerable when the perceived senses of economic scarcity are limited. When perceptions of scarcity run strong, then attention can turn in various directions for criteria to govern the allocation of scarce resources and services. In these circumstances, criteria associated with the hegemony claims or aspirations of a particular group can effectively convert the reality of cultural diversity to a reality of cultural stratification.

Finally, in several quite fundamental ways, the debate between communalism and individualism hinges on the often subtle dividing

lines between consensus, conformity, and compliance—in particular, how these lines are defined and enforced. In principle, the idea of democracy is associated with ideas about access and participation. Democratic access and participation are assumed to be the products of unforced choices freely made. In specific social and political contexts, “democratic” behaviors which may yield indicators of high consensus (e.g., voting characterized by very high majorities) may not necessarily represent expressions of endorsement or agreement, but rather may reflect more conservative patterns of conformity with pre-democratic forms of leadership and decision-making. The latter could happen, for example, where patterns of economic relationships (e.g., high incidence of tenancy in a rural area) have created expectations for conformity with local leadership or, more generally, where community leadership remains wedded to older autocratic modes even though the broader system may have formal democratic characteristics. Where conformity is essentially imposed (e.g., through single-candidate elections or compromises in ballot secrecy), then the consensus becomes compliance and processes of participation reflect the exercise of state power more than the articulation of popular voice.

Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and Democratization

Bilateral foreign aid has had some history of supporting processes of democratization in Asia, especially in the Indochina states and in the Philippines. As elsewhere, this support has taken two major forms. Support that *indirectly* and implicitly supports democratization has focused on economic development, infrastructure provision, health and education, and domestic security. In different ways, each of these was rationalized, at least in part, by the impacts they could or did have on prospects for democratization. Support that *directly* and explicitly supports democratization has been much less frequent. In these cases, the focus historically has been on

assistance for managing elections, educational opportunities for legislators and senior policy makers, and assistance for members of the press. In recent years, donor relationships with NGOs have expanded and in so doing, have represented an important bridge across both the direct and indirect paths associating ODA and democratization.

Nevertheless, it would be appropriate to say that for some time the links between aid and progress towards democratization in Asia were tenuous.⁴ In a few recent instances, however, movement away from democratization and concerns about human rights abuses (e.g., in Burma, China, and Thailand) were made a basis for suspension of aid by some donors. With the recent surge of interest in democratization, donors are looking more explicitly at how their aid can be used to support processes of democratization. In Asia, this shift in strategy is juxtaposed with several other issues. These include the role of ODA to middle-income countries (especially in Southeast Asia); issues of persistent poverty (especially in South Asia); and interactions of trade, aid, and international political relations (especially with China). All these matters together—along with constraints on aid budgets faced by many donors—pose significant challenges for existing donor capacities and preferred modalities for functioning.

4. Although considerable aid (especially to Indochina in the 1950s and 1960s) was rationalized as supporting democracy and in some instances was increased because of political reforms in those states, overall these steps are more properly characterized as support for anticommunism rather than support for democratization *per se*. Similarly considerable support to Pakistan and the Philippines in the 1970s and 1980s was occasionally advertised as support for democratization, but its primary purposes were related to international and regional security issues. Finally, the efforts of several donors during the 1980s to encourage economic policy reforms supportive of more market-oriented economic processes were sometimes described in terms of their consequences for democratization, but these consequences were not the pivotal point for determining how much aid would be provided or when it would be released.

As already noted, in the studies under view, there was a common call for new modes of relationships with donors. The democratization issue requires donors to have considerably broader and deeper understanding of domestic political processes in recipient countries. The democratization issue also requires donors to proceed very carefully in their relationships with domestic groups in recipient countries to avoid compromising indigenous democratization processes. Four themes capture the focus of this assessment on the roles of ODA and democratization in Asia: strengthening good governance, working with Asian NGOs, promoting democratization, and understanding the limits of bilateral influence.

ODA and Good Governance

A key issue in ODA strategies to support democratization in Asia is the matter of good governance. However, can ODA contribute to strengthening good governance? Good governance can be viewed as a compromise between the imperatives laid out by the ethical universalism of democracy and the possibilities permitted by the dictates of political prudence. However, in the Southeast Asian context, the issue of good governance has to be examined carefully. Is good governance an instrument of power or is good governance power itself? If good governance is interpreted strictly as the latter, the results may simply be efforts to make a nondemocratic government more efficient or less corrupt. There are numerous examples of this outcome throughout Asia.

The real question, and the deeper challenge of good governance, is that accepting the principle of good governance makes the exercise of power instrumental. This, in turn, forces the question: for whom and for what purposes is power being used? In a democratizing society the presumption will be that in some nontrivial sense the answer to the question will be: for the people and for purposes they deem important through meaningful representative expressions.

In one sense this means that ODA in support of good governance must focus on reforms *within* government. This focus

becomes necessary because the bureaucracy frequently will not be sympathetic to political liberalization and democratic initiatives which appear to require reductions in their prerogatives. However, this focus does not mean that ODA should be *state-centric*. The larger challenge of good governance in Asia is to strengthen the capacities of the civil society both to support and if necessary to demand its role in determining how power is both used and limited. What this means for the question of how ODA can relate to good governance is that external pressures in favor of good governance must be strongly *social-centric*.

ODA to support good governance and democratization must be directed at specific social groups rather than at the state as such. In cases such as the Philippines and Thailand, but also in many other developing-country circumstances, aid which has the effect of strengthening the existing state (e.g., by making the bureaucracy more efficient) will not by itself guarantee the growth of authentic democratization processes. For ODA to support good governance, aid which improves the efficiency of governing must be accompanied by aid which strengthens the role of the governed. This means that new forms of policy dialogue are needed between donors and recipient countries, but dialogues which go beyond the existing state-to-state format. To support such dialogues, donors will need to develop much more subtle understandings of democratization processes in recipient countries.

One strategy which is recognized in most countries (although not necessarily equally feasible) is grassroots research which generates greater understanding of how the social sector is configured and performing. The term “grassroots” is used to convey the importance of getting a perspective that is from the foundations of an emerging civil society. A second strategy proceeds from the need to recognize that prospects for democratic outcomes in specific countries reflect the peculiarities of different histories. This argues for qualitatively-oriented case studies developed along lines that are very sensitive to indigenous concepts and concerns.

ODA and Asian NGOs

For most bilateral donors, the principal recent entry point to the issue of democratization in Asia has been work with Asian (and donor country) NGOs. Three issues concerning the relationships among donors, Asian NGOs, and democratization were identified in the studies: selection, funding, and “ownership.”

The selection issue relates to what types of NGOs are identified, what criteria are used to make these choices, and what processes are employed to apply the criteria. Concerns have arisen about selection for several reasons. First, there are concerns about the range of issues that donors appear to want to associate with NGOs. The general conclusion now is that donors should use NGOs especially for people-oriented issues such as community forestry, election monitoring, skills training, etc. However, as the election-monitoring example sometime illustrates, both governments and nationalist forces (who may otherwise be opposed to their government) are suspicious that the NGOs are not being supported in their own right but rather as instruments for a donor’s political agenda. From this perspective, there are serious concerns that when donors rely heavily on NGOs, what they are attempting to do is to blunt the sharper edge of their political intervention.

Second, there are concerns about in-country hierarchies among NGOs. Some argue that donors should function through “umbrella” organizations for NGOs rather than with NGOs directly. Others argue that umbrella organizations can represent NGOs whose principal asset is their familiarity with donor procedures and accessibility to donor overtures. The implication is that such NGOs would not necessarily be in touch with or sympathetic to the range of NGO interests in the country. Related to this is a concern coming from more grassroots NGOs that umbrella NGOs simply reflect hierarchies of power in the society at large. Indeed, in several countries, umbrella organizations which are basically federations of large NGOs have emerged. However, these are being alienated from more grassroots organizations. This is because

a very high proportion of umbrella NGO funds come from outside (usually international) sources. Finally, umbrella NGOs have not escaped the problems of bureaucratization. From this perspective, working through umbrella NGOs may not offer significant advantages over working with state institutions directly.

The issue of funding is developing into a sensitive issue on several fronts. One reason is that NGOs in general are vulnerable to high dependence on individual donors. This is problematic, as will be noted below, where ambiguity arises as to who “owns” the NGO. Where NGOs have or are believed to have political roles, the dependence on donor funding can compromise the integrity of the NGOs and of the evolving democratic processes of which they are presumably a part. The availability of funding—often actively promoted—has encouraged the formation of NGOs in several countries, but the organizations so formed and their explicit dependence on donor funding raise serious questions. In the Philippines, for example, a distinction is made between NGOs and POs. POs are people’s organizations and are viewed as more authentic. NGOs may be people’s organizations, but their authenticity is considered more tentative.

The issue of ownership follows from the issues of selection and funding. Donor selection represents more than a form of endorsement. In the political and funding environment throughout Asia, donor selection of an NGO often represents empowerment. Donor funding endows an NGO with the resources to function. In these circumstances, subtle problems can arise on the part of the NGOs and those they deal with. Are the NGOs free associations acting independently or are they the agents of those who fund them? This question is often brought into sharp relief by donors themselves who take several steps which more closely bind the identity of the NGO to the donor. These steps range from high visibility and frequent visits to the NGO organized by the donor to incorporation of the NGO into the donor’s budgeting practices. By insisting, for example, on exemption of the NGO from conventional in-country budgeting practices, the effect is to highlight that the NGO is in the donor’s orbit.

As the democratization process unfolds, and as countries move into phases where relationships between political change, economic reform, and redefinition of citizenship and social rights become more open and politicized, the scope of voluntary group action may increase beyond technical matters to explicitly political issues. It will be important in these instances for donors to be cautious about what constitutes an NGO as compared, for example, to a political faction. This characterization cannot be based on abstract classifications, but must instead be clearly based on an understanding of the political significance of these organizations in their own political and cultural contexts. This understanding will also have to make a distinction between a government's assignment of political significance to NGOs (a step which can come very fast) and an independent assessment which considers the validity of an assignment in terms of broader state-society relationships. At the same time, donors will need to give very careful attention to how relationships with NGOs can be best defined and managed from the perspective of contributing to the construction of a strong and independent civil sector. This raises issues not only for donors, but for recipient country governments as well, since they too may have interests in NGOs as "development partners."

Several implications follow. The clearest of these is that working with NGOs will require new forms of policy dialogue, involving donors, government, and NGOs. This issue has to be seen at several levels. Country-specific forums are needed, but these need to be trilateral, involving governments, donors, and NGOs. However, this will not always be feasible, especially where NGOs are viewed with suspicion by government and most especially where governments may see explicit alliances between donors and NGOs as political intervention. From another side, however, it is important to recognize that NGOs are often at the forefront of independent political activity and group action and are a foundation for the building of open political dialogue. From yet another side there is the complex issue of co-optation. NGOs have become very wary of their relationships with both their own governments and foreign donors and foundations. This is the reverse side of the

ownership issue discussed earlier—the issue of NGOs having to sacrifice their independence as a price for funding and worse, as a cost of legitimating. The failure to handle this issue sensitively—especially by donors—can seriously complicate efforts to build independent group action.

Consequently, issues in the regulation and suppression of NGOs have become a key playing field for the formation of a civil society and not coincidentally also for the exercise of state resistance to expanding social and political rights. This establishes an important line, a line that holds significant promise from a democratization perspective, but which also holds considerable danger if the reality of the line is miscalculated or underestimated. For example, NGOs can be labeled by the state as political groups (rather than technical or charitable organizations only) early on. This kind of labeling in many parts of Asia can disqualify NGOs from receiving donor support (this would be political intervention) and from protected status in domestic political arenas as well (by virtue of being nonpolitical).

There is an important additional point. Where this line between strengthening the civil society and inviting repression actually lies varies across the region and is at the core of a debate about the meaning of human rights in the Asian context. Donors have to be careful about their involvement in this debate. However, one role donors can play is to support the process of regional norm-setting. Donors can recognize that there is a need for regional forums across several countries that permit cross-national dialogue among NGOs as well as among governments and donors. Dialogues are needed in several forums beyond the traditional government-to-government mode: within donor governments; between officials and NGOs within donor countries; among international NGOs; among NGOs in one country; between government and NGOs in one country; expanding bilateral donor-recipient dialogues to include other parties (NGOs); and initiating regional multilateral dialogues involving donors, NGOs, and recipient country officials (on policies, not projects). Multilateral forums are important not so much for what they can contribute to consensus building (although this is

important, especially in terms of norm-setting), but for the roles such forums can play in clarifying expectations that donors, recipients, NGOs, and others will have of each other.

Donor involvement with NGOs did not originally emerge as part of commitments to support democratization. In most cases, NGOs were seen as offering a more efficient alternative to state agencies for implementing projects addressing a range of rural development and rural resource management issues. This is still true, even given the link of NGOs to participatory development. This is because principles of participatory development have been applied by donors to projects, but not to the basic relationships between state and society. Nevertheless, NGOs are certainly a visible step into a democratization strategy. However, beyond the specifics of NGOs, what roles can donors play in the democratization process?

Promoting Democratization

As noted earlier, the studies emphasized the importance of avoiding the imposition of essentially imported strategies. In other words, solutions and paths need to be found that will function within specific historical, political and cultural circumstances. A second conclusion is that bilateral conditionalities to pressure democratization choices have been neither effective nor ethical. However, multilateral conditionalities, i.e., agreement and coordination in the donor community to support certain democratization paths, could be considerably more effective and can avoid the ethical problems of one country, in effect, dictating matters of domestic political choices to another country. The assumption in some quarters would be that the donor community as a whole is a more credible representative of wider norms than any individual bilateral donor. This interpretation can be applied, for example, to the role of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC).

However, it is unlikely that the donor community—even in the form of a multilateral approach—will always be able to substantiate a role in this area. Throughout the region, for example,

the number of business people who are highly educated is growing. More generally, the size of the middle class in countries across the region is growing. These are developments which can be associated with greater demands for greater government efficiency, less corruption, and possibly the adoption of democratic values. However, these are also developments which can be associated with greater confidence in the articulation of indigenous norms and the rejection of externally-imposed norms. Earlier waves of NGOs that focused on religious-philosophical and intellectual issues are being supplanted by a new wave of NGOs with stronger political orientations. These too can be associated with possible commitments to democratic values, as well as commitments to indigenously identified strategies for realizing these values, and suspicions about the roles of foreign capital and interests in domestic political processes. In this context, what is the role of ODA? Foreign capital, as such, is seen as supplementary, i.e., it is not necessarily seen as posing a problem for nationalism. The problem arises around perceived conditionalities. While most countries in the region have been willing to accept economic advice from donors, they have been much less willing to consider noneconomic conditionalities. This is not to say that nothing can be done. Several things can be done with existing ODA programming that have strong potential to support democratic processes.

One way is to ask who gets the ODA. Democratization can be supported more if more ODA goes to sectors such as health, education, and rural infrastructure—sectors which are more likely to reach the economically and politically less well off. Second, regional (within ASEAN, for example) dialogues on good governance supported by ODA can help create a more conducive environment for democratization. The dialogue could consider perspectives on human rights. This would be especially valuable since there are no regional arrangements or forums for this purpose at present. Inadequate and obsolete norms and institutional arrangements within the region are creating a strong need to develop and operationalize norms and standards for good

governance, democratization, and international cooperation in support of these. The absence of regional norms and of processes to develop such norms constitutes a significant impediment to sustainable international cooperation in support of democratization.

These points illustrate that the influence donors can have on democratization need not be confined to explicit patterns of influence on political reform in the political system. Another example resides in the relationships between the demands of economic growth and the requirements for political stability. Donors have often accepted the argument that economic growth requires soft authoritarianism. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent to many that this relationship is considerably more complex. For example, the early phases of macroeconomic reform appear to benefit from a political environment which does not subject the reforms to challenge. However, as macroeconomic reforms proceed and sectoral reforms unfold, experience in Asia suggests that sustaining these reforms (rather than simply adopting or initiating them), requires forms of constituency development and mobilization that can benefit from processes of political liberalization and democratization. This point parallels the argument about the relationships between political stability and investor confidence. In the early stages, stability is undoubtedly a prerequisite for investor confidence. But past a certain point, authority is associated with bureaucratization, conservatism, and corruption—points which hardly strengthen investor confidence.

Consequently, while some argue for an Asian model of democracy based on soft authoritarianism, others notice it is governments and elements of the military and business sectors who are making these arguments. From their perspective, the levels of political power concentration in several countries appear to be higher than what could be required by the imperatives of economic growth. These levels also exceed what could be required by the demands of internal security. The threat of communism and domestic insurgency, a significant issue in several countries in the 1950s and 1960s and one that justified strengthening state police

powers, is no longer a significant force in the internal security prospects of most countries in Asia. The level of education has increased, a point which should imply an increasing level of tolerance for diverse political views. And the rise of middle classes has reduced tolerance for inefficiency and corruption.

Again, the challenge for donors in this context is not to impose their views, but at the same time not to restrict their understanding of the debate to what governments and their most obvious allies have to say. Donors have a legitimate responsibility to be aware of broader democratic processes operating in a society and to conduct their own affairs with sensitivity to the consequences of their actions for those processes.

The Limits of Bilateral Influence

The role just described represents a significant challenge to contemporary donors in terms of their existing capabilities, usual strategies, and preferred modes of operation. Faced with this challenge, can the donor community effectively play what is a highly complex role? The donor community has, by and large, not been inclined to collectively and formally raise issues related to domestic political evolution within most countries of Asia (with the possible exception of China). When views are raised, they are usually raised informally and out of public view, or are contained in soft public statements of concern. Miscalculation here can lead to problems. Japan's implied characterization of the May, 1992 crackdown in Bangkok as normal politics by Thai standards widened the gap between Japan and many of the democratic forces in Thailand. Indonesia's break with Dutch aid after the Dutch government publicly criticized the Indonesian government's behavior in Timor can be seen as an example of two points. First, recipient countries will not necessarily lightly tolerate public criticism of their political arrangements by aid donors, especially if there are hints of aid conditionality in the critique and if there are no other major mitigating economic factors at risk in the relationship between the donor and the recipient country. Second, aid donors

who wish to maintain an active aid portfolio in a country should be cautious about how and where they offer views on internal political issues in a recipient country.

Given these sensitivities, and given until recently the preference of most donors to avoid direct programming in Asia on democratization, it is not surprising that both bilateral and multilateral discussions between donors and recipient countries have predominantly focused on matters of economics: economic policy reform, trade matters, foreign investment policies, external debt management, etc. Donor consultative group forums (for specific countries) offer an annual opportunity for donors and a recipient country government to review past performance and future plans and commitments but these meetings have exhibited serious limits as mechanisms either for conveying donor views on democratization progress or for domestic interests in a recipient country to somehow aggregate or voice their own perspectives to the donor community.⁵

An important distinction that should be made here is that between conditionality and facilitation. Throughout Asia, governments are not pleased with the specter of what they see as political conditionalities. On the other hand, there is considerable debate about facilitative roles donors can play. Some donors and international NGOs appear to prefer to become involved in direct support of the construction of political parties. They do this through various forms of technical and financial assistance and through encouraging affiliations in some cases with political parties in Europe. This is often both welcomed and opposed—in both cases for the resources and linkages it brings. Other donors and international NGOs get involved frequently in “turf” battles over

5. Actually in most cases the donor groups have not been especially effective even for coordinating donor policies on economic issues. In principle, what made the Philippine multilateral aid initiative different was that there were explicit commitments to coordination and monitoring.

which parts of the democratization process are “theirs.” This competitive pattern is not restricted to democratization issues, of course, but on such issues it forces out problems of ownership discussed earlier and raises questions about the autonomy and even the integrity of local political groups so aided.

These patterns of donor involvement in local efforts at political change suggest that donors are not always clear about where the line is between intervention and facilitation. The studies suggest that donors should stick to facilitative issues (e.g., steps which help the public to become better informed about issues and choices in democratization processes), but donors should not become directly involved in support of political institution building. For example, donors can focus on the democratic fulcrum effects of their aid, i.e., the political consequences which might flow from specific areas of support (e.g., health, agriculture). This may resemble the historic focus on indirect strategies, but it should be noted that what is implied here is not simply restating an old rationale for investment in health, education, and infrastructure, but rather is calling for serious analysis of the impacts of project assistance on matters such as political participation. Facilitation is also advised on the grounds that in the end, it is crucial for domestic political interests to be able to say that they developed a strategy for democratization themselves. This would not exclude technical assistance on strategies and methods employed elsewhere, but from this perspective direct support of institution building is seen as inappropriate.

These are complex issues. Donors do not exhibit consistent practice within Asia on these issues. Many donors are strongly inclined (and politically propelled from domestic sources) to approach democratization issues through a norm-imposing approach. However, for other donors, dialogue strategies which take the shape of norm-imposing forums would not be acceptable. In these cases, donors are inclined to adopt a “soft” approach. This means that a donor would play a cautious role in the process of finding the core factors constituting democratization (and which it would promote), and in identifying those bottlenecks and

constraints for which ODA can be a constructive part of a problem-solving strategy.

What Asia sees, however, is that some donors are troubled by the concept of a soft approach, however defined. These donors argue that a soft approach is too vulnerable to abuse, in effect rationalizing business-as-usual among those not especially interested in progress on democratization. Others argue that the concept of the soft approach is too vague. It implies applying the concept of democratization with multiple standards. The issue here is disagreements among donors and governments in Asia about how to understand what the core factors constituting democracy are. A soft approach is possible if there is agreement on the core elements. For example, there may be a number of concrete projects which can support essential core elements. For some donors, this might mean working with what were called “action/policy intellectuals.” These people should be independent, i.e., not themselves beneficiaries of ODA programs. For other donors, people who have effective links with government and can get into an effective discussion on core factors need to be involved.

It is also important to recognize that existing modes of ODA management present numerous limits on the capacity and relevance of ODA as a strategy for supporting democratization. Factors ranging from patterns of organization (such as characteristics of centralization and democratization), staffing skills and distribution, relationships to nongovernmental groups in donor countries as well as in recipient countries, and the imperatives of budget cycles and contracting rules all have significant bearings on what an ODA system can actually do in terms of programming on democratization. At the least, for many donors, there is an increasingly pressing need to bring ends and means on democratization into closer correspondence. This point is apparent to many sectors in Asia.

For example, an important area where donors can influence the prospects for democratization comes from the relationships between the prospects for democratization and the deconcentration of domestic economic power. Donors have achieved considerable

influence in areas of economic policy reform and these reforms, if extended to attacking distortions that reside in the structure of the economy as well as in the choice of inappropriate economic policies, would carry significant potential for positive impacts on prospects for democratization. Where donors have been weak, however, is in recognizing that economic policy reform is only one side of the coin in reorienting an economy to more market-oriented principles. The other side of the coin is the structure of the economy, represented by the concentration of economic power and the rules for entry, competition, collusion, and exit which characterize the private sector. While economic policy reforms can certainly alter the incentives and signals which government sends to the economy, the relationships between government and the economy are hardly this simple or unilinear. The political economies in Asia are considerably more complex and if economic change is to have an impact on the distribution of political power, then there is no sidestepping the importance of the need to reform the organization of economic power. The issue here, of course, is whether donors have either the capacity or the will to embrace this challenge, especially in the growing and increasingly powerful economics of Asia.

Conclusion

There is an increasingly vocal discussion in Asia about the quality of society as an indicator of developmental success. However, a fundamental and contentious difference remains to be settled: Whose concept of quality will pertain? Specifically, there is wide discussion both in and about Asia that questions the applicability and appropriateness for Asia of Western understandings of democracy, democratization, and human rights. Broadly speaking, two sides to the discussion can be identified.

On one side is the belief that there is a unique Asian perspective on democratization, democracy, and human rights. This perspective represents a set of historical and cultural experiences which, while significantly influenced by the West through

colonialism and more recently communications and trade, is nevertheless distinct. This distinctiveness along with the premise that the political system of any society—if it is to be authentic—has to reflect and be consistent with the deeper cultural themes of that society, leads to the conclusion that Western liberal democracy in both its minimalist and maximalist forms, is inappropriate. Asian experience, according to this perspective, plays down the importance of individual rights and especially the role of the individual as the legitimate arbiter of a political order and gives preeminence to the imperatives of economic growth, social unity, and political stability. This is the so-called “consensual” model. The “worth” of democracy is not denied, but rather is defined in terms of the responsiveness of a government to the imperatives of economic growth, social unity, and political stability—imperatives because these goals bring the greatest benefits to the largest number.

On the other side is the argument that the impetus of democratization, democracy, and human rights reflects an ethical universalism, a global endorsement of democracy as a normative good accessible to all. This ethical universalism—as a moral principle—is not seen as “foreign” to Asia but rather as convergent with emerging political and social forces within Asia. The dictates of this ethical universalism, however, do not mandate precise reproduction of specific institutional strategies employed elsewhere nor, in fact, does it mandate foreign intervention in the name of external standards. What it does say, however, is that the imperatives of democratization cannot be satisfied by the substitution of what amount to antidemocratic philosophies. From this perspective, the ethical universalism in favor of democracy and democratization can be defined as referring to certain core values. How these values are institutionalized can reflect the diversity of particular historical and cultural contexts without violating the meaning of the values, but the core values—by definition—cannot be said to vary.

The studies summarized here do not categorically resolve this argument, but they do make two important points with direct

relevance to the argument. First, the desire for wider democratization in Asia along lines that are recognizable globally is stronger than many elites are apparently prepared to accept. The major evidence against the claimed desire for wider democratization—the claimed support for the principle of diversity and the preservation of unity and stability—is certainly compelling, but the studies suggest this evidence is problematic as a counterweight to democratization.

Undoubtedly there is diversity between the West and Asia, but the deeper issue is the significance of diversity within individual societies. Ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity are recognized as potential problems for social stability and the integrity of the nation itself, but the studies suggest that what matters is the political significance assigned to diversity and, more specifically, the political processes which assign and maintain this significance. The core of the political implications of diversity resides in definitions of the nation. The studies suggest that it is certainly possible to embrace strategies to manage ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity through restricted definitions of nationhood. There are two dangers, however, with this strategy. One is that maintaining class differences and elite defense of their political and economic prerogatives are often masked as strategies to preserve the nation. In effect, rather than “preserving” diversity, politics in these cases creates diversity for purposes of defining who are excluded. The second is that there is no clear evidence that strategies to manage diversity by definitions of nationhood which concentrate on ethnic, cultural, or religious status rather than civil status have been correlated with or have been principally responsible for either social unity or political stability.

At the same time, identifying a point that is shared by the opposing sides in the argument, the studies conclude it is crucial for Asia’s societies to find their own ways to realize and institutionalize emerging democratic values. For donor countries, this requires recognition that there is indigenous support for and indeed, conceptualization of democratic values and processes in Asia. The challenge this establishes is for donors to spend less

time encouraging the transfer of their own experience or measuring the conformance of Asian political processes by the criteria of their own experience. Instead, donors need to spend more time on understanding indigenous democratic processes within Asian countries and the impacts of the donor country's overall relationship with a country on the prospects for democratic elements in that country.

For all this to happen, however, there needs to be greater agreement on norms for the core values of democracy, democratization, and human rights than there is now. There also needs to be a greater effort to construct a dialogue for norm-setting that reaches beyond established elites. These steps will not come easily, even among Asian countries themselves. Without efforts to establish norms based on a broad dialogue, however, donor efforts to support democratization in Asia are likely to be reactive, of very limited value, and arguably only marginally effective at best. The studies confirm that forces are operating within Asia's societies that can be associated with an emerging process of democratization. Donors will need to learn how to understand these forces without compromising them.

Finally, donors will also need to give serious attention to the implications of international relations within the region on prospects for democratization. In the same way that norm-setting is required with regard to the core values of democracy, democratization, and human rights, norm-setting will also be needed to establish the core values of security. This point is crucial for two reasons.

First, processes of norm setting involving dialogue—especially between donors and countries in Asia—will need to face very clearly the realities of differences in understandings about both the importance of culture as well as the significance of cultural differences. While the point may be stylized, there is the point nevertheless that cultures in Asia generally assign less importance to confrontation, competition, and change than cultures in the West. Concepts of security may vary accordingly, with greater concerns about the preservation of certain core cultural values than the impregnability of physical borders (although the latter would never

be unimportant). As discussed earlier, one problem for donors will be to assess whether the core values associated with security are for a culture as a whole or for the maintenance of specific power arrangements within a culture.⁶

Secondly, there are serious democratic forces within Asia, but these forces can be undermined in the name of security—an ironic prospect in a post-cold war era. The most subtle danger to the health of the democratic forces within Asia is the growing possibility that redefinition of security within Asia will incorporate notions of democracy based on the principles of unity, stability, and consensual politics. The results will be to strengthen the legitimacy of “soft authoritarianism” as the “Asian way,” preserve the notion of diversity as problematic, deepen the role of the state as interpreter of the imperatives of economic growth and political stability, and weaken the possibilities for an emergent civil society.

6. The same point can be made, of course, about similar debates within donor countries (e.g. McCarthyism and the “Moral Majority” in the United States, xenophobic neo-Nazism in Germany, etc.).

PART TWO

EVIDENCE

3

STATE-BUILDING AND THE POLITICS OF DEPOLITICIZATION

THE CONCEPT OF THE NATION-STATE assumes the existence of national identity. It also reinforces the state's claims over other sources of loyalty and power in civil society. This enables states to have considerable autonomy and at times to formulate and pursue goals that do not reflect the demands or interests of social groups, classes, or society (Evans et al. 1986, 9).

The development of the nation-state in Europe was conditioned by the rise of capitalism which in turn created and reproduced liberal democracy. The modern nation-states which emerged in Europe were therefore essentially “modern” in all aspects—political, economic, as well as cultural. There was a connection between the rise of civil society and the exchange economy and the flourishing of scientific investigation (Gamble 1987, 6). In other words, forces which gave rise to, maintain, and reproduce modern nation-states in Europe have usually been liberal with a great emphasis upon the desirability of being independent

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of the state and of curbing and limiting the centralized power of the state.

The rise of a modern nation-state in late nineteenth-century Thailand is in sharp contrast to that of the West, although technical aspects of Western civilization were utilized to systematize and centralize state power and its bureaucracy. The development of the Thai nation-state as an independent state having a non-liberal regime and a closed society with a dependent ethnic bourgeoisie is, therefore, much more complex than the development of the nation-state in the West. In the West the idea of the nation-state and state power can be subsumed under the same liberal-democratic rubric, and it is always possible to relate the character of the regime to the identity of the state. In the case of Thailand, as Ruth McVey rightly pointed out, the ideological enthronement of the nation-state was basically a matter between the king and the bureaucratic elite. The administrators did not need to mobilize the populace to their cause, and the king could not rally them to his because he had no means of reaching them save through the bureaucratic apparatus (McVey 1984, 5–6).

Although the modern nation-state in Thailand was created to centralize state power, the nation-state building process did not essentially change the character of the state (its regime) or the identity of the nation. There was a serious attempt led by Prince Pritsdang in 1885 to propose such a change to King Chulalongkorn, but the security and stability of the throne achieved after the death of the Regent was perhaps the main reason that prevented the king from appreciating the necessity of forging an institutional link between the regime and the nation.¹ The Chakri Reformation in the nineteenth century resulted in structural change in the bureaucracy but left unresolved many substantive problems such as the plight of the people and bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption (Brailey 1989, 73–99).

1. See Pritsdang's "Notes on Siamese Administration, Relations with Foreign Powers" and "Life in the King's Palace" in Brailey (1989, 70).

Under the absolute monarchy the nation-state was only a technical and administrative instrument of the regime. There was no need to build either a national identity or a state-identity since the identity of the nation-state or “Siam-*rat*” was inseparable from the reigning monarch. It is not surprising, therefore, that state-identity creation and nationalism in Thailand became a separate process from democratization. In fact, bureaucratic and military elites have always sought to establish, maintain and reproduce a state identity separate from that of society in order to escape being encompassed by social forces. The creation of state-identity is, therefore, an artificial process intended to augment the capacity of the bureaucratic and military elites to prevent the emergent forces in civil society from controlling the state. It involves using the idioms and symbols of the state to legitimize its domination and self-aggrandizement.

State-identity building is guided by a state-creating class which is the official class whose major and primary interests and livelihood depend on the capacity of the state to manage and maintain its relative autonomy vis-à-vis civil society. In the context of peripheral countries where both capitalist and proletariat classes are normally weak, the official class becomes the dominant intermediate class which seeks to utilize state power for its own purposes (Gramsci 1978, 409). The overdevelopment of the Thai state can thus be explained by analyzing the process of state-building on the part of the official class which was created by the Chakri Reformation. It is this class that has been striving to maintain its hegemony over civil society by utilizing various ideological and coercive methods.

Constitutionalism and State Identity

It is the thesis of this chapter that after 1932 the official class which captured state power from the ancient regime was confronted with a dilemma. Its “revolution” was supported by an emergent bourgeois force which was largely ethnic Chinese. In the early stages of the new regime the role of this emergent

bourgeoisie was tacitly recognized by the appointment of a number of Sino-Thai businessmen and Muslim leaders in the appointed legislature. Under constitutional rule, the state assumed a new character, and this essentially changed the identity of the state which, at least in theory, became inextricably linked with constitutionalism. The bureaucratic and military elites also rationalized and legitimized their newly acquired position by means of this ideology.

The commitment to constitutionalism presupposes an adherence not only to the rule of law and civil rights, but also to pluralism both in economic and cultural terms. Conflict soon arose within the new ruling elite as to its relation to other groups in society. Since the capitalist class was weak and dependent on the official class and the peasantry was scattered and unorganized, the official class was insulated from effective control by the civil society. The absence of this control made it possible for the new ruling elite to develop gradually its own version of constitutional rule. Such an ideological departure culminated in the late 1930s, less than a decade after the establishment of constitutional rule when the new ruling elite succeeded in creating a new state-identity. This new state-identity, it will be argued, negated the principles of constitutionalism. It promoted centralization of state power and authoritarianism, resulting in a modern variant of absolutism. More importantly, it drastically changed the identity of the nation which had been pluralistic in nature under the name of Siam. The identity of the nation and the state became one under the name of Thailand, while the character of the nascent constitutional regime and state also changed.

From Siam to Thailand

On 8 May 1939 the cabinet spent a mere ten minutes making a historic decision which had a tremendous impact on the identity of Siam. Six men discussed an agenda proposed by Luang Pibul Songkhram, the Prime Minister, to change the name of Siam to

Thailand.² The three ministers who were not in full support of this change were Luang Pradit, Luang Thamrong and Chao Phraya Srithammathibet, but it was clear that Luang Pibul and Luang Vichit had already decided to change the name of Siam to Thailand and the three cabinet ministers who disagreed with them simply could not resist Luang Pibul's power to impose his will on them. Luang Thamrong argued that there were many races in Siam, and they were all loyal to Siam. If the name of the country was changed from Siam to Thailand, other races would feel discriminated against, especially the Pattani people who were not "Thai." Luang Pradit only commented that the word "Thai" was known only by Eastern historians, while "Siam" had been familiar to Europeans since King Narai's time during the Ayudhaya period. Mom Chao Wan suggested that the government should issue a *ratthaniyom* or Cultural Mandate along the same lines as the *pharachaniyom* of monarchical times.

The cabinet consulted the Legislative Adviser, R. Guyon, and it is interesting to observe that in his note concerning the change of the name Prates Siam to Prates Thai, Guyon concluded that there was no need for legal revision since the word "Siam" was a customary word, not a legal word. In his words,

...there is no provision of law which has ever enacted that this country has the name of "Siam." There is none in the old laws. There is nothing to that effect in the

2. Secretariat of the Cabinet. Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting No. 4/2482 Monday, 8 May 1939. The six were Major General Luang Pibulsonggram, Luang Pradit Manudham (Minister of Finance), Mom Chao Wan Waitayakorn (Adviser of the Primer Minister), Group Captain Thamrongnawaswasdi (Minister of Justice), Luang Vichit Vadhakarn (Minister without portfolio) and Chao Phraya Srithammathibet (Minister of Foreign Affairs). The first Pibul cabinet (16 December 1938–5 March 1942) was the ninth cabinet, and was composed of twenty-six ministers. Pibul also held the portfolios of Defence and Interior.

constitution where the words “Kingdom of Siam” (Sect. 1) are used as a matter of fact, following the old custom, but there is nowhere said that this country must be called the “Kingdom of Siam.” (Secretariat of Cabinet 1939)³

The point Guyon made is the one which I am putting forward in this chapter, that Luang Vichit and Luang Pibul were using state power to legalize or bureaucratize custom and tradition. Guyon rightly pointed out that rules established by custom stood only as long as there was no statutory law to supersede them, but custom did not have to be expressly reiterated when a statutory law abolishing or modifying it was promulgated. He continued:

The new law, by the very fact of its existence, abolishes the custom. The consequence of this is that there is no need in the new law of a provision to the effect that the names “Siam” or “Siamese” are abolished.

As a rule, it is rather rare that the law of a country specifies the name by which the country shall be known, the reason being just the same as for Siam up to now, that is to say that the name is generally created by custom, and then used since a long time as a matter of fact.

But when a new country comes to existence, and has no old name by custom or has an uncertain name, it has been necessary in some cases to give a name to that country by statutory enactment. (Guyon 1939, 1–2)

Guyon added that the change should be made by an amendment to the constitution because “Amendments to the Constitution are important things, and should not be made unless

3. The first Cultural Mandate was issued on 24 June 1939 (*Rattaniyom* No. 1, “Name of the Country, Peoples and Nationality to be called ‘Thai’”).

for important matters. But the change of the name of the country is an important matter. It is an historical event, which practically initiates a new period in the life of the nation” (Guyon 1939, 4). Guyon presented two drafts of the Constitution Amendment Act B.E. 2482 (1939), the first amendment to the 1932 constitution.⁴ Guyon did not live long enough to witness other changes which came after the first amendment he drafted for Pibul’s government.

Pibul’s Government and State-building

In this section I analyze Pibul’s nationalism in terms of state-identity creation and state-building, rather than nation-building. Pibul’s state-identity creation and state-building replaced constitutionalism with military statism. It was an extremely important project which dramatically changed the character of the nascent political order. It will be recalled that the ideological basis of the state and regime emerging after the 1932 revolution was a constitutional one. The state mechanism, the bureaucracy, both civilian and military, had been patterned after the Weberian ideal-type which was, in principle, legal-rational, non-ethnic and was supposed to be equally accessible to every group in society irrespective of race or sociopolitical status. It was crucial for the new regime to maintain and propagate this myth at the initial stage of political consolidation, because the newly-established constitutional state was a negation of the ancient regime. Although the urban bourgeoisie lent its support to the People’s Party, it was a civilian and military bureaucratic group that overthrew the old regime by a coup d’etat. The predominant social and political base of the new regime was, therefore, the bureaucracy which had been absorbing progressive elements in civil society through a modern educational system and open, expanding civil and military services. The bourgeois element,

4. The amendment to the constitution was passed by the Parliament on 28 September 1939.

mainly ethnic Chinese, was still small and had been subservient to the aristocracy for long time.

The bureaucracy is not merely officialdom and an instrument of the state but is also a specific social and political entity. It is social to the extent that its values and behavior have had a great influence on societal values. The Thai bureaucracy has not only been a major avenue of social mobility. It also acts as an important source of the socialization process. Its social character is most evident when entry to the bureaucracy marks the beginning of a continuing process of ethnic assimilation. A son of a Chinese immigrant will remain Chinese if he chooses to be a businessman, but once he enters the bureaucracy his ethnic identity disappears and he becomes a *kharatchakan* or civil servant. The bureaucratic *Weltanschauung* and the civil servant's former cultural background are naturally in conflict, resulting in a decision to embrace bureaucratic values in order to survive and prosper in the new social entity.

The bureaucracy is a *political* entity because it has always been the main power base of the state through which the state exercises its power over society. The bureaucracy existed prior to the constitutional order, and owing to this fact, we have to distinguish between *state* power and *political* power. The military and the civilian bureaucracy represent the state (they are the state within the state), and state power has been vested in laws, regulations and orders. State power elites create constitutions, so it is not surprising to see that many laws in Thailand exist even when they are in conflict with the constitution.

While the Thai bureaucracy possesses social and political characteristics, it has not been an important economic force in society. Immediately after the 1932 "revolution," Pridi Phanomyong (Luang Pradit Manudham), one of the coup leaders, attempted to link the economic activity of peasants to the state by making them state employees, but such a proposal was misinterpreted as a communist-inspired scheme. In the late 1930s economic nationalist policies also reflected the official class's attempt to build an economic base for state power. However, it turned out that state

power was more successfully utilized to build personal economic bases as is evident in the business empires of such postwar figures as Field Marshal Sarit Thannarat and Police General Phao Siyanon (Thak 1979).

The most important factor which prevented the bureaucracy from becoming an economic-oriented entity was the creation of a professional civil service as early as 1928 by means of the Civil Service Act. The civil service was patterned after the Weberian ideal-type organization with a strong emphasis on the separation of self-interest and state or common interest. Although these values are not upheld in real bureaucratic life, they nevertheless prevent a total personalization of the state, and they force state power elites to find other avenues and means to amass their wealth.

It should be pointed out that under the absolute monarchy the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie were not in conflict. Unlike the European experience, there was no confrontation between the Thai aristocracy and the Chinese bourgeoisie. On the contrary, both groups cooperated in capital accumulation. Confrontation between the two groups did not arise because the small Chinese bourgeoisie was mainly compradorial in its economic operations and performed useful functions as entrepreneurs and middlemen without posing a serious challenge to political authority.

After 1932, constitutional rule did not activate forces in civil society to compete for political power. It restricted and restrained these forces by closing the political arena and prohibiting freedom of political association by not allowing a political party system to emerge. The Chinese bourgeoisie, who were set free from the old patron-client ties with the aristocracy, had no institutional means to develop their political potential. Although they were left alone to carry out their businesses, they lacked the opportunity to become an independent bourgeoisie because the new ruling class had its base of support in the state power structure rather than in civil society.

The new ruling elites were salaried officials who had to seek wealth to support themselves, and, later on, to distribute benefits to their various factions. They could not immediately use state power for their own benefit, however, owing to the universalization

of state power expressed in the ideology of constitutionalism. State power after 1932 was supposed to be impersonal, as against the personalized power of the ancient regime. State power was also supposed to shape society in a nonpartisan manner. This meant that most organized and well-endowed groups in society were bound to benefit from the newly-constituted state.

The first identity established immediately after the 1932 revolution was not national identity but a purely political identity divorced from any cultural identity. Constitutionalism, as a system of rule, cannot possibly be modified to safeguard any particular interest group, let alone establish the cultural identity of that interest group. As an ideology, constitutionalism and democracy posed a number of issues for the new ruling group, the most crucial of which was its implication for the distribution of power and a long-term transformation of economic power into political power. If constitutional democracy was allowed to develop fully, the new rules of the game would have allowed economic forces in civil society to capture state power gradually. In this sense, the constitutional democracy that was adopted by the official class as an ideological weapon against the old regime became a potential threat and a direct negation of bureaucratic power.

It was, therefore, necessary for state power elites to prevent the development of an independent bourgeoisie and the possible transformation of economic forces into political influence and power. The easiest way was simply to deny access of this group to the political process. This was possible by applying the criterion of citizenship, and it was legitimate to do so. A more serious problem was how to deal with this potential threat in the long run, since Chinese born in Thailand would one day become Thai citizens.

Two related problems then emerged to confront the Thai ruling elite. First, to what extent should the new regime allow the Chinese to accumulate wealth, and what would be the long-term implications for the distribution of power in society? Second, once constitutional rule was adopted, and under such rule individual and group rights and freedom were guaranteed by the state, how could the state effectively curb the influence of economically powerful

groups which were not fully integrated into the cultural and political milieu of the bureaucratic state?.

Within this new political context, direct political coercion was not possible, and such a policy would have had adverse effects on the economy. The state power elites had to devise a set of strategies and policies to deal with these problems. National identity propagated by King Vajiravudh from 1910 to 1925 became a liability for the newly constituted regime, because the concept would enhance the development of a national bourgeoisie in the long run once the Chinese economic force could find a broader non-ethnic source of loyalty in the democratic political system. If such a natural process of democratization was allowed to occur, political parties would have become a new source of loyalty transcending ethnic identity. Under a strong party system ethnicity would have become secondary to concrete economic interests. But this new form of loyalty and political identity was not allowed to take root in Thai society. Instead, bureaucratic power elites created a state identity which was elevated above the political values inherent in constitutionalism.

Under the absolute monarchy there was no pressing need for the kings to establish any state identity, because such a policy would not have been effective owing to the inability of the center to impose its control over distant territories. Regional identities were, therefore, tolerated as long as they did not challenge the supremacy of the center. There was, however, a need to create a nation, although the identity of the state was never expressed in any specific racial or ethnic form. On the contrary, there had always been conscious attempts by the kings to utilize Buddhism and kingship as a common framework for the coexistence of various races and ethnic groups.

The state was given a specific *Thai* character in Pibul's period as a result of a combination of factors ranging from the desire to claim jurisdiction over other Tai races beyond the existing territory of Siam to the suppression of emergent ethnic Chinese influence in politics and society. It is not an exaggeration to say that since that time state identity and national identity have become

synonymous with the emphasis on the superiority of the former. Once state identity was established, the state assumed a special place in civil society in the sense that *raison d'état* became an overriding force and was regarded as having a higher value than constitutionalism. At this juncture, there was a movement from universalism to particularism resulting in the shrinkage of both social and political space. The state could issue orders like the Cultural Mandates which otherwise would have been unconstitutional had the state not elevated itself above society.

The Chinese bourgeoisie was stripped of its opportunity to develop into a potent political force, because there was no other form of political relations it could enter into apart from the old patron-client networks. New forms of political loyalty did not emerge to capture economic forces, while institutional arrangements such as trade associations had always been severely controlled by the state since the Association Act was promulgated in 1914. Even after 1932, these associations were not recognized by law as political entities.

It is not surprising, then, that the Chinese who were marginalized had to resort to underground or secret associations to protect themselves. Others developed political links with the Kuomintang or the communists. In all cases their political relationships were considered illegal, external, and subversive to the state and the regime. The state had succeeded in externalizing these political forces, in effect identifying them as alien and “un-Thai.”

It was also during this period of state-identity creation that an official version of culture and cultural norms was superimposed on popular culture and subcultures. The establishment of a Ministry of Culture and a National Council on Culture, passage of a series of legislative acts, and executive orders such as the Cultural Mandates reflected the priority the leadership assigned to state-identity building. This new bureaucratic structure was very effective in shaping a new Thai consciousness through a combination of legal and socializing instruments. The cultural aspect of state-identity creation which authorized appropriate cultural values and recreated a series of new *national* dances, plays, and songs

was reminiscent of the monarchy's standardization of the Mahachart, or Great Birth Story of the Buddha, in the Ayudhaya period. In the same manner that King Trilok had authorized the court version (*khamluang*) of the Mahachart, Luang Vichit and Pibul consciously created an official version of Thai culture as the national culture.

It should be pointed out that in this period the new elites greatly utilized new technology of mass communication. The Department of Public Relations was established with modern broadcasting equipment. The state completed its control cycle by adding the operation of the only radio station to inform the masses—especially in urban areas—of its policies and propaganda. The influence of this new technology of communication became so strong that nationalistic feelings were effectively aroused through the broadcasting of martial and nationalistic songs as well as a dialogue program in which Mr. Man and Mr. Kong discussed nationalist policies and gave guidance to people on desirable behavior. It is during this period that the identity of a good person became inextricably linked with the identity of a good Thai citizen.

Unlike King Vajiravudh, whose literary contributions were essentially his personal concern oriented at times to arouse national consciousness, the plays, songs and prose of Luang Vichit Vadhakarn were specifically produced to create a new state identity and to direct the process of state-building (Pra-onrat 1985; Pisanu 1986; Barme 1987). While King Vajiravudh's plays were performed within limited court circles, Luang Vichit's plays, songs, novels and essays were produced for mass consumption, especially the educated elite and urban population. Most important of all, the new national culture was embraced as the culture of the bureaucrats, as reflected in the practice of popular *ramwong* dancing among officials and their families, and the use of *ramwong* as the basic mode of party entertainment during the 1940s and 1950s.

The official version of culture did more than socialize the bureaucrats. It also set state-identity apart from popular cultural identities, especially at the local level. Many popular traditions and cultures became "folk" or "subcultures" during this period and

thereafter. At state functions official versions of cultural dances were performed and presented as genuine traditions of the Thai state.

It is important to note that this project of state-identity creation was a subtle synthesis of historical *imaginaire* and cultural diversity presented through stage performances as bourgeois entertainment. In this sense, the stage performances of Luang Vichit's plays and songs became a major form of cultural entertainment of the official and the small urban classes, replacing such traditional performances as *like* and *plengphuenban*. What Luang Vichit did was to create a cultural bridge between the official realm and the public realm. A Chinese who frequented Luang Vichit's plays, sang his songs, and read his novels and articles was, in effect, undergoing a transformation in cultural identity as important as the adoption of alms-giving. Thai state-identity and state-building were, therefore, both political and cultural. The state during this period took up new functions of depoliticization, bureaucratization and socialization simultaneously. Such functions have been inextricably linked with the state to the present day.

The official versions of national culture and national identity were constructs based on the creation of a historical *imaginaire*. It was during this period that the people were told of the origin of the Thai race. An official historical version of the Thai state was also created, and plays, songs and novels relating to the ancient kingdom of Nanchao, the putative homeland of the Thai, were produced. This historical *imaginaire* of the Thai state established a distinct and concrete community driven southwards by the Chinese. In the process, the Chinese became the enemy of the Thai state both in historical and contemporary perspectives. The idealized kingdom of Nanchao and the forced migration of the Thai races aroused nationalistic feelings of positive and negative effects at the same time: positive because it reinforced the pride of the Thai race as a people with a long cultural as well as political tradition; negative because it identified the crumbling of that kingdom with Chinese hegemony and militarism.

The identity of the state propagated by Luang Vichit and supported by Pibul transcended the old regime's historical

imaginaire. It was asserted that there was already a kingdom before Sukhothai, the capacity to survive successive threats being symbolized by the ability of the leadership and the unity of the people. The decline and destruction of kingdoms were associated with corruption and the weaknesses of leadership or overpowering attacks and invasions from other races, or a combination of both. It is interesting to recall that during the period of political polarization in the 1970s, messages in the songs played by state and military radio stations were very clear, namely, “we can no longer retreat,” and the present Thai territory is the last remaining on which the Thais must unite themselves to defend in order to ensure their own survival against the Chinese and the un-Thai activities of the communists.

The identity of the Thai state was enhanced by the nature of the threat which its elites defined for civil society. The threat to the security of the Thai state and nation was, therefore, linked not only to the *political* aspect of an ideology, but also to the *ethnic* aspect of that ideology. Communists in the 1940s and 1950s were either Vietnamese, Chinese, or Northeastern Lao, but never “Thai.” Communism as an ideology has been regarded as a totally un-Thai enterprise, a negation of the livelihood, history and civilization of the Thai race.⁵

The Chinese were, of course, the most affected group in this process of adjustment. They were forced to abandon their identity at two levels. At the cultural level, they had to prove that they recognized, accepted and were willing to socialize under dictates of the state which established a set of criteria for its citizenry.

5. It is significant to note that Luang Vichit’s “Research on the Tai races” was reprinted in 1961 by the Central Intelligence Department “to be used in the official functions of the Department.” Luang Vichit at that time was serving as the chief advisor to Field Marshall Sarit, and it was during Sarit’s rule that the Chinese Communist menace was “recognized” by the ruling elite. Luang Vichit’s above-mentioned work became the “bible” once again for Thai intelligence officers.

More importantly, at the political level, they had no political option open to them. Many of them who were born in Thailand were not allowed to vote unless they possessed additional qualifications. They could not look for any other political identity within the constitutional framework apart from that offered by the state. The state ideology had no relevance for the enhancement of democratic values which the bourgeoisie could embrace as its political doctrine and capitalize on in order to capture state power. The new identity of the Thai state after 1932 was proclaimed by the constitution as a constituted state, distinguishing it from the old monarchical state, but constitutionalism was soon replaced by militarism and a cult of personality in Pibul's period. With the advent of communist and socialist ideas and parties, the identity of the Thai state became a staunchly anticommunist ideology with emphasis on the triad Nation, Religion, and King. In such a context, state ideology succeeded in removing politics from civil society and relocating it in the bureaucracy which became the main theater of politics (McVey (1982). This process of relocating politics has resulted in different interpretations of politics and "democracy" between the bureaucratic elites and other forces outside officialdom.

New Forces Affecting State-identity

Owing to the lack of an alternative political source of loyalty and the absence of democracy, the problem of political identity in Thai society intensified in the late 1960s and early 1970s, resulting in the 1973 student revolution. Because of this lack of institutionalization of the democratic system, activist political forces in Thai society found an alternative in socialism of the Maoist brand as was evident in the 1973–1976 period. During that period, there were a series of identity crises especially among the younger generation, ranging from family relationships to the cultural, political and economic spheres (Morell and Chai-Anan 1981).

The identity of the Thai state was challenged by these new forces on all fronts. The state power elites responded by making a

series of attempts to revive the spirit of 1940s nationalism, which included the establishment of a National Identity Board. But in the 1970s, Thai society was buffeted by many pressures. It was beyond the ability of the state to arrest the forces of change as it had done in the 1940s by simply issuing Cultural Mandates or resorting to military statism à la Pibul or Sarit.

The communist challenge forced state power elites to embrace and propagate capitalism, which resulted in a continuous rise in the power of the bourgeoisie. The communist threat also forced the state power elites to relax their bureaucratic control and seek an alliance with capitalist and middle classes. The media which had been under tight control by the Sarit regime was given more freedom after his death in the early 1960s and became an important source of social and political diversity in the late 1960s. The Chinese in Thailand in the 1970s became a “positive factor” for development, and a Public-Private Consultative Committee was set up to promote economic development. Chambers of commerce were encouraged in all provinces. However, the rise of the bourgeoisie and its wider and more active participation in politics created grave concern among state power elites, especially the military, over the long-term implications of these changes. The stabilization of the semi-democratic system in the 1980s and the rapid democratization process which has taken place since 1988 made it possible for new forms of loyalty outside the state to emerge in civil society. The bourgeoisie have a new source of political loyalty which they can use to further their economic interests. Political parties thus became political institutions in which Chinese businessmen could identify themselves without having to show their ethnic identity. Political parties, elections and the legislative process therefore provided for new institutional frameworks in which ethnicity is not a factor. In this new political context, the names of political parties which are purely Thai (such as Chart Thai, Prachakorn Thai, Ruam Thai) and have no ethnic connotations, serve as a legitimating instrument, transforming an otherwise Chinese bourgeoisie economic force into a non-ethnic political entity.

Since the 1970s the capitalist aspect of the economy has become a dominant factor in the Thai state. In this context of Thailand's becoming a Newly Industrialized Country (NIC), the identity of the Thai state has been dramatically changed. Civil society has become more heterogeneous where middle class forces continue to put pressure upon the bureaucratic state to respond to their demands. The contested terrain has been shifted from the attempt on the part of state power elites to dominate the political arena to the dynamic formation of alliances among strategic groups of which state power elites are but one element. In this context, it is not possible for state power elites to resort to the same old strategy of creating a separate state identity and using it to impose its will upon society. The only way state power elites can prevent the capturing of state power by non-state forces is to limit the growth of the capitalist economy, but this is impossible. The identity of the Thai state at present coincides with the identity of the extrabureaucratic forces in civil society, and they will continue to reinforce each other as long as the democratization process is not disrupted. In other words, the democratic constitutional order makes it possible for the emerging middle class to develop its separate identity based on liberal democratic values which are basically different from the old state ideology.

Foundations for Thai State-building

Looking back at the early 1940s, we can conclude that it was during this period that the identity of the Thai state was created and served a number of functions for state-building.

1. It established hegemony of state power over civil society, especially vis-à-vis economic forces.
2. It strengthened and legitimized institutional power of the military in general, and the position of the army commander in particular.

3. It was the main instrument of state capital accumulation, resulting in the creation of a strong bureaucratic intermediate class (Ahmad 1985, 43–46).
4. It established a clear and concrete historical *imaginaire* and a state ideology separate from the constitutional order to which citizens were obliged to sacrifice their freedom and liberty, both as individuals and as a group, to serve that imaginary identity.
5. It made possible a simultaneous application of social and political coercion to suppress and co-opt potential challenges emanating from an economically powerful ethnic community by dispersing its cultural identity and solidarity which otherwise would have been politically consolidated.
6. It regulated state-society relations through specific codes of conduct and legal measures which clearly defined political and economic boundaries.
7. It made possible integration of the state, the nation, the regime, and leadership into one imaginary entity above constitutionalism.

The effects of state-identity creation under Pibul were pervasive and long-lasting. The Thai state had become an entrenched bureaucratic state with a specific identity imposed on civil society. It has taken more than four decades for civil society to gradually withdraw from this relationship and to question the bureaucratic *raison d'être*, although it has yet to challenge and take control of state power. This lack of will to challenge and capture state power is a direct result of the socio-historical development of state-society relations in Thailand. Economic forces and local influences, although very strong and theoretically capable of becoming potent political forces at the national level, have in practice been restricted and denied access to the normal political process which has been authoritarian rather than democratic in character. Prior to 1978, when there was discontinuity in the

participatory political system, economic forces at every level were channelled into the bureaucratic system if they wanted to be relevant actors in the state decision-making process. And because of the elaborate legal system pervasive in the Weberian organizational structure, extrabureaucratic arrangements in processing surplus exchanges are not articulated through formal political institutions, but through mafia-like or patron-client networks.

It should be noted that owing to the lack of democratization and political institutionalization, certain sections of the economic forces gradually gained effective political power at local government levels, but there existed no democratic channel for their expression. Mafia-like power finally emerged as a modern variant of the secret societies that Thailand had known earlier in its history. The *chaopor* phenomenon has recently found its best ally in the democratic process where local influences and money provide vital support for party candidates (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1991 (18 April), 25–30). The existence and pervasiveness of these “dark influences” have posed a direct challenge to the state. In most cases, dark influences are merely noninstitutional marriages of state power and non-state power in the common pursuit of extracting economic rent from civil society. In some cases, these mafia-like influences develop to a point beyond the control of state power, and state violence has to be applied to suppress them, although not in a legal manner.

The legacy of Pibul’s state-identity creation had, therefore, adverse effects upon the democratization process. The Pibul period lasted long enough and the application of state-identity over society was intense enough that they left a lasting memory on the 1940s generation of the military and civilian elite who became political leaders later on. It should not be forgotten that Thai politics between 1950 and 1980 was dominated by leaders who were influenced by the process of state-identity creation in the Pibul period.

What state-identity creation and state-building in the Pibul period did to civil society was to eliminate a potential link between the social-economic base and the state. To be more exact, the most advanced social and economic base in society was the Chinese

entrepreneurial class which was demobilized and depoliticized during this process of state-building. The peasantry, which comprised the Thai and non-Chinese ethnic groups in the 1940s, was not the target of depoliticization, but it suffered the same fate because the military regime had become so personalized. Political mobilization in this period was essentially a pro-state enterprise aimed simultaneously at the propagation of the Thai identity of the state and at the cult of personality. This state-building project resulted in the elimination of an intermediate political class, or, to put it in more specific terms, the elimination of intermediate political institutions. The state had, therefore, a regime but no political system. The state fused its political power with bureaucratic power and used that power to discriminate against the bourgeoisie. It succeeded in preventing a natural emergence of a larger and stronger middle class and in delaying the development of a progressive and independent bourgeoisie. What the state had created, although unintentionally, was a peculiar extra-political, extrabureaucratic class of “influential people” against whom Sarit had to use extralegal, extra-constitutional measures in order to control.

The mafia-type influence of *chao pho-nakleng* reemerged after the Sarit period when the state relaxed its authoritarian control but still blocked the development of bourgeois-democratic forces from entering the political system. It is not surprising, therefore, to observe that instead of the institutionalization of intermediate political organizations such as political parties, there has been an institutionalization of these extra-political, extrabureaucratic influences. Because of their donations to various state-sponsored projects, these *chao pho* received royal dispensations, symbolically linking them with state power. Many of them were awarded and are wearing emblems of the royal guards. The *chao pho* and the *sia* have become local party bosses who sponsor electoral candidates or support party candidates. In recent years many of them have run in local elections. People like “Sia Yae” of Angthong (Chart Thai Party), “Sia Jew” and Kamnan Por of Chonburi (Social Action Party), and “Sia Leng” of Khon Kaen (Ekaphab Party)

are products of this peculiar socioeconomic and political development. The dilemma of Thai-style democracy is how to transform these undesirable influences into legitimate political authority.

State-identity creation in the Pibul period was, therefore, not a mere imaginary exercise. It became so real and so “natural” that the leadership of these emergent forces in civil society became mere power-brokers instead of daring to capture state power itself. By this I mean that one of the most important antipolitical values invented by Pibul has been the identification of civil servants (*ratchakan*) with the sole and legitimate source of state-society management relations. The ethnic Chinese have been socialized to prevent their involvement in politics. Since they constituted the most important group in society with great potential to develop into a distinct political class, state-identity creation in the Pibul period naturally devised both an ideology and policy measures to exclude them from participation in the political process. The public sector in Thailand has, until recently, been identified with the *ratchakan* domain rather than with a larger entity comprising both the bureaucracy and participant political institutions. Such a process had a similar impact on the general populace, although it offered a broader choice to Thais and ethnic Chinese who became Thais (through naturalization, adoption of Thai names and surnames, education in Thai schools and, most importantly, entrance into the *ratchakan* system, both civilian and military).

While the political arena shrank as a result of this process, what has been continuously expanded and sustained to the present day is the extra-political, extrabureaucratic domain, which exists independently of both bureaucratic and democratic frameworks, yet actively interacts with these entities. Forces in this extra-political, extrabureaucratic domain have partially moved into the formal political process as democratic rule has gradually become more institutionalized. The outcry against “capitalist influences,” and attacks on *thanathippatai* (plutocracy), as well as a yearning for “genuine democracy,” “power to the people” and so on, are all reactions of the state power elites (intellectuals and technocrats

included) to the rapid merging of the extra-political, extrabureaucratic influences with formal democratic institutions and processes both at the national and local levels.

The Thai-*ratchakan* identity of the state is thus undergoing a drastic and rapid transformation. Democratic ideology is essentially a bourgeois ideology, and the power base of this ideology is basically economic in nature. The *ratchakan* domain has shrunk in recent years while the private sector has greatly expanded. Traditional social identity such as religion and love for the monarchy are perhaps the only sources of power which can be utilized to counter the excessive and undesirable influences of capitalism. But it is doubtful whether these traditional loyalties can continue to be dominant values in a modern capitalist state. The bureaucracy is becoming more and more irrelevant, at least to those who produce goods for export. In this context of increasing globalization, Thai state-identity will weaken unless state power elites are successful in regressing to the old concept of Thai-style democracy cloaked in the language of popular sovereignty or pure and absolute power of the masses. It is not unlikely that as Thailand moves towards a more export-oriented economy, there will be a revival of neo-Pibulism to counter this runaway internationalism.⁶ Although it is not possible to recreate the same type of state-identity as that of Pibul and Luang Vichit, Thailand in the 1990s will surely face a serious national identity crisis which accumulated wealth and sustained economic growth can not sufficiently accommodate.

6. The tensions implied in this analysis surfaced in the military coup of late February 1991.

4

THAILAND: A STABLE SEMI-DEMOCRACY

Historical Review

ALONE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA Thailand was never colonized, maintaining its independence through the height of the Western imperial presence in the region. Traditionally the Thai political system has relied on the monarchy as the basis for its legitimacy. The monarchy reigned and ruled and was the focus for the loyalty, love, respect, and religious faith of the Buddhist populace. The king and the dynasty were central to both the ideology and reality of political rule. This was a classic centralized hierarchy, in which the entire focus of legitimacy and status emanated downward from the king through the royal elite to the ordinary citizen, and outward from the palace in Bangkok through the provincial towns to the village.

Independence in Thailand means that it never experienced the imposition and transfer of institutions from the West that took place in many developing countries. The absence of colonialism also means that traditional structures, particularly the monarchy, the Buddhist Sangha (monastic order), and the military and civil

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bureaucracy were not disrupted. Although Thailand did not benefit from the process of democratization through the transfer of colonial institutions, neither did it suffer the kind of destruction of the social fabric that many European colonies in the Third World experienced. Because King Chulalongkorn (1868–1910) and his advisors were able to respond effectively to the colonial threat, the country also escaped the necessity of overthrowing its colonial yoke. Since no independence movement was necessary, the institutions and ideology concomitant with independence movements around the world—especially political parties and mobilized mass movements—never emerged. The Buddhist Sangha, which is the social and religious institution closest to the masses, was therefore not politicized like its counterparts in Burma, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. Its traditional linkage with the monarchy was not disrupted, but instead has been fostered so that the two institutions have remained complementary to each other (see Somboon 1982; Tambiah 1976). In this sense Thailand faced only a limited political challenge. This allowed the country to defer its true political development to the present (Chai-Anan 1987, 1–40).

Democracy as a system of government was adopted in Thailand in June 1932 by a group of junior army, navy, and civilian officers calling themselves the People's Party. Prior to this, constitutionalism and democracy had been discussed among the Thai intelligentsia for a long time. In 1887, a group of princes and officials submitted a lengthy petition to King Chulalongkorn outlining the immediate problems facing Siam and suggested that a constitutional monarchy be instituted (Chai-Anan 1969). In the late 1880s Tienwan, a commoner and Buddhist scholar, argued in his magazine, *Tulawipak Pojanakit*, that the most effective way to promote justice was to institute a parliamentary form of government (Chai-Anan 1974). In the 1910s a group of lesser army officials attempted unsuccessfully to stage a coup to replace the absolute monarchy with a republican government. In 1917 Prince Chakrabongse submitted a memorandum to the king suggesting that it was time to grant some kind of constitution to the people. From the latter 1920s to May 1932—a month before the end of

the absolute monarchy—the question of whether a democratic form of government was suitable for Siam was one of the major concerns of the regime. Starting from the reign of King Vajiravudh (1910–1925) the monarchy, as an institution, began to be questioned and criticized openly. With the increasing suffering from the Great Depression in the late 1920s, the desire for change was more pressing and resulted in growing awareness of the anachronism of the absolute monarchy.

The reactions of the kings to political reforms were quite similar (Chai-Anan 1980). Not all of them rejected constitutionalism and democracy as an ideal or a concept of governance, but the appropriateness of the model and practices were questioned. It had always been maintained by the old regime that while constitutional government might be desirable and even inevitable, it was still premature to establish such a system in Siam. The main reasons against the establishment of a constitutional government expressed by foreign advisors, the king, and senior princes were (Batson 1974):

1. There was no middle class in Siam. The Siamese peasants took little or no interest in public affairs. Most of the electorate were uneducated; hence to set up a parliament with real power without an educated electorate to control it would only invite trouble and corruption.
2. Parliamentary government was not suitable for the Siamese people, and it was even possible that there must also be certain racial qualities that the Anglo-Saxons possessed and the Siamese did not have to make democracy a successful form of government.
3. Not only was a real democracy very unlikely to succeed in Siam, it might even be harmful to the interests of the people. The parliament would be entirely dominated by the Chinese (Batson 1974, 45).
4. The great bulk of the people of Siam were as yet not trained in political or economic thought (Batson 1974, 10).

As for the students who returned from Britain, Europe, and the United States, their idea of democracy was half-baked, and their Western ideas were often superficial and misunderstood.

It is clear that the arguments against the adoption of a constitutional government were not so much concerned with democracy as a concept but rather as a form of government, especially its political implications.

Yet it was admitted that Siam would ultimately be forced by circumstances to adopt a democratic form of government, and hence the regime should be well prepared to direct this change gradually. King Prajadhipok, however, cautioned that the main danger and the obstacle to this gradual experiment lay in impatience (Batson 1974, 49).

Those who were impatient were the Western-educated military and civilian bureaucrats. In the absence of a sizable middle class, a large and strong bureaucracy became the locus of power in the new institutional arrangements. Thai politics after 1932 have therefore been dominated by the bureaucrats, as best described by David Wilson (1962, 277):

Some 30 years ago the bureaucracy—much strengthened by the reorganization and development of the previous 40 years and by the new techniques of communications and control imported from the West—was cut free of the restraints of absolutism. As much as the leadership of the Thai revolution might have wished things to be otherwise, it was not able to muster much popular interest outside the bureaucracy upon which to base itself. As a result, politics has become a matter of competition between bureaucratic cliques for the benefits of government. In this competition the army—the best organized, most concentrated, and most powerful of the branches of the bureaucracy—has come out on top.

It is ironic that soon after the success of the Westernized elites in their seizure of power from the monarchy, constitutional idealism gradually eroded into formalistic constitutionalism (Yano 1978, 127). Since 1932 the bureaucratic elites have been the prime movers in political institutional arrangements under different constitutions. Because of periodic changes in the rules of the game, the scope of political competition, the level of political participation, and the extent to which civil and political liberties are guaranteed have varied according to the nature of the regime.

It should be noted that from 1932 to 1945 the only formal political institution in Thailand was a unicameral legislature composed of two categories of members, half elected and half appointed. The People's Party did not find it necessary to transform itself into a political party since its leading members and supporters were already appointed members of the National Assembly. Political parties in Thailand, therefore, emerged as late as 1946 and were only recognized as legal entities nine years later in 1955. What was institutionalized instead was the political role of the bureaucratic elites. The new leadership relied upon the bureaucracy to play a leading role in educating and mobilizing the mass to participate in elections, as well as to learn about democracy through the system of constitution.

Since half of the assembly members were mainly military and civilian officers, the legislative process became an extended arm of, and provided an additional function for, the bureaucracy. Although the new military-bureaucratic elites formed the only organized political group in society, they were not united. On the contrary, soon after June 1932 the young military faction within the People's Party emerged and was, by 1938, able to eliminate the senior members. And since the civilian faction of the People's Party did not develop itself into a broadbased political party, its power and influence gradually declined while that of the military faction rapidly increased, especially after its leader Luang Pibul became defense minister in late 1934 and prime minister in 1938.

From the beginning of constitutional rule, the role of the elected members of parliament was oriented toward internal legislative

activities rather than acting as a major political institution for participation and competition for major positions of government power. Hence the electoral process in Thailand, which began as early as 1933, did not lead to the recruitment of political leadership at the top. It was only a tool to legitimate the political system and process in which competition for power was not linked with the electorate but with factions in the military.

It seems that the objective of the constitution was to establish and strengthen the power position of the new regime rather than to develop a truly democratic political system. The constitution and constitutional symbols were utilized to distinguish between the *ancien* and the *new* regime. In 1933 the National Assembly passed a bill on the protection of the constitution. In the same year it passed another bill establishing a special court to deal with 238 persons who were involved in the Baworadej rebellion. The special court had no provision for appeals or petitions.

The passage of the Protection of the Constitution Act and the special court legislation reflected the ability of the People's Party to control the National Assembly, as well as to utilize it in legitimating its power. Although there was an effort to educate the masses in democratic rule, such an effort was highly formalistic and symbolic rather than substantive.

The 1932 Constitution, therefore, provided considerable stability for the regime, as evidenced by the fact that factional rivalry and competition for power among the military did not result in the abolishment of either the constitution or the parliament. Although there were eight cabinets in a period of six years (1932–1938), there were only two prime ministers, compared with the much more turbulent period three decades later (1969–1979) when there were ten cabinets with six prime ministers under four constitutions.

Political parties were not allowed to function in the first fifteen years of constitutional rule, and the voting method in the first election was indirect. (Each village elected its representatives; the village representatives chose those of the districts, who in turn chose the representatives of the province.) Political

participation was a mobilized action in which officials of the Interior Ministry at the village and district levels played a significant role, a pattern not dissimilar to that existing in contemporary Thai politics. Hence early universal suffrage in Thailand did not lead to meaningful political participation or the emergence of political organizations, as happened in other societies. It should be pointed out also that universal suffrage was given to the people when they were not familiar with the principles and the workings of the new system. It is not surprising therefore that constitutional rule was finally replaced by an authoritarian military rule, first by Field Marshal Pibul, and later by Field Marshal Sarit and Field Marshal Thanom.

Pibul's cabinets from 1938 to 1944 marked the high point of rule by the army. During this period, there were seven cabinets with a yearly average of 51 percent military men in the cabinets. Also in this same period, the yearly average of the percentage of military expenditure to total national spending increased to 33 percent, compared with 26 percent during the 1933–1937 period. With the rise to power of Pibul, heroism and ultranationalism, with emphasis on leadership, began to develop. Such developments finally led to militarization, especially before the outbreak of World War II. In 1942 the government amended the constitution to extend the tenure of the parliament for two years, and in 1944 the tenure was extended for another two years.

Although Pibul's rise to power did not in any way affect the constitution, his leadership style and ultranationalistic policies greatly affected civil liberties. His *ratthaniyom* marked the first and most systematic intervention of the state into the lives of the Thai citizenry. The Thai people were told what to do and what not to do by their "great leader." The state assumed its role in remolding the values and behavior of the citizens by imposing several orders, rules, and regulations. The nationalist drive also resulted in a number of discriminatory policies against the Chinese minority. Strangely enough, there was no challenge to the government's policies as being unconstitutional, either by the parliament or by the press. This reflected the weakness of democratic values and the inherently

autocratic traits in Thai society, which were utilized to a great extent by Pibul and his principal political adviser.

Before the outbreak of World War II the Pibul government was mainly controlled by members of the 1932 junior clique, including Pridi Phanomyong, a prominent civilian leader who was the chief ideologist of the 1932 coup group. World War II brought about a major conflict between Pibul and Pridi. The former chose to ally with the Japanese and the Axis Powers while the latter identified himself with the Allied Powers. When Thailand declared war against the Allies, Pridi formed an underground movement against the Japanese and the Axis Powers. The defeat of the Japanese and the Axis resulted in the collapse of Pibul's military government.

Postwar Politics

Postwar politics was largely a matter of a struggle among three groups for dominance. One was the military group that supported Pibul and was based mainly in the army. The second group, at first centering on Pridi, was rooted in parliament and the civil service. The third group, considerably smaller, was traditionalist and royalist in character. This group was led by Khuang Aphaiwong and Seni Pramoj (Wilson 1962, 22).

After Pibul's resignation in July 1945, which coincided with the Japanese surrender in the following month, the National Assembly began to play a dominant role in the political system for the first time. Political parties were formed in late 1945 and early 1946. A new constitution was drafted and promulgated in May 1946 to replace the 1932 Constitution. The new constitution was an attempt by the temporary civilian coalition of Pridi and Khuang to establish new institutional arrangements to minimize the power of the military. It provided for a bicameral legislature: the House of Representatives, to be elected directly, and the Senate to be elected indirectly by the House. At the first election of the Senate, most of the candidates were the appointed members of the former National Assembly who were Pridi's supporters.

Politics during this civilian interregnum were highly unstable. From August 1945 to November 1947 there were eight cabinets and five different prime ministers. Competition among civilian politicians, together with charges of corruption, economic hardship as the result of the war, and the mysterious death of King Ananda, led to a military coup in November 1947. The coup group abolished the 1946 Constitution and replaced it with an interim constitution, resulting in the January 1948 elections in which the Democrat Party won a majority. However, after less than two months of his premiership the leader of the Democrat Party, Khuang, was forced to resign by the army, and Field Marshal Pibul was installed as the new Premier in April 1948.

In March 1949 a new constitution was promulgated. This constitution provided for a bicameral legislature like that of the 1946 version, but with an appointed Senate instead of an elected one. The new constitution barred officials from being members of the National Assembly, thus separating the once-powerful military and civilian bureaucrats from active involvement in politics. Such arrangements antagonized the military and finally led to the “silent coup” in November 1951 by the same officers who organized the 1947 coup.

The coup group reinstated the 1932 Constitution, which provided for a unicameral legislature with two categories of members, half elected and half appointed. Ninety-one (or 74 percent) of the total 123 appointed in the 1951 parliament were military members, of whom sixty-two were army officers, fourteen were navy, and fifteen were air force officers. It is also noteworthy that thirty-four of them were the younger generation of middle-ranking officers (major to colonel). As David Wilson pointed out, with the re-establishment of the 1932 Constitution the principle of tutelage was again imposed on an assembly that had been free of it for six years. The government was therefore able to control the legislature through its appointed members and no longer faced serious difficulty in organizing a majority group to support it (Wilson 1962, 20). In February 1952 an Emergency Law providing the government with wide powers of arrest and press censorship was

passed. In November of the same year an Anticommunist Law was approved by parliament by an almost unanimous vote (Thak 1979, 102).

Following their consolidation of power in the 1951 “silent coup,” the 1947 coup group became deeply involved in politics and commercial activities. They built up their economic base of power by setting up their own business firms, got control over state enterprises and semigovernmental companies, and gained free shares from private firms mainly owned by Chinese merchants. This active involvement in business ventures resulted in the division of the group into two competing cliques, popularly known as the “Rajakru,” under the leadership of Police General Phao Sriyanond, and the “Sisao Deves” clique, under the leadership of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat. Each controlled more than thirty companies in banking and finance, industry, and commerce (Sungsidh 1980). This split between Phao, the police chief, and Sarit, the army chief, was seen as an attempt by Pibul to maintain his power by manipulating and balancing off these two factions. However, the events of 1955 to 1957 culminated in the coup of September 1957 in which Sarit ousted both Pibul and Phao. This coup mainly concerned a succession conflict: “When a situation of considerable tension had developed in the Bangkok political scene, the Sarit clique moved with the army to take over the government and ‘clean up the mess’” (Wilson 1962, 180).

After the September 1957 coup the constitution was temporarily suspended, resulting in the dissolution of the parliament. The coup group appointed Pote Sarasin, the former Thai ambassador to the United States, as the premier of a caretaker government. A general election was held in December 1957 in which no party won a majority in the parliament. Lieutenant General Thanom Kittikachorn, a leading member of the coup group, was chosen as the prime minister in January 1958. However, as a result of the inability of the government to control the internal strife within its supported party as well as deteriorating economic conditions, Sarit staged another coup in October 1958. This time he abrogated the constitution, dissolved the parliament, banned political parties;

arrested several politicians, journalists, writers, and labor leaders; declared martial law; and imposed censorship on newspapers. In 1959, an Interim Constitution was promulgated establishing an all appointed constituent assembly whose main function was to draft a new “permanent constitution.” The interim Constitution also gave tremendous power to the prime minister. From 1958 to 1963 Sarit used the power given by Article 17 of that constitution to execute without trial eleven persons—five for arson, one for producing heroin, and four on charges of communism (Thak 1979, 201).

Sarit’s rule (1958–1963) has been characterized as a dictatorship, as a benevolent despotism, and as military rule. However, as a noted scholar of this period observed, Sarit’s 1958 coup marked the beginning of a new political system that endured until at least the early 1970s. What Sarit did in effect was to overthrow a whole political system inherited from 1932, and to create one that could be termed more “Thai” in character (Thak 1979, 140–141). Apart from his strongly anticommunist policy and his initiation of a National Development Plan that opened the way for the tremendous developmental activities of the following decades, the most significant change Sarit brought to the Thai political system was the activation of the role of the monarchy. As Thak rightly pointed out, Sarit made it possible, without perhaps so intending, for the monarchy to grow strong enough to play an independent role after his death. The relative political weakness of Sarit’s successors brought the throne even more clearly to the center of the political stage (Thak 1979, 334).

After Sarit’s death in 1963 Thanom became prime minister and commander of the army. In 1968 a new constitution was promulgated after ten years of drafting. The familiar vicious cycle of Thai politics, evident in earlier periods, recurred. A semi-parliamentary system was established with a two-house legislature. Two years after that, conflicts developed within the government-supported party, leading to a military coup in November 1971. Another interim constitution was promulgated, providing for a single constituent assembly composed entirely of appointed members, most of whom were military and civil bureaucrats.

The Breakdown of Military Rule

After the 1971 coup a new and ambitious strongman emerged: Colonel Narong Kittikachorn, the prime minister's son and Deputy Prime Minister Praphat's son-in-law. Narong was appointed assistant secretary-general of the National Executive Council, the supreme body of government administration after the 1971 coup. Apart from being the commander of the powerful Bangkok-based Eleventh Infantry Regiment, he acted as head of a new Committee to Suppress Elements Detrimental to Society, and was also made deputy secretary-general of a new anticorruption agency. Narong was seen as the heir apparent to the prime ministership. This kind of dynastic succession, never before seen in the Thai military, generated tremendous discontent and criticism from the general public.

Leaders of the student movement were well aware that the growing popular animosity to Narong and the military offered a potentially unique opportunity to put pressure on the military for political reforms, a new constitution, and an elected parliament. On 6 October 1973 student leaders and political activists were arrested while they were distributing leaflets demanding immediate promulgation of a new constitution. The government announced that the police had uncovered a communist plot to overthrow the administration.

From 6 October through 13 October hundreds of thousands of students and others gathered to support the cause of the jailed students. Although the government agreed to release the students and promised to quicken the drafting of the new constitution, riot police on the morning of 14 October clashed with a group of demonstrators in front of the royal place, thereby sparking violence in other parts of the city. In the meantime a deep split was developing within the military's own leadership. General Krit Sivara, army commander in chief, began to adopt a position independent of the Thanom-Praphat group. General Krit's intervention rendered further military suppression untenable, leaving Thanom, Praphat, and Narong no alternative but to flee the country,

after being personally ordered by the king to do so. The king appointed Professor Sanya Thammasak, former chief justice of the Supreme Court and rector of Thammasat University, as the prime minister.

The Failure of Democracy, 1974–1976¹

The student-led uprising of 14 October 1973 brought back once again the period of open politics and democratic experimentation. The 1974 Constitution was patterned after the 1949 Constitution. It limited the number of senators to only 100, with much less power than the elected House of Representatives. Government officials elected to the House or appointed to the Senate had to resign their bureaucratic posts; votes of no confidence remained the sole prerogative of the House; and the prime minister had to be a member of the House of Representatives. These provisions set the stage for a more open political system based on party and pressure group politics.

From 1974 to 1976 the political climate in Thailand became highly volatile. Pressure group politics, mobilization, polarization, and confrontation replaced the usual political acquiescence and the achievement of consensus through bargaining between established patron-client factions. The students, labor unions, and farmer groups were the most active in expressing grievances and making demands, which led them into conflict with government officials, business interests, and landowners.

Primarily because the previous governing elite (especially the army) was discredited, and because the abrupt departure of Thanom, Praphat, and Narong had damaged existing patron-client linkages, no single government political party emerged. Several factional groups formed, each composed of members of earlier government parties. Progressive elements also were unable to coalesce into a coherent political party, splintering instead into

1. For more details on this period, see Morell and Chai-Anan 1981.

numerous competing groups. Fragmentation and political polarization of both Left and Right characterized Thai politics during this period. The Democrat Party, the nation's oldest, was divided into three competing factions; each formed its own political party to contest the 1975 elections. The members of the defunct government party were also split into several competing groups, which subsequently led to the formation of four identifiable parties, namely, the Thai Nation Party, the Social Nationalist Party, the Social Justice Party, and the Social Agrarian Party. These parties were linked with the business community and the military-bureaucratic factions. Apart from these parties, there were two new parties in the center-left spectrum, the Social Action Party and the New Force Party, and two leftist parties, the United Socialist Front and the Socialist Party of Thailand. Although forty-two parties contested the 1975 election, only twenty-two gained seats in the House. The Democrat Party, which had the largest number of seats in the House (seventy-two out of 269), formed a ninety-one-seat minority government in February 1975, but on 6 March the House voted no confidence in the newly-formed government. The Social Action Party under the leadership of Kukrit Pramoj, with only eighteen seats in the House, together with three other major parties and ten minor parties, formed a new coalition government. However, this government had a built-in instability because of the lack of trust among leaders of the various parties. Each party, aware of the possible dissolution of the House at almost any moment, focused on building its own small empire. As 1975 progressed, the pace of political maneuvering accelerated. On 12 January 1975—two days before the Democrat Party's scheduled vote of a no confidence motion—Kukrit dissolved the parliament. In the April 1976 election four major parties—the Democrat, Thai Nation, Social Justice, and Social Action—emerged as the dominant powers, compared with the multiplicity of small parties in the House elected fifteen months earlier.

The election results, shown in Table 1, demonstrated several continuing features of Thai politics. The national average voter turnout was slightly reduced, 46 percent compared with 47 percent

Table 1
Comparative Elections Results,
January 1975 and April 1976, for Largest Parties in Thailand

	January 1975		April 1976	
	Percent of Popular Vote	Percent of Seats	Percent of Popular Vote	Percent of Seats
Democrat	18.0	26.8	25.4	40.9
Social Justice	14.8	16.7	10.7	10.0
Thai Nation	12.2	10.5	18.1	20.1
Social Action	11.4	6.7	17.8	16.1
Social Agrarian	7.7	7.1	4.3	3.2
Social Nationalist	7.1	6.0	3.3	2.9
New Force	5.9	4.5	7.0	1.1
Socialist	4.7	5.6	1.9	0.7
Socialist Front	3.8	3.7	1.0	0.4
Peace-Loving People	3.5	2.9	—	—
Thai Reformist	2.0	1.1	—	—
Thai	1.7	1.5	—	—
People's Justice	1.7	2.2	—	—
Democracy	1.7	0.8	0.3	0.4
Labor	0.9	0.4	0.8	0.4
Agriculturist	0.7	0.4	—	—
Sovereign	0.6	0.7	—	—
Thai Land	0.5	0.7	—	—
Free People	0.5	0.4	—	—
People's Force	0.4	0.7	4.0	1.1
Economist	0.3	0.4	—	—
Provincial Development	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.7
Dharmacracy	—	—	1.4	0.4
Protecting Thailand	—	—	1.2	0.4
Democratic Front	—	—	1.0	0.4
Thai Society	—	—	0.7	0.4
New Siam	—	—	0.4	0.4
Progressive Society	—	—	0.1	0.4
Total	100.3	100.2	99.9	100.4

Source: Chai-Anan Samudavanija and Sethaporn Cusripitak, 1977; Rapin Tavornpun, "Popular Votes in 1976 Elections," *The Nation Weekly*, 15 July 1976)

in 1975. Only 29 percent voted in Bangkok, compared with the 33 percent that had voted fifteen months earlier. Leftist parties suffered a humiliating defeat as the electorate displayed a strong conservative tendency in its overall orientation—a preference for political safety over political development. The two socialist parties dropped from twenty-five to three seats, or in percentage terms from 10 to 1 percent of the House as a whole; the progressive New Force Party declined from twelve to three seats. Thus the perceived radical alternative so touted in the months after October 1973 was obliterated by the results of a free election. The Socialists won even fewer seats in April 1976 than in the House elected under military rule in February 1969.

These election results confirmed certain basic trends. One fact was clear: while conflict between the political forces committed to change and those committed to maintenance of the status quo was continuing to escalate, most citizens longed for the stability and security of an earlier, easier era. As they reflected on the extremes of violence that had become commonplace over the preceding months, many Thais were seriously asking familiar questions: “Can representative political institutions really survive in Thailand under these pressures?” And of course, “When will the Army finally intervene?”

The Democrat Party’s leader, Seni Pramoj (brother of Kukrit), took over as prime minister on 20 April, at the head of a grand coalition comprising the Democrat, Thai Nation, Social Justice, and Social Nationalist parties. Together these four parties controlled 206 of the 279 seats in the new House of Representatives. However, due in large measure to the weak and vacillating leadership of its aging head, the Democrat Party had by 1976 become divided into two sharply opposing factions, one progressive and the other conservative. The conservative faction, in alliance with other rightist parties, ultra-rightist groups, and the military, attacked the progressive faction as being leftist and communist. The factionalism and the weakness of civilian leadership coincided with the growth of leftist ideology and political polarization. Amid these situations came the fall of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia

to the communists. Hence, when a crisis occurred in October 1976 following Field Marshal Thanom's return to Bangkok, the weak and faction-ridden civilian government was unable to control the violent and chaotic situation. On 6 October 1976 the military once again intervened.

The Resumption of Military Rule

The 1976 coup resulted in a familiar autocratic political pattern with even more extremist overtones. The 1974 constitution, parliament, and all political parties were abolished; martial law was proclaimed. The coup group appointed Thanin Kraivichien, a staunchly anticommunist judge, as the new prime minister. Over the months that followed, Thailand was immersed in intense reactionary rule. Several thousand students were arrested while others fled to join the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) in the hills.

The ultra-rightist policies of the Thanin government—especially its stipulated twelve-year plan for political development, its obsession with communism, and unnecessary aggressiveness toward communist regimes in neighboring countries—resulted in increasing polarization of the Thai society (Girling 1981, 215–219).

Thanin's anticommunist zeal brought about rigorous indoctrination of civil servants, repressive educational control, pressure on labor unions, severe press censorship, and a rigid foreign policy. The military leaders, especially the emerging "Young Turks" in the army, became convinced that Thanin was leading the country to disaster, that his extremist policies were having a most divisive effect and were indirectly strengthening the CPT. On 20 October 1977 the Thanin government was overthrown by the same group that had staged the coup that brought Thanin to power one year earlier.

The coup group eased social conflicts and political tension by abolishing the 1977 Constitution and replacing it with a more liberal one. A bicameral legislature with an elected lower House was again introduced and a general election was held in April

1979. However, the new military regime, like its predecessors, maintained its control over the legislature through the appointed Senate to ensure political stability.

The new government adopted a liberal policy toward the problem of communism by granting amnesty to the students and others who were arrested in the 6 October incident as well as to those who had fled to join the CPT. This move, together with other subsequent political measures and reduced support of the CPT by China, led to a diminution of the insurgency in the mid-1980s.

A significant political development from 1977 to 1980 was the rise to political influence of the “Young Turks” within the military establishment. The emergence of these young colonels as a pressure group coincided with the fragmentation of power among army generals. Their political importance stemmed essentially from their strategically important positions within the army organization, which provided a power base for the coup group and the government formed after the coup. Since parliamentary politics after the 1979 election were still unstable because of the proliferation of political parties and interparty conflict in the coalition government, and the military was still deeply split at the higher echelons, the Young Turks were able to exert pressure for changes in leadership. In 1980 they withdrew support for General Kriengsak’s government, forcing the prime minister to resign, and installed General Prem Tinsulanonda in his place. However, the Young Turks became frustrated a year later with the premier’s choice of certain ministers (in a cabinet reshuffle occasioned by interparty conflict in the coalition government). On 1 April 1981 the Young Turks tried and failed to capture state power, despite their overwhelming military forces. The failure of their coup attempt was due largely to their inability to get the tacit approval and support of the king, who openly supported Prem. The Young Turks’ power and influence thus ended abruptly.

As a result of the failed coup thirty-eight officers were discharged, leaving a power vacuum in the army. At the same time Major General Arthit Kamlangek, who was responsible for

the suppression of the 1 April 1981 coup attempt, rose rapidly to the rank of full general and became commander of the army in October 1982. Although he attempted to prove himself as a new strongman and as a successor to Prem, General Arthit found it difficult to advance his political career in that direction. The military's failure to amend the constitution in 1983 to allow permanent officials to hold cabinet positions made it impossible for General Arthit to enjoy the status his predecessors had as commanders of the army. As the army suffered a big split after the 1 April 1981 coup attempt, and the dismissed officers still maintained considerable influence among their troops, there was deep concern and widespread fear of a possible counter coup if a coup was carried out.

In September 1985, while the prime minister was in Indonesia and General Arthit was in Europe, Colonel Manoon Rookkajorn, the leader of the Young Turks, and a group of officers in the Armored Cavalry Regiment still loyal to him, staged an unsuccessful coup. Two former commanders in chief of the armed forces (General Kriengsak Chommanan and General Serm Na Nakorn), two former deputy commanders in chief, and a serving deputy commander in chief of the armed forces (Air Chief Marshal Arun Promthep), were put on trial together with thirty low-ranking officers, while Colonel Manoon was allowed to leave the country. The September 1985 coup created a wider rift between the prime minister and General Arthit since the premier's advisers suspected that the latter was behind the unsuccessful bid for power. Subsequently relations between General Prem and General Arthit became increasingly strained. On 1 May 1986 the government decree on diesel-fueled vehicle registration was voted down in the House, leading the prime minister to dissolve the parliament.

The dissolution of the parliament led to the formation of new political parties that openly declared their hostility toward General Prem. The scheduled election on 27 July 1986 was four days before the retirement date of General Arthit, and it was speculated by the premier's aides that General Arthit could make use of his positions as commander in chief of the armed forces and commander in

chief of the army to influence the outcome of the election. On 27 May 1986 the premier removed General Arthit as army commander in chief and appointed his former aide, General Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh, to the post.

The 27 July 1986 general election did not drastically change the political situation prior to it. Although the Democrat Party won the largest number of seats in the parliament (100 out of 374), there were another fourteen parties elected with representation ranging from one to sixty-three seats (Table 2). It was therefore

Table 2
Results of the Thailand General Elections, 1983 and 1986

	1983		1986	
	Number of Seats Won	Percent of Seats	Number of Seats Won	Percent of Seats
Democrat	56	7.3	100	28.8
Chart Thai (Thai Nation)	73	22.5	63	18.2
Social Action	92	28.4	51	14.7
Prachakorn Thai (Thai Citizen)	36	11.1	24	6.9
United Democratic ^a	—	—	38	10.9
Rassadorn (People's Party) ^a	—	—	18	5.2
Community Action ^a	—	—	15	4.3
Ruam Thai (United Thai) ^a	—	—	19	5.4
Progressive	3	1.0	9	2.6
National Democratic	15	4.6	3	0.9
Muan Chon (Mass Party) ^a	—	—	3	0.9
Liberal ^a	—	—	1	0.3
New Force	—	—	1	0.3
Puang Chon Chao Thai (Thai People)	—	—	1	0.3
Democratic Labor	—	—	1	0.3
Independents ^b	49	15.1	—	—
Total	100.3	100.2	99.9	100.4

Notes:

a. Parties formed after 1983.

b. In the 1986 election candidates had to belong to political parties in order to be qualified to contest.

inevitable that a coalition government be formed, and it is interesting to note that this has been the pattern of government since 1975. The only difference is that coalition governments after 1983 have been more stable than their counterparts during 1975–1976 and 1979–1982.

The outcome of the 1986 election did not affect the pattern of leadership succession. General Prem, who did not run in the election and does not belong to any party, was invited by seven political parties (including Democrat, Thai Nation, Social Action, People's Community Action, Thai Citizen, and United Thai) to head the government. It is clear that the support from the military was the key factor in the decisions of the political parties to nominate him as the premier. This confirms our assertion (see below) that the semi-democratic system is still the most accepted political arrangement in Thailand.

The present Thai political system can be called neither a democracy nor an authoritarian system. It falls between the two political modes and has been termed a semi-democratic government in which the bureaucratic elite have made certain concessions to the nonbureaucratic forces to allow participation in the political process. The semi-democratic system is a political compromise—made possible through distinctive constitutional arrangements—between the bureaucratic and the nonbureaucratic forces.

Historical Analysis

Constitutional Structure and Change

During the half century from 1932 to 1987, Thailand has had thirteen constitutions, thirteen general elections, sixteen coups (nine of which were successful), and forty-three cabinets. There have been sixteen prime ministers, of whom six were military officers and ten civilians. During this period military prime ministers have been in power altogether for forty-four years, while their civilian counterparts were in office for a total of only eleven years.

Moreover, some civilian prime ministers were simply fronts for the military.

Successful military interventions usually resulted in the abrogation of constitutions, abolishment of parliaments, and suspension of participant political activity. Each time, however, the military reestablished parliamentary institutions of some kind. This reflects the concern for legitimacy of every military group that came to power after 1932. But because of the weakness of extrabureaucratic forces and the lack of broadbased support for political parties, what has occurred in Thailand since 1932 is referred to as factional constitutionalism (Wilson 1962, 262). This explains why there have been as many as thirteen constitutions and seven constitutional amendments in a period of fifty-five years. It also explains why democracy in Thailand has many versions and is still being interpreted differently by various groups.

In Thailand a constitution does not normally provide for the general and neutral rules of the game to regulate participation and competition between political groups. On the contrary, it has been used as a major tool in maintaining the power of the group that created it. What Thailand has experienced is not constitutionalism and constitutional government, but rather different kinds of regimes that adjusted and readjusted institutional relationships between the executive and the legislative branches according to their power position vis-à-vis their opponents.

Constitutional arrangements have basically presented three main patterns. One is the democratic pattern, which takes as its model the British parliamentary system, in which the elected legislature and political parties have dominant and active roles in the political process. Under such a system the prime minister must come from a major political party and is an elected MP. An upper house may be maintained but the number of its members is relatively small and its power minimal. In this model military leaders have no opportunity to become prime ministers and bureaucrats are not allowed to take political positions. The second, a semi-democratic pattern, favors a strong executive vis-à-vis the legislative branch. The prime minister does not have to be an elected member of the

parliament; the upper house is composed mostly of military and civilian bureaucrats with more or less equal powers to the lower house; and the total number of senators is almost equal to the number of elected representatives.

The third, the undemocratic pattern, has no elected parliament. A legislature is maintained but its members are all appointed, and it acts as a mere rubber stamp on executive decisions that require enactment into laws. Under this system political parties are not allowed to function; hence no elections are held.

Table 3 shows the types of constitutions and the periods in which they were in effect.

The most important aspect of a Thai constitution is not the provision and protection of civil and political liberties, but the extent to which it allows the elected House of Representatives to participate in the political process. While, theoretically, the constitution is the highest law of the land, the constitution limits its own power by stating that citizens have political and civil rights and liberties “except where laws otherwise so stipulate.” Thus laws, executive decrees, etc. have precedence over constitutional rights and liberties. Such laws limiting rights and freedoms are framed in terms of national security, public order, public morality. Seldom, if ever, is a law challenged on the basis of unconstitutionality. Even if a constitutional issue were to be raised, it would not be decided by an independent judiciary but by a Constitutional Tribunal composed of three *ex officio* officers (president of

Notes to Table 3

* Still in effect as of 21 December 1987

^a 27 June 1932–10 December 1932; ^b 10 December 1932–9 May 1946; ^c 10 May 1946–8 November 1947; ^d 9 November 1947–22 March 1949; ^e 23 March–29 November 1951; ^f 8 March 1952–20 October 1958; ^g 28 January 1959–20 June 1968; ^h 21 June 1968–17 November 1971; ⁱ 15 December 1972–6 October 1974; ^j 7 October 1974–6 October 1976; ^k 22 October 1976–20 October 1977; ^l 19 November 1977–21 December 1978; ^m 21 December 1978 to present. ⁿ Excludes a total of 1 year, 8 months, 22 days when no constitution was in effect.

Table 3
Constitutions in Thailand: June 1932–December 1987

Constitution	Types of Constitution					
	Democratic (number)	Years in Effect	Semi-democratic (number)	Years in Effect	Un-democratic (number)	Years in Effect
1932 ^a (provisional)			✓	5 months 12 days		
1932 ^b			✓	13 years 5 months		
1946 ^c	✓	1 year 6 months				
1947 ^d			✓	1 year 4 months 13 days		
1949 ^e	✓	2 years 8 months 6 days				
1932 ^f (amended 1952)			✓	6 years 7 months 12 days		
1959 ^g					✓	9 years 4 months 23 days
1968 ^h			✓	3 years 4 months 28 days		
1972 ⁱ					✓	1 year 9 months 21 days
1974 ^j	✓	2 years				
1976 ^k					✓	363 days
1977 ^l					✓	1 year 1 month 13 days
1978 ^m			✓	9 years		
Total	3	6 years 2 months 6 days	6	34 years 3 months 5 days	4	13 years 3 months 25 days

parliament, chief justice of the Supreme Court, and director-general of the Department of Prosecutions) and four jurists appointed by parliament. Thus, while the form and structure of constitutional government is visible, in reality the game is fixed; the political deck is stacked in favor of the executive.²

In other words, constitutionalism was not designed so much to constrain the rulers as to facilitate their rule. The constitutions therefore did not prescribe the effective norms of political behavior, but were used to cast a cloak of legitimacy over the operations of succeeding rulers and to set the stage for a play to be enacted by the extrabureaucratic performers—parliaments, political parties, and electors (Riggs 1966, 152–153).

Having an elected House of Representatives means that a mechanism must be devised and agreement reached between elected politicians and nonelected bureaucratic politicians (military included) on the sharing of power in the cabinet. Whenever this relationship is strained, the tendency has always been to abolish the constitution so that the elected House of Representatives will be automatically terminated. Similarly, having an entirely appointed assembly means that such mechanism and agreement have to be arranged among the bureaucratic elites, especially among the military.

Out of thirteen constitutions, only three can be classified as “democratic” while six have been “semi-democratic” and four have been “nondemocratic” (Table 3). From 1932 to 1987, “democratic” constitutions were in effect for only six years and two months while the “semi-democratic” and “undemocratic” have been in effect (through December 1987) for thirty-four years, three months and thirteen years, four months respectively. (No constitution was in effect for one year, eight months). In other words, during these fifty-five years there were only six years when political institutions could operate within the democratic rules of the game. Moreover, these six years were thinly spread out among three different short periods.

2. I am indebted to Dr. William Klausner for his observation on this point.

Political Institutionalization

The weakness of the democratic pattern of rule can be attributed to the low level of political institutionalization in Thailand, which is the consequence of three important factors: the frequency of coups d'état, the discontinuity of elected parliaments, and the weaknesses of political parties.

Military coups in Thailand are a means by which political leaders alternate in power. Therefore it is not necessary that political, social, and economic crises be preconditions for a military intervention, although they could facilitate the intervention, particularly when the civilian government's supporters are very strong and active. From 1932 through 1987 there have been altogether sixteen military interventions, nine of which were successful.

As military interventions have become more frequent, the commitment of the military to democratic institutions has declined. This is indicated by the fact that in all the five coups during the 1932–1958 period the coup groups changed only the governments in power but did not abolish the constitution. Elections were held and political parties were allowed to function, although their roles in parliament were limited by the presence of the appointed members of the assembly. After 1958, however, military interventions usually resulted in the abolishment of the constitutions and the 'freezing' of participant political activities. In the following period of twenty years (1958–1978) there were altogether seven constitutions, only one of which can be classified as 'democratic' (1974 Constitution); the rest gave vast powers to an executive branch that was dominated by bureaucratic elites. The high frequency of military interventions in Thailand has had diverse negative effects upon democratic political institutions and has bred more instability within the political system as a whole.

While democratic political institutions suffered setbacks and discontinuity, the military has greatly strengthened its organization and expanded its role in several areas. During the 1976–1982 period the defense budget averaged about 20 percent of the total

government expenditure. The military has also been granted each year a considerable secret fund, which could be used for intelligence operations but has also been widely used for internal security and political purposes. Several civic action programs, political education projects, and rightist movements have been financed from this fund.

Most of the mass communication media, particularly radio and television stations, are under the control of the military—which has undoubtedly reinforced its political potency. Out of 269 radio stations—all of which are government-owned—the military stations account for some 57 percent, while 33 percent are operated by the Public Relations Department and the rest by other ministries and educational institutions. The army also runs two television stations (Sethaporn et al. 1985, 37). The military can utilize radio and television programs for psychological warfare and/or mobilizing mass movements in times of political crisis. For instance, the Armored School Radio played a very active role during 1975 and 1976 in mobilizing the rightist movement against the student demonstrators, which eventually led to the coup on 6 October 1976.

In recent years the military has adopted a standpoint that serves to strengthen its legitimate role in politics. It has been emphasized that the military as an institution (or ‘national armed forces’) is the principal machine of the state; therefore when a government composed of political parties fails to solve national problems, the military is entitled to use its own policies to solve those problems (Chaovalit 1985).

In a country where participant political institutions are weak, the military can effectively rally public support by pointing to the instability of government and ineffective administration of state affairs by party politics. In their thinking, politics and government administration are inseparable; hence government officials could hold political positions, such as cabinet officers, concurrently with their administrative positions in order to ensure national security.

Historically, therefore, the military and civilian bureaucratic elites represent the most dynamic political forces in Thai society. They were prime movers in most of the events and changes. They

are the most powerful political machine in the country, and have been able to control the political game fairly well. The circulation of the military and the bureaucratic elites is also worth noting. The control and command of military positions, especially those at the top of the pyramid and also at the politically important posts, can be utilized for multipurpose activities ranging from getting themselves appointed to the National Assembly to the chairmanship or membership of the public enterprise boards.

Unlike Malaysia and Singapore, where tenures of parliaments last without interruption, only four parliaments in Thailand completed their tenures; the rest were disrupted by coups d'état. While discontinuity of elected parliaments is a fact of political life, the appointed assemblies have been continued without disruption. It is therefore not surprising that some military officials, such as General Prem, have been members of the appointed assemblies since 1958, while the majority of members of the elected parliament in 1980 served in the House of Representatives for the first time.

When parliaments could not complete their tenures, several bills proposed by the members had to be resubmitted, thus delaying the process of socioeconomic reform in response to the rapidly changing condition of society during these interim periods. Legislative supporting organizations such as legislative reference and research units were only established in 1974 and could not function effectively because of the lack of support from the government. Members on parliamentary standing committees keep changing from one parliament to another, preventing MPs from developing expertise in their chosen fields.

These consequences of parliamentary discontinuity have weakened the power of the legislative branch vis-à-vis that of the executive and prevented the legislature from becoming a potent force in the Thai political system.

Discontinuity of elected parliaments has had adverse effects on political parties in several aspects. Party organizations could not be developed and political mobilization could only be at best ad hoc. From 1946 to 1981 143 parties were formed but only a few survived throughout these years. All of the parties are urban based

with weak rural organization, and party branches are not very well organized.

When political parties were allowed to function they suffered from lack of discipline among their members, who pursued factional and individual interests rather than abiding by party policies. Usually political parties in Thailand are primarily groupings of individuals or networks of patrons and clients who are forced to be together by a political party law requiring candidates to contest elections under party banners. After elections almost all of the parties have no significant programs that would link them with the masses.

Unlike Singapore and Malaysia, which are one-party-dominant states, in Thailand no single party has ever dominated the political scene. When government parties won a majority in parliament, factionalism within them usually led to political crises, culminating in military interventions. From 1975 to 1976, parliamentary seats were shared by from eight to twenty-two parties, resulting in highly unstable coalition governments.

Apart from the above-mentioned factors inhibiting the strength of political parties in Thailand, the development of a party system is affected by the hostile attitude of bureaucratic elites toward the role of political parties. As Kramol Tongdharmachart (1982, 37) observes, "the bureaucratic elites often perceived political parties as the cause of national disunity and political instability and also as the political entity that could threaten their power positions" When political parties were allowed to function, the bureaucratic elites usually imposed obstacles to their formation and performance, making it difficult for the parties to mature at a natural rate of growth. The 1981 Political Party Law required the potential party organizers to fulfill several requirements before their parties can be registered and legally perform their functions. For example, they must recruit a minimum of 5,000 members with residence in five provinces in each of the four regions of the country. In addition, each province must be represented in the potential party with a minimum of fifty persons.

To encourage a strong party system, the present constitution requires that in the general election parties must field candidates

numbering not less than half of the total number of members of the House of Representatives. Except for the Bangkok Metropolis, which is divided into three constituencies, every other province is regarded as one constituency. The method of voting is to be that of a party slate system; political parties are to submit lists of the candidates supported by them to stand in the constituencies, for the voters to decide on the whole slates.³ All these measures were adopted in the hope that they would eliminate small parties so that a two-party system would finally emerge. Naturally such measures have created a tremendous need for major political parties to mobilize funds for their campaigns. It is estimated that to be able to support candidates in a general election, a political party would need at least 50 million baht for campaign funding (U.S. \$1 = 25 baht in 1987).⁴

The need for campaign funds has led to a closer relationship between political parties and business interests. Some prominent businessmen have thus become either deputy leaders or executive members of political parties, whereas in the past these people maintained relatively distant relationships with leaders of political parties. At the provincial level local businessmen are also more actively involved in politics both as candidates and as financial supporters of political parties. At the national level most of the businessmen who are party financiers prefer not to run in the election. However, because of their financial contributions, they are given cabinet portfolios in the coalition governments. Conflicts, therefore, usually arise between the elected politicians and the party financiers who are executive members of the parties and are given cabinet posts. The elected politicians call these party

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3. This electoral system and voting method were changed to that of multiple constituencies and individual candidacy by a constitutional amendment in 1985.
 4. A candidate uses about 800,000 baht in an election campaign although the election law permits a candidate to spend not more than 350,000 baht. In highly competitive constituencies a candidate spends as much as five to ten million baht to win a seat.

financiers “political businessmen,” distinguishing them from the “grassroots politicians.” Hence, although there has been more involvement from the private sector in the Thai political system, this development has created especially destabilizing effects. This is because, apart from cabinet positions, political secretaries to ministers, and a limited number of executive positions in public enterprises, there are no other significant official positions to which party financiers could be appointed. The competition for limited positions between these two groups of people in various political parties has markedly contributed to the overall instability of the system.

It is fair to say that most businessmen still prefer not to be formally identified with any political party. This is because party politics are not yet institutionalized, while bureaucratic politics provides more certainty. However, if there is continuity in the parliamentary system it is natural that compromises would be made between “grassroots politicians,” who claim to represent a broader spectrum of national interests, and the “political businessmen,” whose interests are more parochial. At present only the privileged groups have access to the formal political institutions through their alliances with political parties and lobbying. The underprivileged groups, i.e., the workers and farmers, have no formal links with political parties and take political actions independently. In other words, while all groups articulate their interests, only the interests of privileged groups are effectively aggregated by political parties.

Major political parties in Thailand have more or less similar policies. They can be classified as moderate and nonideological. Political parties in Thailand have not yet reflected any clear-cut economic interest. Although every major political party has many prominent businessmen on its executive committee, these people became involved in party activities because of their personal relationships with leaders of the parties rather than because of their economic interests. Since parliamentary politics have suffered from lack of continuity, it has not been possible for different economic interest groups to identify their interests along party lines. Parliamentary politics, whenever they are allowed to function, have enabled politically-minded businessmen to participate in the

competition for power. Short-term parliamentary politics make political and economic alliances highly dynamic and fluid. It is too soon, therefore, to classify Thai political parties by using a criterion of specific economic interests they represent.

Like other problems concerning the weakness of political institutions, the importance of parliament and political parties in Thailand is inextricably linked with the perennial issue of the conflict between bureaucratic power and that of participant political institutions. Problems facing political parties must therefore be analyzed in a broader perspective and not restricted to internal characteristics of party organizations. It is impossible for any political party to develop its organization and to effectively perform its functions in a political system where coups d'état have become more or less institutionalized.

In historical perspective, democratic development in Thailand suffered setbacks because of certain unique circumstances. In the pre-1973 period, when extrabureaucratic forces were weak and political competition was limited to a few personalities and their cliques, the commitment to democratic values among the political elite gradually declined. This is understandable because those who were committed to democratic principles had no effective base of support, and had to engage in the same game of power play. Hence in the 1930s the leaders of the People's Party sought support from the armed forces in their competition for power. After being drawn into politics, new generations of army officers quickly realized their indispensable role. The army officers who staged the coup in 1947 and remained in power until 1973 were not only uncommitted to democratic ideals, but they also had strongly antipolitical attitudes. Hence, when extrabureaucratic forces became strong and began to play active roles in politics, they were regarded as destabilizing factors in national development. The military perceived legitimate politics in a very limited sense, involving activities centered in the parliament and not outside. As General Lek Naeomalee (former interior minister) commented: "When people in our country want to have freedom or liberty, they are going to create confusion and disorder—in our democracy we

have members of parliament, but what do we get from having a parliament? Can members of parliament help make our country stable?" (Matichon 16 September 1979).

It is evident that "democracy" as perceived by military men is quite different from the liberal democratic tradition. Its scope begins with a general election and ends at the legislature that is not necessarily an entirely elected body. It is democracy without pressure groups and is conflict-free. In other words there are another set of values higher than liberal democratic values. These values are national security, stability, and order. The attachment to these values is still strong among military officers, and the increased activism of newly emergent groups has further convinced them that full-fledged democratic rule would be detrimental to national security.

Another factor that impeded political development is that rapid socioeconomic changes coincided with the growth of the Communist Party of Thailand. This contributed to the weakening of the overall political system, since any democratic movement that aimed at mobilizing and gaining support from the masses was usually suspected of being communist-inspired. It is therefore unfortunate that significant socioeconomic changes did not lead to a stable pluralist democracy. Ideological polarization during the 1973–1976 period was too extreme and intense. Moreover, political parties were unable to establish linkages to politically active groups such as student, labor, and farmer groups. As a result political participation under the full-fledged democratic rule in the mid-1970s was close to anarchy. The military was therefore able to exploit the situation, suppressing radical elements and co-opting the moderate and conservative sections of these pressure groups.

Economic Development and Social Change

Thailand's economy has grown rapidly over the past two decades, with an average per capita income growth of almost 5 percent per annum between 1960 and 1980. (In 1961 per capita income was 2,137 baht compared with 12,365 baht in 1980. U.S. \$1 = 22 baht

in 1980). Over the same period there was a rapid transformation in the structure of production, with the share of agriculture in total value added declining from 40 percent in 1960 to 25 percent in 1980. However, it was estimated that 76 percent of the Thai population still remained in rural areas, a decline of only about 10 percent since 1960. This labor force and population distribution reflects the unusually extensive pattern of Thai agricultural growth and the pervasive rural nature of the Thai economy and society. After two decades of development Bangkok still remains the primary city. While about 9.7 percent of the Thai population lived in Bangkok in 1980, 32.7 percent of total GDP in Thailand originated in Bangkok. Although the overall incidence of poverty was reduced from 57 percent in the early 1960s to about 31 percent in the mid-1970s, poverty remains largely a rural phenomenon (World Bank 1984, 1–13). It is estimated that in 1980 11 million people in the rural areas were living in poverty. The benefit of growth was not evenly dispersed but has widened the gap between the rich and the poor, and between the rural and the urban sectors.

The manufacturing sector expanded rapidly as a result of the policy of import substitution. Its share in GDP rose from 10.5 percent in 1960 to 18 percent in 1980. The number of factories increased fivefold between 1960 and 1980. Figures in 1980 show that there were 3.6 million workers in industrial and service sectors. Apart from workers in privately-owned factories, there was also a rapid increase in the number of workers in state enterprises, which rose from 137,437 in 1973 to 433,649 in 1983. Labor unions in state enterprises have been more politically active than labor unions in the private sector. In 1983, there were 323 labor unions in the private sector while there were 91 state enterprise labor unions. However, the former had altogether only 81,465 members compared with 136,335 members in the latter. Public enterprise workers in the Electricity Authority, the railways, and the Water Supply Authority are the most organized; their political significance is due to their control of public utility services in metropolitan areas, which gives them considerable bargaining power. Hence socioeconomic changes in Thailand are marked by the highly urban

character of the society, with major potent political forces concentrated in the capital city.

By far the most important change in the Thai economy since the 1960s has been the rapid expansion of “big business enterprises” (those with assets of more than 500 million baht). According to a 1979 study the value of capital owned by the big business enterprises amounted to nearly 74 percent of the GNP that year (Krirkiat 1983). This growth of monopolistic capital was made possible by government development policies during the authoritarian regimes in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s that favored the development of industrial capital outside agriculture. Such policies were aimed at creating a production base capable of transforming an agricultural surplus into manufacturing commodities. As a result, policies of import substitution and trade protection were implemented. During the same period, government after government pursued a policy of price controls in favor of urban communities at the expense of the agricultural work force. Prices of rice paddy have been kept low for the sake of city dwellers and consumers while farmers have to purchase chemical fertilizers at extra high prices as a result of additional transportation costs (Seneh 1983, 38).

In sum, economic development in the past two decades has resulted in the concentration of economic power in the capital city and has created a large urban working class. At the same time this development witnessed the growth of the bureaucracy, which, while remaining highly centralized, penetrated more into the rural areas. By 1980 the number of government employees (excluding military forces) reached 1.4 million, making the ratio between population (46 million) and government employees 33 to 1. In the same year, government expenditure on personnel services accounted for 35 percent of total government expenditures (Chai-Anan 1980a, 6–7). Bureaucratic expansion also resulted in a rapid increase in the number of students during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. This expansion, unprecedented in Thai political history, resulted from the heavy stress placed on education by the first three national development plans (1961–1976) and

provided more than 30 percent of the total government funds each year to education at all levels. Most significant politically was the rapid expansion in the number of university students, which rose from 15,000 in 1961 to 50,000 in 1972, and has since increased greatly (Darling 1974, 6–7).

As discussed earlier, in the early 1970s latent demands for participation were escalating exponentially. The student-led unrest in October 1973 and its aftermath were direct results of the frustrations and unfulfilled aspirations associated with this large and growing gap between change in the society at large and stagnation in its political institutions. Although new nonbureaucratic groups emerged, most of them were anomic entities while the better-organized ones, such as the students and workers, were either destroyed or infiltrated and finally controlled by the government.

The Consolidation of a Bureaucratic Polity

It is indisputable that socioeconomic changes led to the emergence of new groups in society, but whether the existence of these groups would lead to a pluralist democracy is another matter. In the case of Thailand, socioeconomic changes occurred under situations of semi-imposed development. In this pattern of development political and administrative structures such as the military and the bureaucracy have been able to grow alongside the growth of the private sector. In fact, they have been able to create new institutional structures of their own or to adjust existing structures and functions (or even the “style”) to cope with pressures coming from extrabureaucratic groups. The military and bureaucratic groups may “lose” the first battle, especially when intra-elite conflicts are high. However, as they had more and more experience with new environments and situations, their advantage in controlling political resources, especially the use of legitimate violence, made it possible for them to gradually gain control over extrabureaucratic forces.

Rapid socioeconomic changes often create uncertainties and sometimes instability and disorder. In fact, democratic values and norms brought about by these changes are the antithesis of and

pose great challenges to traditional values of the military elites, who welcome modernization and development as long as stability and order can be simultaneously maintained.

In the past five decades military intervention in the political process has taken only one form—a coup d'état. But recently, the military has been more sophisticated in developing a national strategy that has helped to expand its legitimate role in the political system. It has adjusted its strategies and tactics in dealing with emergent social forces. Cooperation and co-optation have replaced intimidation and suppression. The experience the military has gained in the past two decades was not from its participation in conventional politics, but from its encounter with the Communist Party of Thailand in rural areas. The new generation of military leadership in the 1980s has been politicized in a manner totally different from that of its predecessors. Their experience in organizing the masses in rural areas to counter political activities of the CPT convinced them that the most effective way of dealing with pressure groups is not to suppress them but to find the ways and means to control them. This approach is evident in the prime minister's orders No. 66/2523 and No. 65/2525. The former was known as the policy to defeat the Communist Party of Thailand, which stated that to destroy the CPT it was necessary to establish a truly democratic regime. Individual rights and liberty should be guaranteed and democratic groups encouraged to actively participate in politics. The army's role in implementing this order is therefore not only to suppress the CPT, but also to act as an instrument to solve political and socioeconomic problems. In a 1983 lecture on "The Changed Situation of the CPT and the Strategy to Defeat the Communists in 1983" Lieutenant General Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh, deputy chief of army staff and the brain behind Order No. 66/2523, stated:

Nowadays, Thailand has two policies to solve national problems. There is the political party policy, proposed to the Parliament by the government, and the policy of the National Army, the policy to defeat the Communists.

These two policies, however, have conflicting contents since one policy is formulated by the political parties but the other by the National Army. But facts, reasons and theory prove that the National Army can solve national problems, namely to win over the CPT, while the political party policy has not succeeded in solving any problems (Chaovalit 1983).

From this statement it is clear that the military has taken another step in redefining and reinforcing its role in society. The open criticism of political parties reflected the attitudes of army leaders on the roles of participant political institutions. In fact the military leaders are raising some very important questions, for example, the legitimate role of political parties, whether they really represent the people, and the extent to which parties could successfully cope with national problems.

In mid-January 1983 Major General Pichit Kullavanijaya, First Division commander, warned on a television program that the new electoral system would only result in bringing the “capitalists” into parliament, and, if there was no change in the constitution, the military might well have to “exercise” (to step in) to protect the security of the nation and the interest of the people.⁵ He also pointed out that the military has been an important force in society for 700 years and has to be given a proper role in politics.

Order No. 65/2525 reflects a tendency toward a limited pluralist system, especially points 2.3 and 2.4 of the order which state:

- 2.3 Popular participation in political activities must be promoted to enable the people to have more practical experience which can serve to strengthen their attachment to and understanding of the principles of sovereignty. This must

5. I.e., the party state system requiring the electorate to choose the whole state of candidates proposed by each political party.

be done by involving the *tambon* councils, village committees and cooperatives, ... encouraging the use of political parties as a means of promoting their own interests at the national or local level in accordance with the principles of democracy ...

- 2.4 Activities of pressure groups and interest groups must be regulated. Pressure and interest groups can act either to reinforce or to obstruct the development of democracy. Therefore, to ensure that their role be a constructive one and to deter any such group from hindering this development, their activities must be regulated ... (Sukhumbhand 1982, 14–18)

Order No. 65/2525 (1982) identified six major groups that ought to be regulated: economic groups, the masses, students, progressive groups, the mass media, and the armed forces. While the first five groups were treated at length, the last—the armed forces—was given a very short guideline: “They should have a correct understanding of democracy and preserve this system.”

In the same order it is stated that the personnel who will be the main instrument for achieving democratic development are to be “*government* officials” in every agency, as well as ordinary people with idealism who are prepared to *cooperate* to bring about a model democracy (*italics added*). Hence the Thai military in the 1980s has gone one step further; that is, in the past it only criticized civilian regimes, but now it has set the framework for the development of democracy.

Both the military and the bureaucracy compete with political institutions in organizing and mobilizing the masses in several ways. Although there are several private and voluntary associations and interest groups, they are mainly Bangkok-based, while the great bulk of people in rural areas are organized into groups by the military and the bureaucracy. At the village level the Ministry of Interior is in control of the village councils through the offices of village headmen and district officers. The army, through its Civilian Affairs Department, has not only organized and mobilized masses into

groups such as Village Defense Volunteers, but has also infiltrated and taken over certain initially legitimate pressure/interest groups—e.g., student groups, labor, farmers, the media—and created polarization within these movements, weakening them as effective political forces. It was pointed out earlier that political parties had weak links with pressure groups and the masses. With the military's stand and approach to the groups mentioned above, it is very difficult for political parties to establish a closer and more viable relationship with these groups. Political parties are thus reduced to ad hoc electoral organizations, rather than being a meaningful participant political institution.

The present political system is therefore a unique one, in which the leadership of the military has not formed or openly supported any political party as it did in the past. The military and the bureaucrats, however, have their “informal political party,” which is the appointed Senate.

The Senate is dominated by military officers and civil servants, with a few businessmen and intellectuals. Military officers are appointed to the Senate according to their seniority and positions (for example, all commanders in chief of the army, navy, and air force, chiefs of staff, divisional commanders) as well as for their loyalty to the prime minister. As for civil servants, the undersecretary of every ministry and those of equivalent stature are members of the Senate. These senators have a military whip, the army chief of staff, and a civilian whip, the undersecretary of the prime minister's office. Through their coordinating Committee on Legislative Affairs senators get slips recommending how to vote on various issues both in the Senate and in the joint sessions with the House of Representatives.

The role of the House of Representatives has been constrained by several provisions and procedures of the 1978 Constitution and parliamentary rules. For example, until recently, members of parliament could not freely propose legislative bills unless the Committee on Legislative Bills endorsed the bills. This committee was composed of seventeen members: three appointed by the cabinet, six by the Senate and eight by the House of

Representatives. This provision of the 1978 Constitution was lifted in 1983.

Senate control over the House is exercised through the requirement in the constitution that the following matters are considered by a joint session: consideration and passage of the Budget Bill, motion of the no confidence vote, and consideration and passage of legislative bills concerning national security and economic aspects. Under the same constitution, the president of the Senate is president of the National Assembly, the agenda of the meetings is prepared by him and he chairs the joint sessions. The Senate is therefore an instrument for control of the political process—the legislative arm of the bureaucracy.

The semi-democratic pattern of rule described above is the outgrowth of the interplay of social, economic, and political forces in Thai society. It evolved from the nation's unique conditions that have existed for centuries. This semi-democratic pattern is a compromise between two sets of forces that have coexisted since 1932. One set of forces emanates from military and bureaucratic institutions, and values and norms associated with them. The other originates from more recent nonbureaucratic political institutions. These two forces operate within and adjust themselves to changes in the socioeconomic environment. In the Thai situation, changes resulting from social and economic modernization have not automatically strengthened voluntary associations and political groups because the military-bureaucratic structures, rather than the party system, have been able to incorporate and co-opt these new social groups, which then have their interests represented through bureaucratically created and controlled mechanisms. In other words, socioeconomic changes in Thailand have enabled the nonbureaucratic groups to participate more in bureaucratic politics rather than to fundamentally change the nature of the Thai political system from that of a 'bureaucratic polity' to that of a 'bourgeois polity.'

In recent years economic development has brought increased criticism of the bureaucratic polity and of military domination of politics. Ansil Ramsay has observed that political participation in

decision making in Thailand has recently extended to “bourgeois middle-class groups,” especially the business elite, who have begun to play a major role in Thai cabinets and in economic decision making. Other groups from middle-class backgrounds, such as leading academics and technocrats, also have increased their access to decision making (1985, 4).

But it is too early to conclude that the bureaucratic polity has already evolved into a “bourgeois polity.” One obstacle to this development is the reluctance of these emerging middle-class elements to be politically independent. Moreover, despite the optimism that there have been more businessmen serving in the cabinets than in the past, they make little impact in policy matters. Their participation in the executive branch is usually counterbalanced by the use of advisers and technocrats as practiced under General Prem’s governments. Such limitations on the role of the private sector and its leadership are due to the distrust of businessmen’s direct involvement in politics on the part of the military and bureaucratic elites. The military, as pointed out earlier, has expressed its concern about the danger of “capitalist interests.” Businessmen who have served as cabinet ministers often complained that they could not implement their policies because the bureaucrats did not give enough support.

It seems that the most significant political change in the relationship between bureaucratic and nonbureaucratic groups is that in the 1980s the latter have found a workable partnership with the former through the leadership of a former army general who has an interest in maintaining a semi-democratic system. In the past military leaders formally engaged themselves in parliamentary politics by becoming leader or sponsors of political parties. When conflicts arose between military factions, they were carried over into the arena of parliamentary politics. Political parties and elected politicians were brought into the power play and consequently suffered when conflicts were heightened, which led to military coups. Under the present system, however, the prime minister is not directly involved in party and parliamentary politics. Indeed General Prem does not consider himself a politician. Also, the

leadership of the military has no formal links with political parties. A balance has thus been achieved under semi-democratic institutional arrangements. Since election campaigns in recent years have involved tremendous funds, the elected members of parliament are naturally concerned with the preservation of the system so that their tenure can be completed. The four parties in the coalition government are satisfied with the portfolios they were given, but the prime minister also appointed former technocrats, retired senior military generals, and a few intellectuals to his cabinets. Hence political power is being shared between bureaucratic and nonbureaucratic forces both at the executive and legislative levels.

It is clear that the military-bureaucratic dominance in the Thai political system is not waning, although it is evident that new and more subtle strategies and tactics have had to be adopted to cope with social change.

The present state of Thai politics can therefore be described as “politics of contentment” or “politics of satisfaction.” Thus continuation of the Prem government in the interest of stability may be viewed not as a triumph for the democratic process, but rather as satisfying the interests of the bureaucracy, the army (or certain factions in it), political parties, and the monarchy. However, pressure groups, although increasingly more vocal and demanding over the past decade and one-half, have remained on the periphery of this political circle of contentment.

Theoretical Analysis

Politics have taken the shape of a vicious circle in Thailand. A constitution is promulgated and elections are held for legislative seats. A crisis is precipitated and this triggers a military coup; the military then promises a constitution. Thus the process of democratization in Thailand has been cyclical; authoritarian regimes alternate with democratic or semi-democratic ones. In this situation neither authoritarian nor democratic structures are institutionalized.

Why, despite the social and economic changes that have occurred, is democracy in Thailand still unstable and why has there been the institutionalization of only semi-democratic rule? This is because a differentiated socioeconomic structure does not necessarily lead to the control of the state by societal groups. In Thailand socioeconomic change has occurred under conditions of semi-imposed, forced development, rather than being led by an autonomous bourgeoisie. An activist bureaucratic state competes with participant or nonbureaucratic actors, and this leads to greater bureaucratization, rather than democratization, as the state expands its development role.

The ability of the state to expand and adapt its role to changing situations and environments explains why emergent autonomous forces have failed to challenge the power of the military and the bureaucracy. Although there exists a sizable middle class in Thailand, it is mainly composed of salaried officials and other non-bureaucratic professionals whose interests are not institutionally linked with any of the participant political institutions. The capitalist and commercial class, which is predominantly Sino-Thai, is just beginning to take an active but cautious role in party politics. Neither the farmers nor the laborers, who together compose the majority of the lower class, have yet developed into a class for itself. Although there were some peasant and worker groups that developed consciousness of class antagonisms, they were easily suppressed by the authorities. This underprivileged class is not effectively represented by any strong political party, and is therefore a rather impotent political force in society. Moreover, the military and the bureaucracy have provided an important ladder for social mobility in the past century for many middle-class and lower-class children. This explains why there has been little class antagonism in Thai society despite distinct class divisions. The bureaucracy has therefore been able to function not only as the state mechanism, but also as a social organization.

It should be pointed out that Thai authoritarianism is not very repressive. Authoritarian regimes that attempted to be too repressive

usually met with strong opposition from various sections of society. Once an authoritarian regime extended its controls and suppression to the general populace, it was usually opposed by the press, which has been one of the freest in Asia. An independent and long-standing judiciary is another institution that has always been safeguarding against the encroachment of civil liberties. It is an autonomous body not subject to the control of the military and the bureaucracy, but has its own independent recruitment and appointment procedures. The independence and integrity of the judicial branch is reflected in the appointment of a senior judge to head a government in times of crisis.

The existence of countervailing forces such as an independent judiciary, a free press, and some favorable social conditions such as relatively little class antagonism or ethnic and religious cleavage, are necessary but not sufficient conditions for a viable democracy in Thailand. These conditions do serve as important factors in preventing an authoritarian regime from becoming extreme in its rule. In other words, they soften authoritarian rule and, to a large extent, contribute to the maintenance of semi-democratic rule.

The most legitimate institution, which has greatly contributed to social and political stability in Thailand, is the monarchy. It took the monarchy only three decades to slowly but firmly reestablish its prestige, charisma, power, and influence in the Thai political system. By 1985, after almost four decades of his reign, King Bhumibol Adulyadej has become the most powerful and respected symbol of the nation. This is not surprising. He has survived seven constitutions, nine general elections, and over thirty cabinets with eleven different prime ministers. While politicians, military leaders, and civilian prime ministers had come and gone, the king has remained the head of state, the focus of his people's loyalty and cohesion, the fount of legitimacy. Because of the continuity of this institution in contrast to others in Thailand — especially elected legislatures and political parties — the king has gained political experience and developed mature insights into the country's problems.

It has been overwhelmingly accepted, especially since 1973, that the king remains the final arbiter of a national crisis. In 1984,

and once again in 1986, in the midst of the conflict between General Prem, the prime minister, and General Arthit, the commander in chief of the army, the monarchy played a decisive role in restraining many an ill-advised move by the military (Suchit and Sukhumbhand 1985, 18).

In this sense, the monarchy performs a highly important substituting function for other political institutions in bringing together national consensus, especially when there is a crisis of legitimacy. It has increasingly played the role of legitimator of political power, supporter/legitimator of broad regime policies, promoter and sanctioner of intra-elite solidarity, and symbolic focus of national unity (Thak 1979, 334). The social stability of Thailand, despite its periodic coups d'état, can be explained by the existence and positive role of the monarchy. As long as the bureaucratic-military leadership is supported by the monarchy the problem of legitimacy is, to a large extent, solved. Hence it has been observed:

If any significance emerged from the eventful and volatile political developments of 1984, it was perhaps that the highest institution in the land, the monarchy, revered as a symbol of justice and authority, is likely to be the single most important force capable of holding the country together during times of chaos and crisis and of assuring the viability of a democratic process in Thailand. With a clear commitment of the monarchy to a constitutional government, democracy Thai-style ultimately may have a chance to take root (Juree 1985, 240).

This view merits further analysis. What kind of democracy is it that “may have a chance to take root” in Thai society? Democracy Thai-style has been identified in this chapter as a semi-democratic one. Is there any chance for a pluralist democracy or a polyarchy to take root in Thailand?

One of the most important conditions for the development of a pluralist democracy is the more or less neutral “umpire” role of the state. In the case of Thailand, however, the state and its

machinery have always played an active and dominant role in society. It should also be noted that the state's principal machinery, the bureaucracy, has been able to adapt its role to changing conditions, most notably by utilizing the ideology of development to expand and legitimate its presence in society.

Although new forces have emerged as a result of socioeconomic changes in the past two decades, they have been under close surveillance by the bureaucratic elites. The privileged organized groups, such as the Bankers' Association, the Association of Industries, and the Chamber of Commerce, have been given access to the decision-making process in economic spheres, but their participation is of a consultative nature rather than as an equal partner. Likewise, labor unions have also been given a limited consultative role in labor relations, while the bureaucracy still firmly maintains its control over farmers' groups through the Ministries of Interior and Agriculture.

Although there were general elections in 1983 and again 1986, popular participation remains relatively low. Where turnouts were high the successes were due to active mobilization by officials of the Interior Ministry rather than to voters' interest in political issues.

The Thai military and bureaucratic elites are by no means united, but despite factional strife and rivalry, they share a common negative attitude toward elected politicians. They are willing to tolerate the elected politicians only to the extent that the latter do not pose a threat to their interests.

The Thai case is different from the U.S. situation where elites are committed to democratic values. In the United States democratic values have survived because the elites, not the masses, govern; and it is the elites, not the common people who are the chief guardians of democratic values (Dye and Zeigler 1971, 18–19). Numerous studies on Thai political culture confirm that antidemocratic tendencies have a positive correlation with a high level of education (Suchit 1968; Surapas 1976). It has also been reported that people who have high socioeconomic status, high educational levels, and good access to political information tend to have a higher degree of political alienation than other groups of

people (Pornsak 1980, 131). Furthermore, there is no difference in attitudes toward elections among voters with lower socioeconomic status. Electoral participation by the masses is ritualistic or mobilized participation rather than voluntary political action (Pornsak 1984, 155–156).

It is fair to conclude that a dynamic balance is currently maintained among various forces, each of which cannot possibly afford to dominate the political process on its own strength alone. The semi-democratic model seems to work quite well because, on the one hand, it permits formal and ritualistic political participation through a general election that produces an elected parliament; but, on the other, the real center of power is in the executive branch, which is controlled by the military-bureaucratic elites who, in recent years, have begun to carefully select some business elites to join their regime on a limited basis.

A pluralist democracy is unlikely to develop from an entrenched bureaucratic polity, especially where that bureaucratic polity is not a static entity, but can utilize the ideology of development to redefine its role, and where it exploits traditionally powerful social institutions to further legitimate its dominance by evoking fears of communism and instability emanating from external threats (such as Vietnam and the Soviet Union). While socioeconomic changes have led to the growth of newly emergent forces, they could at best restrain the bureaucratic power rather than capture it and replace it with a group-based bargaining and mutual adjustment system. As for the masses, the persistence of the bureaucracy and lack of continuity in the functioning of political parties have greatly affected their socialization in the sense that they have been bureaucratically socialized rather than politically socialized. This is particularly true in the case of the rural population since they have to rely on the delivery of services from the bureaucracy, and therefore have to learn to survive or to get the most out of what is available from the bureaucracy and not from the parties. The politics of who gets what, when, and how in Thailand is in essence a bureaucratic allocation of values rather than a politically authoritative distribution of benefits.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that failures of the April 1981 and September 1985 coups do not mean that Thai politics has developed into a mature democratic system. Military leadership elements continue to view the coup—however difficult it may be to implement—as an acceptable technique to transfer political power. However circumscribed the power of the military may be (due to factionalism), and however expansive may be the growth of nonbureaucratic forces, the result can not be interpreted as signifying a steady development of parliamentary democracy. The major constituencies of government remain outside the arena of its citizenry at large. The balance of power has not shifted to the democratic party system, but to the monarchy, whose charisma and grace enables it to control political power allocation and balance and referee often conflicting political power interests.

Future Prospects

In the past, democratic development primarily involved changes in the constitution to make it more democratic by giving more powers to the legislative branch. Such efforts usually led to the instability of the constitutions and the governments because formal political arrangements did not reflect the real power relationships in society. The problem of politics in Thailand is not how to develop a democratic system, but how to maintain the semi-democratic system so that a more participatory system of government can evolve in the long run. In other words, under the semi-democratic system in which an elected parliament is allowed to function, political parties and parliament could utilize the continuity of the political system (which is very rare in Thai political history) to strengthen their organizations. One of the least controversial and most practical aspects of democratic development is the development of the research and information capabilities of political parties and the parliamentarians. The strengthening of the supporting staff of parliamentary committees, as well as research capabilities of political parties, would greatly enhance the role of the parliament in the

long run. A well-informed parliament can act more effectively in exercising its countervailing force vis-à-vis that of the bureaucracy.

The continuity of participant political institutions will have great impact upon local politics in the sense that elections for local government bodies, such as the municipalities and the provincial and the village councils, could continue to be held and allowed to operate alongside national politics. In the long run, it would be possible for political parties to extend their infrastructure to rural areas and mobilize support not only in national elections, but also in local elections. It is expected that as long as the elected politicians are willing to make a compromise by not demanding the abolishment of the Senate or insisting that all ministers must be members of the elected parliament, there will be no major disruption in the overall political system. This means that to be able to survive, participant political institutions have to share power with the military and bureaucratic elite.

It seems that the most significant change in Thai politics since 1981 has been the absence of a successful coup d'état. Some observers regard this as a progressive movement toward a more democratic system because of the more pluralistic nature of society. This led one scholar to conclude that the present Thai polity's strength is its ability to accommodate the demands of a wider range of groups than could the bureaucratic polity (Ramsay 1985, 9). However, the stability and the strength of the present polity might, on the other hand, be attributed to its ability to accommodate the demands of the military and technocratic elites. In this sense, any change in the institutional framework that would upset the existing power relationships would precipitate a coup, because however difficult it might be to implement, military leadership elements continue to view the coup as an acceptable technique to transfer political power. It is their decision not to use this instrument at a particular point in time. When their interests are no longer accommodated and if they overcome factionalism within the army itself, then a coup becomes possible.

This does not mean that the Thai polity will maintain its semi-democratic pattern of rule forever. On the contrary, in the long

run, when participant political institutions have the chance to prove their usefulness to the people, their image and credibility will be gradually strengthened. In the meantime, elected politicians should concentrate on their efforts in developing party organizations (such as party branches), and on improving the capabilities of the parliamentary research unit and committee staff so that their already accepted roles could be institutionalized. The improvement of legislative research and reference sections of the parliament and the strengthening of parliamentary committee staff aides are less controversial than the proposal to reduce the number of senators. But such “internal” political reforms will have great effect in the long run. Another recommendation is state financing of political parties in order to reduce the dependency of elected politicians on nonelected party financiers. The German method of reimbursing political parties for their campaign expenses provided that they get more than 5 percent of the votes cast in the election should be adopted in Thailand.

Under the present political situation where there are many active voluntary associations and interest groups that seek to influence government decisions and policies, the parliament should create a new standing committee to act as a channel for the expression of interests and opinions of various pressure groups. In this way groups would operate within the framework of the legislative process, and would reduce their perceived activist role play, which is not acceptable to the military. Instead of putting pressure on the cabinet through strikes, demonstrations, and protests, which so far have not been very effective in redressing grievances, pressure-group politics could best be legitimated through the provision of an institutional mechanism for their interactions with the government and the legislators. In the long run viable relationships would develop between political parties and interest groups.

The above-mentioned recommendations are likely to be acceptable to the military and the bureaucratic elites because they do not directly threaten the existing power relationships. The idea of bringing group actions into the legislative arena is also likely to

be welcomed by the military, which has been staunchly opposed to political activism outside formal political institutions and processes.

It is unrealistic to propose any drastic change in the constitution since such a move would induce a military coup. The most important issue in Thai politics is how to avoid the repetitive pattern of political change that I have described as the “vicious cycle of Thai politics.” The main reason explaining the persistence of the semi-democratic system, or “authoritarian constitutionalism,” is the nature of authoritarian rule in Thailand, which has often been characterized by moderation, flexibility, and careful avoidance of confrontation. As Somsakdi Xuto (1987) aptly observes,

The general public, in particular, has been relatively little affected by exercise of authoritarian power. In short, Thai authoritarianism has been somewhat softened by the personal characteristics of pragmatism and accommodation. Thus harshness or extreme measures typically associated with authoritarian rule in other countries have remained relatively absent, particularly as applied to the general public.

The idea of keeping the elected parliament viable within the semi-democratic system is, of course, a second-best alternative. In the past decade it was impossible for any government to effectively implement its programs because of its preoccupation with surviving. The absence of a coup in the 1980s has enabled the government and the elected parliament to perform their functions without disruption, which is very important in meeting the increasing challenges and uncertainties coming from international political and economic communities. Perhaps improvement of the Thai political process has to begin by accepting existing politics for what they are and not what they should be (Somsakdi 1987). It may be worthwhile to accept the role of the military in Thai politics by recognizing its sphere of influence especially in internal and external security matters. It also means

that their participation in the legislative process though the Senate has to be tolerated by the elected politicians. Improvements of internal mechanisms of participant political institutions as suggested above would gradually strengthen these institutions and prepare them well for the more important tasks in the future. A viable and responsible government that would emerge in Thailand may not be exactly like the British parliamentary model that has been followed in form since 1932. It may be a mixed system in which the military bureaucratic elites and the elected politicians share powers, and each side competes for support from the masses in their responsible spheres of influence. The peculiarity of the Thai polity is that, apart from the institution of the monarchy, no other political institution can claim legitimacy on its own account.

It seems that accommodation and compromise, to preserve political stability at whatever the cost, has led to stagnation rather than development in both the political and economic spheres. It has become a question of stability for stability's sake rather than a foundation on which to build progressive reform.

This social stability has enabled Thailand to sustain its economic and social development despite periodic coups d'état. However, as Seymour Martin Lipset rightly pointed out, in the modern world the prolonged effectiveness that gives legitimacy to a political system means primarily constant economic development (Lipset 1963, 82). Thailand, like other ASEAN nations, has embarked upon the strategy of export-led development in order to minimize its economic dependency on the agricultural sector. The problem is that such efforts will be hampered by increasing trade protectionism, as currently practiced by the United States and Japan. If the effectiveness of a political regime depends upon its economic performance, the export-led development strategy will not be very helpful in furthering the pace of political development in Thailand because it will create economic instability that will lead directly to political instability. As long as the protectionist sentiment remains pervasive in major industrialized countries, there is less hope for Thailand to utilize its export-led development strategy to sustain its economic growth. This problem is aggravated

where Thai exports such as textile goods compete with U.S. textile and garment manufacturing interests.

Because of the increased openness of the Thai economy and its heavy dependence on imported oil, Thailand will continue to face economic problems such as balance of payments squeezes, serious exchange rate fluctuations, accelerating inflation, and increased reliance on foreign borrowing.⁶ This would have adverse effects on the performance and credibility of the political system. It is expected that failure to successfully implement the export-led development strategy would finally lead to economic nationalism and the maintenance of the semi-democratic regime.⁷ If economic problems emanating from fluctuations in the world economy worsen, it is possible that the military may resort to the adoption of a new corporate state model in order to mediate conflicts among various groups in society. Judging from the past record of political behavior of the Thai military, the Western type of pluralist democratic model will not be favored, for it not only threatens the power of the military technocratic elite alliance, but is highly unstable in a society where the economy is very much dependent upon external forces.

In the case of Thailand, rapid development has expanded the private sector, but the strength and autonomy of the bourgeoisie have not grown correspondingly to the extent that it could counter the political weight of the military and bureaucracy. This is because the bourgeoisie is largely composed of Sino-Thais who have been under the control of the military bureaucracy for several generations. However, it is likely that the present generation has

6. Thailand's reliance on foreign capital has reached the unprecedented level of 6 to 7 percent of the Gross National Product in 1984.

7. Dr. Ammar Siamwalla, a leading economist, suggested in *The Nation* (21 July 1985) that the government could transfer resources to the agricultural sector by diverting budgetary allocations from other sectors in improve agricultural productivity. He also observed that if there should emerge public opinion to the effect that Thailand should detach itself from the present world economy, the agricultural sector would be the first to be hard hit.

shown its desire to be more independent by joining political parties and by beginning to be in the forefront by running in the elections. It would, however, take some time before this generation of the bourgeoisie could become a leading political force in society. This is due to the fact that the military has also sponsored a number of political parties to counter the growing extrabureaucratic forces. No matter how rapid the rate of urbanization, political participation in Thailand can never be truly autonomous, but will remain partly bureaucratically mobilized. In conclusion, democracy in Thailand is not regarded as a purely political rule and process, but a political system in which the military and bureaucratic forces largely determine the role as well as the mode of participation of the nonbureaucratic forces. It should be remembered that the Thai parliament is not, and has never been, the center of power. In recent years, as there have been fewer disruptions in the political system, the parliament is only now becoming a new source of power, struggling very hard to institutionalize its legitimacy.

A stable political system—Thai-style—is therefore a semi-democratic system where the bureaucratic and nonbureaucratic forces share political power and continually engage in bargaining and adjusting their strategies to maximize their powers.

5

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

Introduction

IF WE LOOK BACK, WE WILL REALIZE that economic development in Thailand is not a new phenomenon. The Thai economy has grown continuously for over half a century with more rapid and higher sustained rates of growth in the 1980s, especially during the last three years of that decade. But why have the new amalgam of social and political forces not been able to consolidate themselves and reshape the character of the state?

This question leads to others. Are capitalism and democracy in Thailand related? Is democracy the only alternative political framework to support and promote capitalism? In other words, does capitalism and its basic trait—industrialization—need democracy in order to sustain and expand itself? The most relevant question is whether economic and political inequality caused by rapid economic development is temporary and self-correcting.

Before we answer these questions, we should look at some peculiar traits of economic development in Thailand. I would like

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to highlight only a few characteristics that are unique in the Thai case. As Medhi pointed out (1991, 2):

Economic changes took place in a situation where the labor force was still predominantly in the agricultural sector (close to 60 percent); where the secondary school attainment level was one of the lowest in Asia (about 30 percent of the age group); where the primacy of its capital city, Bangkok, increased even more with development, effectively dominating all other cities in the kingdom.

Unlike most other developing countries, the average size of landholdings had not become smaller as the country developed. This strange phenomenon could be explained partly by the fact that the rate of deforestation was very extensive, but also partly by the fact that the population growth pressure was substantially reduced by a very successful family-planning policy within the period of only less than two decades.

According to the above view, there has been a persistence of the agricultural sector in Thailand over a long period of time, and it is quite clear that industrialization had not to any significant extent been able to absorb the agricultural sector. Because of this, we can safely state that Thai society is largely bifurcated into the private-corporate sector and the people's agricultural sector, composed mainly of small farmers. Development in Thailand does not concern only the leading private-corporate sector; it is inextricably linked with the less developed agricultural sector as well. It is also important to point out that economic growth in Thailand has been achieved not only through industrialization but also through diversification in the agricultural sector.

The attitude of the state toward the industrial and agricultural sectors, especially its final decisions concerning conflicting claims over natural resources under state control, should be the focal

point of our analysis of the link between industrialization and the development of political democracy in Thailand. There have been a number of studies about the role of business associations as well as relationships between certain industrial sectors and the state which conclude that, while politics in Thailand is highly unstable, the relationship between state and private actors has been very stable and institutionalized (Anek 1992; Doner 1991, 264).

Both Anek and Doner were interested in the upper level of civil society—the private corporate sector—and it is not surprising to discover that this part of civil society has been gaining acceptance from the state and is becoming a partner in progress. Such cooperation has led to a different political model—authoritarian pluralism instead of democratic pluralism (Christensen 1992a, 35)—which is the same point as one made earlier about technocratic pluralism (Chai-Anan, 1990a). It is quite clear that state–private-sector cooperation and authoritarian pluralism are complementary to each other. They formed an alliance that is coming into conflict with the poor agrarian sector in its drive towards industrialization. If we want to analyze the relationship between industrialization and democracy in Thailand, we should test it from the state’s policies and actions towards the access and utilization of natural resources, for this is the area in which industrial and agricultural interests are sharply in conflict. It will be argued that industrialization inhibits the development of democracy, especially in a country that depends heavily on its natural resources as the main basis for economic development. Industrialization through the utilization of natural resources creates an urban-rural conflict of a zerosum game or negative-sum game nature since the gain of one sector is the loss of the other sector. While the state has adjusted its strategic alliance with the private corporate sector by co-opting it into the high-level decision-making process, the state has been reluctant to use the same inclusionary measure with the rural agricultural sector, and has been less responsive to its demand for participation beyond periodic electoral channels. Not only powerless small farmers but also organized agricultural interest groups suffered

from this drive towards industrialization, which links closely with international competitiveness. For example, proposals for a regional free trade area in Southeast Asia require Thailand to strip protection from two of the three major agro-industries currently enjoying state subsidies: palm oil and soybeans (Christensen 1992a, 34).

In the capitalist developmental state, “while state bureaucrats rule, politicians reign.” The role of state bureaucrats or technocrats in national development is more dominant in the so-called high-productivity investment areas such as key industries, and in traditional economic management areas such as planning, budgeting, and fiscal and monetary policy making. Wade’s governed market theory (1990), for example, discussed the role of the state in directing or governing the advanced section of civil society, that is, capitalist market forces with major industrial bases. It seems that authoritarian states have had a better record on industrial development than on agricultural development. When authoritarian states have had to deal with pressures from the agrarian sector simultaneously with those of the urban industrial sector, they have not been able effectively to solve this dual crisis and have usually had to resort to nondemocratic means such as coup staging or declaring a national emergency to solve the problem. Hence, it is fair to say that the military and its technocratic alliance are able to manage the business sector when it comes to decisions concerning technical economic policies and measures, while politicians may not be able to rule. But the political brokerage of politicians cannot be replaced when it comes to more substantive conflict in the agricultural sector or between the industrial and agricultural sectors.

In this sense state elites may retain significant independence from business in the formulation of macroeconomic policy involving the more developed part of the economy, that is, major industries and the market, but they cannot possibly maintain the same degree of autonomy from the mobilized agrarian sector. This is due to the fact that the state has a primary function in maintaining political stability and security. Its top-down policy tends to create conflict and confrontation with the rural population in the long run, especially

with underprivileged landless farmers. The state does not own capital but it owns reserved forests. It is at this level that the state finds it most difficult to retain its independence, which it does retain when dealing with the more affluent sector. The politics of joint, cooperative interests is inherently the politics of concrete gains and losses, and it is extremely difficult to manage a non-antagonistic coalition between urban industrial interests and rural agrarian interests.

Perhaps it is irrelevant to ask whether certain political systems are better than others at promoting growth or whether there is an inevitable trade-off between democracy and development. It is pertinent to ask: growth of which subsystem of civil society, or growth for whom? If we look carefully into the process of economic development in Thailand we will find that growth has been beneficial only to the urban industrial sector, and that the gap between rich and poor has widened in recent years.

Industrialization as a Source of Intersectoral Conflict

I will use the case study of the reforestation of a reserved forest to analyze the relationship between industrialization and the development of political democracy in Thailand. I would like to show that when it comes to substantive politics of resource utilization, bureaucrats, the military and businessmen are becoming increasingly antagonistic to the masses. This is the area where democratic development faces a real challenge, not in the area of upper-level economic management. The future of democracy and sustainable development depends not on the state-business coalition, but on how effectively such a coalition is able to deal with challenges from below in order to maintain its hegemony in an export-led capitalist economy. If it fails to come to terms with the demand for popular participation, or miscalculates its long-term interests, the unresolved conflict

between industrialization and democratization could lead Thailand in the direction of the reversed development of Argentina.

I am proposing that it is more important to analyze carefully the noneconomic impact of industrialization on Thai society than to find out how democracy supports industrialization. Industrialization as a development policy implies a significant change in the state's development priorities. Industrialization that occurs prior to democratic development may create rapid economic growth in aggregate terms, but it could also lead to greater underdevelopment of the rural sector, especially when that rural sector lacks meaningful political participation. In an activist bureaucratic state industrialization may occur without much government intervention or promotion, but the development of political democracy in such a state is state-imposed rather than a natural process concomitant with socioeconomic development. If the development of political democracy in Thailand poses a direct challenge to the state, the state will limit popular participation rather than promote it. If so, what institutional mechanisms and processes could manage conflicts arising out of the noneconomic impacts of industrialization? Could industrialization occurring under authoritarian pluralism lead to sustainable development?

We should not view more participation by the private sector in the decision-making process as a positive trend towards democratization. There is no evidence of political trickle-down effects where elite-level participation automatically leads to mass-level participation. Far from it. Elite-level participation leads to consolidation of technocratization and entrenchment of the top-down development syndrome. In the West the bourgeois state developed into a democratic state, resulting in greater participation by the underprivileged classes. In developing countries it is doubtful whether the same pattern will repeat itself because the bourgeoisie is politically weak, especially when it is an ethnic minority. That is why we cannot expect the political trickle-down effects of gradual democratization.

It has been pointed out that in Thailand economic growth took place when the labor force was still predominantly in the

agricultural sector, and the average size of landholdings did not become smaller as the country developed. This means that economic growth was possible through the expansion of agricultural land which resulted in rapid deforestation. No matter what kind of regime was in power when economic growth occurred, it was essentially based on diversification of the agricultural sector. In this sense past economic development had fewer conflicts of interest between the industrial and the agricultural sectors. The agricultural sector, to a large extent, benefited from the growing manufacturing industries as they provided alternative or additional sources of cash income. Industrialization that emphasized import substitution and the diversification of agricultural production complemented one another. When there was a shift from import substitution to export-led development, which coincided with the exhaustion of natural resources, industrialization became detrimental to the interests of the agricultural sector, particularly those of poor landless farmers. It is at this transition point that the discontinuous nature of the developmental process began to show its negative effects. The shift of development strategy, which was an inevitable consequence of a successful import substitution strategy, brought industrialization and democratization into greater conflict. The ban on worker unions after the February 1991 coup was welcomed by technocrats and businessmen, who saw trade union activism as the major obstacle to industrialization. But, as the National Peace Keeping Council found out, it was difficult to control farmers' demonstrations and the activism of nongovernmental organizations at the grassroots level. The growing activism of farmers in the post-Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) period in Thailand seems to have been a direct response to the shift of development strategy, which also changed the pattern of land utilization. It is not surprising, therefore, to see that major protests occurred in the northeast, the poorest part of the country, and that all the protests centered around land use problems ranging from the proposed construction of a dam to the use of land for rock salt mining, which caused pollution of major rivers in the rice-growing areas.

Farmer activism in the 1980s was different from that of the 1970s. In the 1970s the main problem was land rent rather than land use, but in the 1980s land use became the central issue involving not landowners or tenants, but the government in its attempts to turn occupied deforested land, which was still classified legally and technically as forest reserves, into large-scale commercial plantations. The demise of the CPT in the early 1980s made it possible for the state and the business sector to take a new look at prospective investment on frontiers that were once under the control of the CPT. Political stability gained after the CPT period not only institutionalized the semi-democratic regime, but also gave the state much more latitude for policy options. Once the country was free from the threat of internal insurgency the elites could be more imaginative in their development strategies. The Eastern Seaboard Project was conceived of during this period (1980 onwards), and the export-led growth strategy gained credibility in the eyes of both government and foreign investors. Due to the peaceful situation in the countryside, technocrats began to shift their attention to correcting the sectoral imbalances between urban and rural areas. This means that “many of the countryside’s natural and social features that in the past were more or less left alone as long as they provided some surplus to the bureaucracy and commercial sectors are being retooled for more direct use by the world market” (Lohmann 1991, 11).

With the shift to export-oriented development, which coincided with the international market’s demand for wood chips and the establishment of the paper-pulp industry, formerly marginal areas were increasingly earmarked for takeover by commercial eucalyptus plantations. The Master Plan for Reforestation in Thailand called for private plantation firms to plant eucalyptus and other fast-growing trees on 43,000 square kilometers of national-reserve forests. Seven to ten million people were generally estimated to be living in national-reserve forest areas, a sizeable proportion of whom inhabited zones designated for commercial plantations (Lohmann 1991, 7–8).

Political Behavior of the State in Economic Decision-Making

The behavior of the Thai state was heavily influenced by the challenge of the Communist Party of Thailand, which enabled the security apparatus to have a dominant role in the decision-making process at both the national and the local level. During the 1960s and 1970s when CPT activities were at their height, although the security imperative had a diverse effect on democracy, the military somehow learned from its experiences that it had to consider seriously the plight, grievances and demands of poor farmers in order to win the people's war. During this period governments often changed their stand on forestry and land policies. In the northeast, the stronghold of the CPT, the government was always very lenient to farmers occupying forest reserves. In many cases the regional army encouraged farmers to occupy frontier lands and guaranteed their right to utilize them in exchange for their loyalty, support and cooperation.

In those years the major political, administrative and military decision-making structures and processes were unified into a single command from cabinet level down to field operations. Security and development dimensions were fused and decisions were usually made with political considerations. The nature of the communist challenge was fundamentally political and it forced the military, technocrats and businessmen to be flexible and more careful in dealing with the masses.

The CPT challenge created political consciousness among certain sections of the military, especially in the field command (Chai-Anan, 1982). This contributed to the soft authoritarian nature of military governments in the 1970s and led to their reluctant compromises with emergent socioeconomic forces in the 1980s. Such continuity of the internal security threat had enabled the military and the technocrats to learn to work together in various areas of security-related development. This close and continuous socialization process was responsible for the recognition on the

part of the military of its limitations in technical economic matters. Hence the instability and the common perception of a possible communist victory (which had already occurred in Indochina) on the part of the military, the technocrats, the businessmen and the liberal academics cemented an enduring tie among the so-called 1960s generation that has been responsible for Thailand's economic development over the past three decades.

This is the strength of what I termed the semi-democratic system in Thailand [see chapter 4 above]. The democratic interlude under the Chatichai government disrupted the stability of this entrenched alliance. The behavior of the coup group of February 1991, which showed tremendous restraint in not intervening in the management of the economy, reflected this deep concern by leaving the task of economic development to the technocrats.

The semi-democratic period (1980–88) enabled the technocrats to consolidate their power. But without the challenge that had been afforded by the CPT, the decision-making structure and process began to disperse among a number of technical agencies, such as the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister's Advisory Group, which in recent years has become more or less an institution. Such dispersal or deconcentration of economic decision making has led to conflicting policy formulations and implementation, especially in the area of resource management, which is under the jurisdiction of more than twenty departments in different ministries.

The political dimension of the bureaucratic decision-making process has become less threatening after the demise of the CPT. During the semi-democratic period under Prem's leadership (1980–88), the technocrats were able to exert their influence over all major policies and they depoliticized the economic decision-making process through controlling the economic ministers meetings. The depoliticization process excluded elected politicians from major decision making but it politicized the technocrats, who became the new power brokers. Due to this development the technocrats of various departments in different ministries became increasingly

overzealous in planning and implementing their policies. The NESDB, which is essentially a planning body, became heavily involved in initiating new projects and also in managing them.

The political dimension of the economic decision-making process was regarded as undesirable, parochial and unproductive. Gradually the elected politicians and parties were pushed to the periphery of the power center. The Chatichai civilian regime, which prided itself on being an elected representative government, reacted in an extreme fashion by dismantling previously entrenched technocratic machinery. The government and its regime thus threatened the apparatus of the state, which suffered a great psychological crisis due to the sudden change in power relations. This group of technocrats quietly sabotaged the nascent regime through various means, and worked closely with the military to overthrow what they called “parliamentary dictatorship” in February 1991.

Due to the long period of technocratization and deconcentration of decision-making power among staff and operating agencies, the political aspect of development was lost. The NESDB drew up its National Social and Economic Development Plan with little regard for the feelings of the rural masses. At the elite level the NESDB created the Joint Public and Private Consultative Committee (JPPCC), composed of government representatives and representatives from the Board of Trade, the Association of Thai Industries and the Thai Bankers Association. The government also promoted the establishment of provincial chambers of commerce, but when it came to setting up the Agricultural Council it downplayed the equal representation of farmer groups.

The prevalent view of the technocrats on political development is that it is one of the important factors of sustainable development. However, to the technocrats, political development implies the involvement of a rational decision-making process in economic and other development issues. It is argued that sustainable long-term development will be possible only under the circumstances of a rational decision-making process. This is of particular importance in the case of Thailand, as the development of the

country has reached the level where the rational decision-making process will become the most important determinant of the sustainability of the future development of the country (Kosit 1990).

Although participation in development is regarded by technocrats as a crucial factor, there is always a concern that the developmental process will be under the control of a few vested interest groups where decisions are made for the benefit of small ruling or privileged groups. The technocrats see themselves as guardians of national interests and are more willing to cooperate with the military than with the politicians. The development imperative is the reason of the state, and developmentalism, not democracy, is their ideology. The developmental process has been a continuous process resulting in the creation of like-minded developmentalist technocrats, while the democratic process has suffered discontinuity, factionalism and political fragmentation. That is why a pluralist democracy is unlikely to develop from an entrenched bureaucratic polity, especially where the bureaucratic polity is not a static entity, but an entity that utilizes the ideology of development to redefine its role (Chai-Anan 1990b, 337).

The technocrats became very confident of their success in leading Thailand towards being a more industrialized nation with spectacular rates of growth. Their attitude and their misconception of democracy isolated them from the masses. They became arrogant, overconfident and antidemocratic. They equated democracy with corruption, inefficiency and parochialism. However, there was a lack of legitimacy in the government, as evidenced by the May 1992 mass uprising against the assumption of power by a nonelected prime minister, who had been the mastermind behind the overthrow of the civilian regime in 1991.

The Thai political structure has not changed much after sixty years of democracy. The legislature is still bicameral with an appointed senate composed mainly of the military, technocrats and their business and intellectual allies. The administrative structure is not much different from that of the 1980s, although it has greater penetrative capability into the periphery. The cabinet system and

its decision-making structure is still highly bureaucratic and bogged down with routine matters.

If we closely examine the relationship between state and society in Thailand we will quickly recognize the difference between the state's behavior toward the corporate private sector and toward the poor and powerless agricultural sector. Economic development in Thailand has not only resulted in the economic expansion of the private sector, it has also led to a closer alliance among bureaucratic, military, political and economic elites. This alliance became firmly entrenched, and in the post-CPT period these groups are much more convinced of their right to act without political constraints from below. Thailand, like Brazil, is a case of a late-developing dualistic economy where the needs trade-off, the equality trade-off and the liberty trade-off seem to be a sustained process rather than a temporary and self-correcting one (Donnelly 1984).

Ungovernability and “Institutionalized Anarchy”

It is not surprising that Thailand in the 1990s is becoming ungovernable. The coup-makers fully recognized this problem but were not willing to allow politics to evolve unobstructed. Thus political democracy had no chance of becoming institutionalized because it had no time or opportunity to prove its positive aspects in the long run. In other East Asian countries, export-led development was made possible under effective political authority, although the nature of that political authority was undemocratic. In Thailand we are standing at a crossroads. On the one hand the system is not yet democratized; on the other hand, institutions of political authority are suffering a legitimacy crisis and cannot be effective as long as the disadvantaged extrabureaucratic groups do not accept the dominant role of the military.

The transition from a primary-producing economy to an import-substitution economy was not such a big test for Thailand.

The transition from an import-substitution economy to an industrial nation will be much more difficult and challenging. Unlike Korea, Thailand has no heavy industry. Compared with Taiwan, the rural sector is uncommercialized and unproductive. Unlike Hong Kong and Singapore, Thailand is neither a city-state nor an international financial center and still has a very large rural sector. Industrialization in Thailand is bound to result in the extraction and utilization of natural resources located in the rural areas. If no democratic framework for peaceful bargaining, adjustment and participation exists, industrialization will lead to intense conflicts of an inter- and intrasectoral nature.

I have argued that authoritarian regimes tend to be more successful in managing the technical aspects of the economy and co-opting the private corporate sector than in managing intersectoral conflicts involving industrial interests and the masses. The security dimension is the most important factor for authoritarian regimes when legitimizing their rule and maintaining a growing economy. In South Korea and Taiwan there has been concern over the possibility of invasion by neighboring communist countries. Because of this, even though the military penetrates more deeply into civil society in Korea and Taiwan than in Latin American countries, the sociopolitical role of the military may hold greater legitimacy in these two countries than in Latin America's newly industrializing countries (NICs) because of the prevalent view that economic development and social mobilization are critical for national survival (Cheng 1990, 385).

The effectiveness of the Kuomintang (KMT) regime is its ability to develop state institutions responsible for the management of the three dimensions of state-society relations (Winckler 1981, 485). The fact that there are three sets of power-creating institutions in the state—one for development, one for legitimation and one for security—has enabled the KMT to surround society. Good coordination among these three sets of institutions, especially the development set and the legitimation set, could preempt political opposition by sponsoring a broad distributional coalition. In Taiwan the sponsorship and maintenance of a distributional coalition from

above went hand in hand with political liberalization (Cheng 1990, 169).

In the Thai case the security imperative remained strong only during the import-substitution period. By the time Thailand had shifted its development strategy to industrialization with an export-led orientation, the cold war had ended. The CPT was defeated, the Indochinese states were beginning to be more liberal in their economic development, and there was a strong global trend of internationalization of capital. Without the security imperative the legitimacy of an authoritarian military regime is bound to dwindle quickly. In the past three decades of development, democracy has not been a legitimating factor in capitalist development; economic growth has. But socioeconomic development has also created a larger middle class and strong provincial interest groups that seek to protect and expand their interests through the democratic process. Provincial interests are concentrated in the urban parts of rural areas and have become more and more antagonistic to Bangkok-based interests, as is evident in the conflict between provincial chambers of commerce and the Bangkok-based Thai Chamber of Commerce (Anek, 1992). The development of capitalism in Thailand has been Bangkok-centric, and in sectoral terms most of its industries have been concentrated in the Bangkok metropolitan region (Christensen 1992a, 14). Industrialization in Thailand will, therefore, lead not only to intersectoral conflict, but also to growing urban-rural antagonism.

Socioeconomic development in Thailand has another peculiar characteristic, namely a shortage of commercialization in the countryside. As Christensen pointed out, electoral politics failed to create a coalition of alliances between the capital and the towns to cut across the urban-rural cleavage. Parties were financed primarily by urban bourgeoisie who were themselves not united. Multiple parties competed for the allegiance of a rather small tier of middle- and upper-income agriculturalists, traders and town dwellers (Christensen, 1992a, 17–18).

In this context, Thailand has no strong social and economic bases for democratic development. The agricultural sector is not

largely commercialized. The middle class, which is mainly ethnic Chinese, is not an independent bourgeoisie. Political parties are disorganized and have not yet consolidated their rural base. The military, the technocrats and the intellectuals are critical of "kleptocracy." In the East Asian situations, the states were strong and effective while other forces were weak; in the Thai case it seems that the state is becoming weaker but other social and economic forces have yet to consolidate their power. The weakness of the state is due to the decline of security threats and the legitimacy of the military leaders who staged the 1991 coup but were unable to govern.

The Thai case is a test case for current thinking on soft and hard authoritarian regimes and their role in industrialization. In comparison with other East or Southeast Asian countries, industrial development in Thailand has involved relatively little direct government intervention (Medhi 1991, 3). I wonder whether the Thai state has the capacity to intervene and lead the market in the way in which its Korean counterpart did. From recent experience concerning dam construction, the planting of eucalyptus forests and the Land Redistribution Project for the Poor in Degraded Forest Areas, the state has already come into sharp conflict with poor farmers. In all cases the state's projects were strongly resisted by the people and it had to resort to intimidation and violence to implement them.

Although the Thai state is far less interventionist than its Korean and Taiwanese counterparts in promoting industrialization, its rent-seeking behavior is articulated in resource allocation. Since Thailand's industrial base is not in heavy industry, the state has only degraded forest land to deliver to the industrial sector. The state has legal control over natural resources and it uses its power to determine how natural resources are to be exploited. In the case of eucalyptus plantations, the state is indirectly supporting the wood-chip and paper and pulp industries by levying very low charges. It has just issued concessions to private companies at a cost of US\$ 1 per acre per year, and has granted special privileges under the Board of Investment law. The Royal Forestry Department

(RFD) which has been the main bureaucratic instrument for rent-seeking since the nineteenth century, is staffed with technocrats with little regard for poor people. Most of the RFD officials see the forests in terms of trees, not in terms of people. In granting concessions to private companies to rent degraded forest land, the RFD officials consider they have carried out their stewardship, and in a way are exercising their authority to control forest land that had been lost to encroachers (Usher 1990).

The rent-seeking behavior of the state has met with strong opposition from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that have formed a close alliance with poor farmers. The NGOs in Thailand, which are mostly ecological movements, gained their momentum in the late 1980s due to a combination of factors. The most important of these was the return to normalcy in the countryside after the communist insurgency. This enabled the NGOs to work more closely and freely with poor farmers without being accused of acting as conduits for the CPT. International environmental movements also contributed greatly by giving financial and moral support to the Thai NGOs. Because the United Nations, the United States and other European countries are now promoting the ecological cause, NGOs in Thailand have become “legitimate” as their movement is seen as part of the international concern for a common global future. Although many former radical activists are now working for NGOs, their activism can no longer be suppressed by the military. The environmental movement in Thailand is also able to rally support from all sectors in society because it presents the issue of environmental protection as being nonideological and above politics. The NGOs quickly became the most active and effective opposition outside the formal political process. In the past five years the strongest opponents of industrialization have been the NGOs and the environmental movement, which have put direct pressure on the government, bypassing political parties and the parliamentary process. This phenomenon reflects the fact that elements in the military, the bureaucracy, the business sector and political parties have vested interests in logging and reforestation, as well as in

other industries involved in the exploitation of natural resources in rural areas. The active role of the NGOs also reflects the failure of the formal political process to effectively link the state and society. Political parties provide partial channels for the demands and grievances of the disadvantaged rural sector, but when it comes to the fundamental conflict between the industrial and agricultural sectors, the urban-industrial interests that control the party machine usually act against the interests of small farmers.

It seems that in the Thai case statism and pluralism are coexisting rather than canceling each other out. This is due to the multistructural nature of the current Thai political system. The state (bureaucratic and military) power structure is strongly entrenched. The formal party and parliamentary political structures are performing only partial functions of interest-articulation and aggregation and are doing so more on behalf of urban-industrial interests. The NGOs act as pressure groups and choose not to ally themselves with parties in the formal political process. Political elites are split in their strategies and behavior towards bureaucratic and military elites. Some are in close alliance with them but others are trying to become independent of the bureaucratic and military influence in politics. Pluralism is emerging but, due to the capacity of the state to adjust its alliances, it remains a rare phenomenon rather than a sustained, potent force to reduce the political effectiveness of the established bureaucracy.

There is a dilemma here. Military governments in Thailand come and go, but they never succeed in institutionalizing their political control over society. In Taiwan and Indonesia the ruling groups created mechanisms to link state and society, but in the Thai case the military has been influential but has not developed into a ruler army. In fact, most so-called military dictatorships have been rather fragile when faced with mass movements, as evidenced in the fall of the Thanom-Praphat clique in October 1973 and the inability of the military to control peacefully the May 1992 mass uprising.

Prior to the Anand government (March 1991 to March 1992), the economic decision-making process was highly secretive and

technocratic. The Anand government encouraged greater transparency, but this was to combat corruption and reduce monopolistic and oligopolistic tendencies rather than to promote popular participation. The technocrats in the government pushed through a regulation on large-project bidding in order to create a more competitive, open and clean business environment. Poor farmers continued to protest to gain government attention, while industrialists were given access to the high-level decision-making process. However the Anand government lasted just one year and it is doubtful whether their many reforms will be continued by succeeding governments.

The Thai case can be called *institutionalized anarchy* or *uninstitutionalized soft authoritarianism*. There is no single dominant power center, not even the most powerful military. Above the military is the monarchy which is still considered the foundation stone of legitimacy. The king's personal comments and speeches about farmers in the reserved forests—that they were there long before the forests were legally reserved—have often been used by environmental groups to counterbalance government actions. It is therefore impossible for the elites to govern the market, let alone to rule in the real sense of the word. The ungovernability syndrome is most manifest in the area of resource management: government policies on forestry and land repeatedly change in response to shifting situations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, democracy in Thailand is not yet institutionalized, and neither is public authority. There is coexistence of the opposing forces of industrialization, democratization, technocratization and militarization. These forces interact but each has its own values, structure and processes. So both statism and pluralism are evolving. The only cementing force or reference framework has been the monarchy. As long as the monarchy continues to be legitimate and strong, it will act as the center holding these opposing forces

together. The lack of democratic or authoritarian institutionalization has been offset by the deep institutionalization of the monarchy. In recent years the monarchy has performed its nonpolitical role by solving or minimizing many political crises. It is not an exaggeration to say that, in Thailand, politics is the art of being above politics, and through this posture, politics could become the art of the possible.

The Thai Riddle will grow even more perplexing as Thailand becomes more industrialized. However this does not mean that Thailand will mimic Argentina's reversed development. Thailand is capable of self-organization. Industrialization and democracy are driving forces creating turbulence and fluctuations in the social, economic and political spheres. But fluctuations do not necessarily cause political decay; on the contrary, they are signs of dynamism and life.

6

OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE, THEY ARE JUST BYPASSED

The Military, the Bureaucracy and Globalization

THAILAND'S POLITICS AND ITS DEVELOPMENT are best viewed not so much as pieces on a giant chessboard, but as a scattered jigsaw puzzle, with the pieces needing to be put together. This fracturing is not necessarily a weakness. As a polity, the Thai state's effectiveness in managing change and handling threats has long been evident. The economy and society have been open and liberal, although the state continues to retain its activist and centralized character, and its civil and military bureaucracy has remained a closed system. The Chakri Reformation under King Chulalongkorn in the nineteenth century resulted in the modernization of the bureaucracy and especially the military, making the latter the dominant organization in a predominantly unorganized agricultural society. The peasantry were largely unaffected by political changes at the top, although they suffered from large-scale wars with the Burmese from time to time.

The absence of direct colonial rule was an important factor in enabling Thailand's society to remain a relatively open social

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system, with egalitarian Buddhist beliefs contributing to this. Periodic shifts in power relations and political-economic alliances occurred through competition and cooperation among rival factions, without the direct intervention of outside forces.

Shifts in power have occurred mainly within elite circles, although more popular participation was not completely absent or repressed. In some circumstances, mass movements, either organized or spontaneous, helped facilitate intra-elite struggles for power. While the locus of power has not shifted away from a small group within the elite, socioeconomic changes have brought new elites into being, with aims and claims not dissimilar to those of their predecessors. This characteristic of the political elite seems to negate one of the conventional concepts of political development. According to conventional wisdom, elected politicians from humble rural backgrounds and high-ranking military and civilian officers are characteristically different in many aspects, ranging from their commitment to democracy to their approach to economic and social development (Janowitz 1964). This does not appear to have been true of the Thai elite. Once a new elite has succeeded in occupying a political space, they have tended to adjust themselves to the basic norms established by the old elite, with no significant endeavor being made to circumvent or change the rules of the game. At best, the new elite has found ways and means to prevent the old elite from recapturing power by excluding them from taking formal political office.

The rules of the game these elites used to facilitate their rule may be described as feudalistic beliefs and norms which have found their expression in bureaucratic rules, regulations and behavior. These rules have not been replaced by constitutionalism. On the contrary, constitutional principles, first adopted in 1932, have been adapted and adjusted to follow the old rules, based on centralism, personalism, unity and solidarity, and patron-clientelism.

After the 1932 overthrow of the absolute monarchy, the military and its civilian allies were primarily concerned with state-building rather than in consolidating democracy. Although a constitution was promulgated, this only served to guarantee that the system would

not revert to monarchical rule. Throughout the so-called democratic period, from 1932 to the present, there have been no serious or continuing efforts to launch meaningful political reform.

It is not surprising, therefore, to see members of elected parliaments staunchly opposing political and administrative reforms that aim at increasing direct participation and enhancing decentralization. As a recent example, the brief constitutional crisis of mid-1994 reflected this position, with elected politicians, the military, bureaucrats, business people and the middle class effectively opposing the call for such political reforms. Even after the 1995 election of the Chart Thai Party under Banharn Silpa-archa, which made political reform a major platform in its election campaign, it has been difficult to get party members to agree that the need for reform is urgent, and coalition partners have proved an even more difficult proposition.

In short, it is argued that political changes have not resulted in any major shift in the location of power. Economic change has had no meaningful effect on the degree of democratization and democratic consolidation, although it has contributed to the relaxation of state power and the degree of liberalization in matters such as deregulation, privatization and the internationalization of capital. It seems that “democracy” has been used, in recent years at least, to prevent a return to the old-style authoritarianism that is seen as an unhealthy political arrangement for growth-oriented economic development.

Due to its openness, Thailand has liberalized its social and economic regimes, but fundamental changes in political power have been limited. In 1932, the absolute monarchy was overthrown and a constitutional regime inaugurated. The new power elite established a parliament and enfranchised the masses, but the right of free association, especially political association, continued to be denied until 1950 (Chai-Anan 1989). Since then, political association in the form of political parties has not been free from controls set by the Ministry of the Interior through its control of the Political Parties Act, 1955. Until recently, the Associations Act of 1912 also prohibited registered associations from having any political objective

or engaging in any political activity. Changes to this were only made under the Anand Panyarachun government in 1992, to recognize and promote the role of NGOs in development. However, the activism of NGOs is viewed by political parties, as well as by military officers and civilian bureaucrats, as destabilizing. For example, in 1955 the Democrat Party moved to cut the budget earmarked for the support of the Duang Prateep Foundation in its slum rehabilitation projects (Minutes of the Parliamentary Budget Scrutiny Committee 1995). It is perhaps not so ironic that politically active NGOs have become increasingly alienated from political parties. This may be due to the historical evolution of NGOs and political parties, both of which were formerly under state control, thus preventing opportunities for them to cooperate in the past.

The Thai political system, which adopted a parliamentary model, has remained more or less the same since its inception in 1932. Socioeconomic change since then has brought about a more complex and diverse set of interests, and this has meant increasing demands and conflicts outside the central political arena. The various political elites have chosen to process these diverse demands through the increasingly less responsive mechanisms of the bureaucracy. While the structure of conflict has become far more complex, the elites, both old and new, have been busy protecting their political space rather than addressing the unequal distribution of wealth and political assets between urban and rural groups. In most cases, only NGOs have been active in initiating and articulating the demands and grievances of the affected masses, while political parties have essentially been passive and reactive.

In order to understand the complexity of politics and power in Thai society, a new approach and model are required. In outlining such an approach I will argue that the military and bureaucratic elites have inherent features which are in conflict. Specifically, the Western-derived organizational structure of these groups challenges their feudal consciousness and values. I will discuss the nature of collective, organized action in society, comparing the state-centric and society-centric patterns of organization. It will be argued that the military and civilian bureaucracy represent the

Weberian, essentially Western, organizational form, while the forces outside the state have tended to adopt a form of collective organization which might be said to approximate the secret society form. The Western form was a reaction against the threat of colonialism and the desire of the new elite of young Siam to deal with the old elite of old Siam. King Chulalongkorn's reformation involved the establishment of a standing army, a centralized bureaucracy and other modern, Western organizations, as well as the nation-state, superimposed upon the old forms and old associations denied by the newly established nation-state (Wyatt 1969). It will be argued that, as society did not go through the historical process of colonization, the location of power remained intact, and those who controlled the political space were able to incorporate potential opposing forces into its structure and, in the process, mobilize and change or assimilate their values.

In building on my earlier three-dimensional state model (see Chai-Anan 1994a, reprinted as Chapter 1 above), it is important to conceptualize the tremendous impact the ideological aspects of modernization have had on state-society relations. The qualitative nature of modernization, which had been linked with the Western tradition, has been challenged. Existing concepts and values brought about by Westernization have been questioned. Modern organizations, including the bureaucracy, the standing army and the nation-state have all been challenged by alternative models based on Marxist-Leninist and, later, Maoist forms of organization. Such challenges have had an impact on the new structures, functions and values of the three important dimensions of security, development and participation in modern Thailand. The Chinese revolutions of 1911 and 1949 have also been major influences on the thinking of the Thai political elite due to the important economic role and status of the Chinese in Thai society; by the late nineteenth century it was estimated that the Chinese made up 1.5 million of the six million population of old Siam (Skinner 1957).

In this paper I will begin by presenting the relationships between state and society in different periods before going on to discuss the impact of external change on politics and power

relations. Following this, I will discuss the impact of globalization on state-society relations, focusing on the impact of the “new” power elites of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which are now becoming “old” elites, struggling for their survival in a rapidly changing world. Globalization has not only brought a bridging of time and space, but also the so-called “New World Order,” with values directly threatening the core values of the military and bureaucracy (Chai-Anan 1994b). In the post-cold war period, the military is suffering pressure for change—international, regional and internal pressures simultaneously—in all directions. The centralized bureaucracy, which was the most modernized sector in the late nineteenth century, is rapidly becoming a problem of its own creation. Change is required, but the pace is too slow or is being resisted. This is why I have suggested the notion of “bypassing the state” to characterize state-society relations for countries whose “historical legacies” are resisting the changes brought by globalization.

In addition, I will discuss the ethnic aspect of capital and economic power in Thailand in analyzing delays in the shift of power. It will be argued that there are loci of power, not a single locus, but that these loci are characteristically different from those in liberal-democratic situations, where the pluralistic nature of society influences the character of the political regime. In the end, this may mean that the concept of a three-dimensional regime, incorporating a bypassed state, may be more appropriate than one of democratization and democratic consolidation.

“Western” and “Eastern” Organizations

In Thailand, the military and civilian bureaucracies have been the most important forms of organization and collective action. Since the Ayudhaya period, the state has been concerned to organize methods for combining its military and civil structures and functions. At the same time it has structured the relations between the elite and commoners, and within the elite itself. This meant that there

was both an arrangement of society and politics, and a system for managing state-society relations.¹ The Buddhist monkhood (*sangha*), because of its egalitarian approach to access, recruitment and internal organization, required that the state organize a different relationship. The state was able to keep the *sangha* out of the political arena, effectively preventing the egalitarian nature of the organized community of monks from spilling over into the political sphere.

Since Siam was not colonized, there was no imperative for any section of society to organize itself for collective political action. The peasantry in the past, as in the present, was spatially and socially scattered. The nature of rice cultivation lends itself to only periodic, voluntary and temporary organized action which, unlike work in industry or on big plantations, does not induce farmers to organize themselves for sustainable or regular collective actions. Moreover, the long period of slavery and *corvée* service required of commoners by the elite served to limit individual mobility. When these systems were gradually abolished, they were replaced by conscription for the expanding standing army.

The freed slaves and commoners without masters were the native Thai, since the increasing numbers of migrant Chinese were not drawn into this system. In earlier periods, Chinese immigrants had been under direct control of the state, which controlled and regulated foreign trade and farmed tax monopolies, but such control declined in later years. The establishment of a standing army and conscription resulted in a clear demarcation of Thai and Chinese sectors in society as the latter were not subject to military service. The Chinese were thus the most significant section of population not organized by the state in the nineteenth century. They were controlled by the Thai state, but were not organized by it, while ethnic Thais were both organized and controlled (Chai-Anan 1987).

Before the Bowring Treaty of 1855, the Chinese found that the only organizations offering collective relations and action were

1. This is not the place to examine this system of social and political organization; for details see Akin (1969).

in the form of triads or secret societies. Although secret societies were a form of organizations growing out of agrarian societies, Chinese secret societies, as triads, were highly structured. Triads were initially formed during the latter seventeenth century, with the specific objective of struggling for the independence of the Han from the Manchus. They were essentially ethnic organizations with a revolutionary aim. Triads were especially active south of the Yangtze River, and this form of organization was brought to Siam with the stream of Chinese migrants during the period from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century (Comber 1959). Thus, in old Siam, secret societies became the *only* form of secular organization outside the realm of state power, even though their leaders were often linked to state officials who used them for a measure of control over their societies. For example, *Chaophraya*² Sri Suriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag), who had real power in the reign of King Mongkut and acted as the Regent in the early part of King Chulalongkorn's reign, was well regarded by leaders of Chinese secret societies, especially those in Rajburi province where he held large sugar cane plantations.

Triads continued to be active from the late nineteenth and to the early twentieth century. As organizations, they had decentralized structures but rigid rules (Suparat 1981). Since there were no "interests" recognized in the old Siamese society (except those of Western nations), Chinese interests were not systematically represented or protected, unlike those of Westerners who were protected by extraterritorial rights. Chinese economic interests, therefore, had to be subservient to those of the nobility and Westerners. New arrivals from China, lacking connections with officials of the monarchy, sought refuge and protection with secret societies. Established merchants either chose to remain under the patronage of royal and high-ranking officials or to become British and French subjects and thereby gain access to the rights of extraterritoriality.

2. *Chaophraya* is the highest title of the conferred nobility, usually reserved for ministers of the pre-1932 regime.

The young King Chulalongkorn and his followers were against the toleration of secret societies but could do little until after the death of the Regent. The King's organization of Western-style Royal Guards when he ascended the throne may be seen as an attempt to balance the power of the Regent and his links to the secret societies. Indeed, many of King Chulalongkorn's reforms were conscious attempts to organize a state apparatus which could cope with external *and* internal threats. Western-style organizations served the dual function of preempting and preventing colonial penetration and curbing the threats posed by the collective activities of ethnic Chinese organized as secret societies. The latter threat was real, with a serious Chinese uprising having taken place in 1733, when 300 Chinese attacked the palace, with other uprisings reported in 1824, 1842, 1845, 1847 and 1848. These events probably set the reformists' collective mind, for in 1889, when two secret societies fought each other for two days in the heart of Bangkok, two battalions were deployed to end the violence (Suparat 1981). The newly-established standing army was also used to suppress peasant uprisings in the North and the Northeast.

King Chulalongkorn was aware of the potential for Chinese interests to develop as organized political interests and of the possibility that Chinese dominated political parties might be formed. In a letter to the Minister of the Capital in 1909, he wrote that any Chinese attempt to create a political party had to be prevented and destroyed (National Archives, 5th Reign Papers N.8.7/8). This policy of preventing economic interests from developing into political interests and being represented by political parties was strictly followed by King Vajiravudh and King Prajadhipok, neither of whom would allow Siam to have a constitution for fear that it would lead to situations where Chinese or Chinese-supported political parties could eventually control political and state power (Chai-Anan 1980).

Through this frame of reference it is possible to gain a better understanding of the modern role of the military and bureaucracy in politics. The military and civilian bureaucracies were and are perceived as essentially *Thai* organizations, while secular collective

entities were perceived as threats to the security of the Thai state. The Secret Society Act, 1897, was the forerunner of the Associations Act, 1914, which prohibited associations from having any political aims or becoming involved in any political activity (Chai-Anan 1995).

It is not surprising that the only legitimate and legal organizations permitted to engage in organized collective action were the military and the bureaucracy. The role of the military in politics throughout the modern period can be analyzed in this context. The development of state enterprises, bureaucratic capitalism, the commercialization and corruption of military and civilian officials, the centralization and “technocratization” of social and economic development can all be understood in the context of this combination of factors which accorded legitimacy to state organizations.

By the early twentieth century, the Chinese question was essentially seen in terms of a potential threat to state power, especially once a stronger Chinese Republic emerged after a long period of internal conflict. The republican government established by Sun Yat Sen managed to gain significant support among overseas Chinese. Those who migrated to Thailand in the late 1890s and early 1900s were very much influenced by Dr. Sun’s revolutionary movement (Hwang 1976). Subsequently, the Japanese invasion of China had a great impact on immigrant Chinese. This was compounded by Field Marshal Pibul Songkhram’s brand of pan-Thai nationalism in the late 1930s and early 1940s, which linked with Japanese pan-Asian expansionism and the creation of a Thai (state) identity (Chai-Anan 1991). Thai-Chinese, who started to organize to assist their fatherland, came into conflict with Pibul’s state.

By the late 1930s, the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce had become the accepted organization for the management of Sino-Thai relations. The president of the Chamber was regarded as the unofficial Chinese ambassador in Thailand. Contacts between high-ranking officials in China and prominent Chinese businessmen in Thailand developed into strong political ties based on the common objective of fighting the Japanese aggressors. In

1939, the newly elected president of the Chamber, Hia Kwong Lam, was invited to the meeting of the Guangdong Provincial Assembly to report on the Chinese resistance movement against the Japanese in Thailand (Amporn 1994). High-ranking officials from Guangdong mobilized Chinese throughout Southeast Asia against the Japanese in 1940, and Chinese schools became the center for this mobilization in Thailand.

Such activities represented a challenge to the Thai state, but changes to the regime and conflict in China reduced concern. However, with the communist victory in 1949, the perceived Chinese and communist threats to the state became intertwined. Such combined threats contributed to the increase and consolidation of the legitimacy of the state elite while limiting and constraining the emerging economic power of Sino-Thais. The military and civilian bureaucrats were able to consolidate their power by focusing on their legitimate roles of maintaining stability and security and at the same time “developing” the nation to safeguard “Nation, Religion and King” from communism. During the three decades after 1949 the ethnic Chinese factor came to be considered a negative political factor.

As an ethnic group the Chinese have been both assimilated and suppressed (Chai-Anan 1991). Generally, those who were culturally and economically assimilated chose not to challenge state power. Those who did, or who were not satisfied with their status, chose, in the past, to join the secret societies and, more recently, were drawn to the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). The CPT was not only a revolutionary party, as it claimed, but a party led by ethnic Chinese and which also appealed to other ethnic minorities, especially hill peoples and Northeasterners who considered themselves ethnic Lao (Chai-Anan 1981).

The Security-Development State

Westernization resulted in the formation of a nation-state organized along Western lines, but without a strong liberal-democratic orientation. There were two factors involved in this. First, the

internationalization of the competition between the socialist and liberal-democratic models strengthened the security dimension of the state. Second, the threat of communism brought a convergence and strengthening of the security and development dimensions. The result was that the state did not develop along democratic lines but emphasized security and development while resisting pressures and demands for decentralization. In the cold war era, the United States promoted security and development as preeminent values, resulting in the deepening of military power and involvement in politics, aided by developmental technocrats (Saiyud 1986).

As noted above, the development of the modern state was characterized by a dualism of power, with state and political power never effectively integrated (see Chai-Anan 1995). State power had been accumulated through the creation of the nation-state, enhancing the “bureaucratic polity” and expanding the power of the bureaucratic elite (Riggs 1966). Political power, on the other hand, has not been consolidated. This is due to five factors: (i) the long duration of state power uninterrupted by direct colonial rule; (ii) the strength of organization, the solidarity and shared belief system and values of the military and civil bureaucracies; (iii) international and regional environments which made the security imperative an overriding factor in state-building; (iv) the development imperative which contributed to the expansion of the bureaucracy and its penetration into the periphery through various development programs and projects; and (v) the threat of the CPT, which developed into an insurgent war from the mid-1960s.

The predominance of the security and development dimensions of the state over that of participation can be seen in budget expenditures from 1960 to 1970, during which period defence and internal security expenditures ranged from 21 to 27 per cent, compared with expenditures on economic activities, education and health which ranged from 19 to 29 percent, 15 to 27 per cent, and 9 to 16 per cent respectively (Chai-Anan 1971). This level of security expenditure was justified in terms of the CPT threat. In 1969—the year in which a general election was

held for the first time in twelve years—thirty-four of seventy-one provinces were declared “communist-infested” areas. From 1965–69, CPT and government forces engaged in armed clashes on some 2000 occasions.

In this situation, the military’s main strategy was to allow for very limited political participation at the national level. For the military, the power of the state and political power were different matters. The former was seen as being of a higher order and more comprehensive than the political power of politicians, which was restricted to legislative activities (Chai-Anan 1979). It is not surprising that it was relatively independent students and intellectuals who emerged to challenge state power in October 1973.

After the 1973 popular uprising, participation in politics, and especially politics outside the official parties and parliament, became increasingly significant as political competition among rival factions within the military developed. The state elites were thus confronted with another group which they had to threaten and/or co-opt. The participation dimension had thus been unleashed to counterbalance the prevailing security and development nexus. With economic development, urbanization and globalization, demands for liberalization and participation have put pressure on the security-development bureaucratic complex to respond more to the grievances and demands of the masses.

State Elites Bypassed

Elsewhere I have argued that the activist bureaucratic state had been able to resist the societal forces surrounding it, and that the dominant state elites of high-level military and civilian officials have not had to relinquish their power to a new elite of elected politicians (Chai-Anan 1989). Control of political offices does not automatically lead to political power. A closer examination of substantive political issues—natural resource management, international relations, security management, decentralization, the proposed election of governors, and constitutional and political reforms—indicates that

the senior military and civilian bureaucrats remain the center of the decision-making process.

While there are internal challenges to the power of the established elites, with various social and economic interests and ideas struggling to gain their place in the political sphere, the greatest challenge to established groups and ideas is posed by the forces of globalization. This is because globalization is occurring under a New World Order which actively promotes human rights, democracy and environmental protection. The changing role of the United States, from that of benevolent patron to economic competitor demanding trade liberalization, while reducing its security commitments, has directly affected Thailand's military. For many years, claiming security concerns, and with the support of the US, the military was able to use border areas as buffers zones and allowed non-formal trade to flourish, bringing great financial benefits to itself. The New World Order sees the Thai military now being criticized for such entanglements, and especially those with the Khmer Rouge and the military regime in Burma. Questions of human rights, corruption and the relationship between business and the military have all been highlighted. As globalization intensifies, state elites are beginning to lose control in many strategic areas, including the border regions and in their links to corrupt business. In addition, their long-standing control of the media and state enterprises are being challenged by privatization.

As noted above, the long period of anticommunism resulted in the overdevelopment of the state and the consequent underdevelopment of participatory organizations. The mobilization of farmers, workers and the urban middle class was an aim shared by both the state and its enemies, including the CPT. Mobilization did not, however, mean participation for these groups. Rather, mobilization was to support the ideology and activities of the organizations involved. Such mobilization actually reduced real participation by the masses.

The development decades which favored a growth strategy created great wealth and opportunities in urban areas. But the emergent economic powers of the 1960s and 1970s had very

limited opportunity to capture or share state power. In provincial areas this situation saw the growth of economic elites which developed as *chao pho*,³ cultivating close relationships with powerful military and police officers. After 1979, when politics became more stable and elections were more regular, these local economic barons, mostly second-generation Chinese immigrants, became potent political forces. As Chinese, they have not been fully integrated into Thai bureaucratic structures even though they have been major beneficiaries of the development decades. Ironically, much of their business success has been from their links to government departments (Pasuk and Sungsidh 1994). Banharn, prime minister from July 1995 to November 1996, was this new elite's representative *par excellence*.

In the new political world of the 1990s these economic barons are convinced that the most effective way to protect and advance their economic interests is to support or “own” political parties or factions of them. There are two types of support and ownership. In the first, an individual supports a group of politicians who may form a political party with or without that person as its leader, as in the case of Narong Wongwan, leader of the Therd Thai Party which became a faction of Banharn's Chart Thai Party in the coalition government which came to power in 1995. The second type is where there is multiple support and ownership or co-ownership. In this type there may be contributions with or without active participation in elections. The Chart Thai Party has also exemplified these kinds of contributions.

In the first half of the 1980s, the military and bureaucratic elites sought to maintain their control over these rising economic elites through a combination of strategies. They formed an effective alliance with big, established business groups under the leadership of General Prem Tinsulanonda during his decade as prime minister.

3. *Chao pho* are powerful provincial business people who control many local businesses, some legal and other illegal (e.g., prostitution, gambling).

They jealously guarded strategic positions in the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), the Ministry of Finance, Budget Bureau, and the Ministries of Defence and the Interior. They developed a mechanism to connect with emergent economic interests through the Joint Public-Private Consultative Committee (JPPCC). This military and civilian bureaucratic alliance was broken in 1989 when Chatichai Choonhavan, leading the Chart Thai Party, became the first prime minister in more than a decade to be an elected member of parliament. Instead of relying on and consulting with the NESDB and the JPPCC, as Prem had always done when making major economic policy decisions, Chatichai preferred to establish direct links with individual members of the business community and to keep decision-making closer to his cabinet of elected politicians.

It is important to note that, while there were attempts to topple the various Prem administrations, all coups failed miserably. A principle reason for this was a lack of consensus on the need for a change of government. The 1991 coup against the Chatichai government was executed with a consensus among military and civilian bureaucrats and business interests (see Hewison 1993a). Business groups that supported the 1991 coup shared a common trait: they were strongly opposed to participatory politics and political parties. Nevertheless, businessman Anand Panyarachun, often seen as a liberal, accepted the premiership offered by the military junta. Generally, he was able to work cordially with them, but he did not launch any meaningful political reforms.

The May 1992 uprising against the military was an organized political movement. Unlike the October 1973 student-led “revolution,” the May incident was engineered by an alliance created from military factions opposed to the 1991 coup leaders, business people (generally small- or medium-sized business), intellectuals and students, and political parties. It may be argued that this uprising was not so much pro-democracy, as is often claimed, but rather a movement opposed to the possibility of a new alliance of the military and business leading to a dictatorship (Chai-Anan 1993a).

The National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC) military junta was a coalition between Class 5 graduates of the military academy and big business groups, especially the Charoen Pokphand (CP) group. By 1992, members of Class 5 were in control of top posts in the Supreme Command, the Army, the Navy and the Police. They also had their staunch allies and supporters in the major civilian ministries, especially the Ministry of the Interior, which controls provincial administration. The junta appointed its leaders to control major public enterprises such as the Telephone Organization of Thailand and Thai Airways International, and rewarded business allies. Many of these enterprises were engaged in mega-projects worth billions of baht. When Anand became prime minister, one of his first acts was to review the contract on the expansion of telephone services which had been granted to the CP Group. He also moved to change members of the boards of the Telephone Organization and Thai International. It is clear that economic liberalization was a priority for Anand over political liberalization and reforms. These moves reflected Anand's firm belief in free competition and his fear of convulsions within the military-industrial complex which, he believed, would be detrimental to future growth (Anand Panyarachun, interviews in 1992).

Following the May 1992 incident the military's position changed significantly. Recent US foreign and trade policy and its support of human rights and democracy resulted in growing anti-American feeling within its leadership. The military and civilian bureaucratic elites are losing not only their influence but also their prestige and status. This is due to the rapidly declining significance of security concerns. At the same time, the development function is shifting from the public to the private sector as the internationalization of capital and declining costs of transportation and telecommunications contribute to the rapid expansion of the private corporate sector. This increasingly means that the unreformed bureaucracy is redundant, even obsolete (Chai-Anan 1994b).

State behavior has been heavily influenced by the challenge provided by the CPT in the three decades to the early 1980s. The

CPT, with the support of China, provided a powerful threat to state power. However, as this threat declined, the relationships and alliances between the state and economic elites have become far more dynamic. The basis of the regime, led by the civil and military elites, has been shaken by the extent that new economic elites can use political parties to effectively advance their interests and demands.

Since 1992, power in society has become increasingly segmented, with the military being increasingly limited to its defence functions and the bureaucracy facing challenges from political parties and NGOs. The military has reacted by attempting to enhance its legitimacy in the security sphere by reaching out to various social groups in a more open manner, including allowing strategically selected groups to discuss security issues. For the first time, the Ministry of Defence organized seminars and in 1994 published a White Paper which was widely distributed, suggesting a new openness (Ministry of Defence 1994).

The post-cold war situation has enhanced the role of participation in politics. Proposals on political reform, decentralization, the election of governors, the appointment of an ombudsman, administrative court, public hearings and a Citizens' Committee on Police, are all indicators of the desire to expand popular participation. In the past, state elites could deny these rights on the grounds of security concerns and the communist threat. Now, the remnants of the ultra-right alliance can only attempt to use the issue of the protection of the monarchy to minimize and control popular participation. For example, the proposal to elect provincial governors, proposed by the Ekaphab (Unity) Party and supported by the Palang Dharma Party was opposed on the grounds that it was an effort to establish a republican form of government (based on interviews with numerous MPs and party members during 1995).

Future challenges to the dominance of the military and bureaucracy are also apparent in the globalization process, through the challenges it poses for the nation-state. Whereas Westernization and internationalization created an entrenched security-

development state in which democratic transition failed to be effectively consolidated, globalization threatens this. Under the security-development state, collective organization and political action was disrupted and constrained by a combination of external pressures and internal power struggles. Meanwhile, the momentum for organized economic power transforming itself into political power in Thailand was lost, first because of the Chinese republican revolution of 1911 and then with the advent of communism, which allowed ethnic Chinese business people to be politically marginalized. Different generations of state elites have been able to be selective and incremental in their responses to such challenges. They skillfully played one force against the other and successfully assimilated, accommodated, coerced and suppressed potentially threatening non-state actors.

They can no longer do so. The globalization and internationalization of capital have made the state a less important actor in a world where spatial and temporal dimensions have shrunk. The political space that state elites have occupied is no longer the main arena for the allocation of resources and the distribution of benefits. The nation-state—a nineteenth-century social and political creation—is being bypassed by the potent forces of information and communications. The military and the bureaucracy are the main instruments of the nation-state and its centralized organization, but the *Thai* nation-state is finding its authority undermined by several significant developments in society and in the region.

Businesses are bypassing state boundaries, relying less on the state and building ties with business counterparts in other territories. The People's Republic of China, once seen as a political demon, has become an important market and contacts with China are now assets, not liabilities. The increased availability of communication technology, such as mobile phones, the internet and faxes, is undermining state attempts at social control. Now, not only can ethnic Chinese move freely, but other ethnic groups in the region are moving across borders as workers from one country migrate to the factories of another to produce goods to be exported, often to a third country. Borders are becoming positive

sites of economic transactions rather than the negative sites of conflict they were during the cold war era.

This bypassing of the state is occurring at two important levels. On the broader, macroeconomic level, the weakening of the security-development state is opening up the possibility of regional economic growth that follows trade flows rather than state boundaries. At another level, people are no longer trapped within state boundaries, as they were during the conflict-filled years of the cold war. Now they are increasingly free to follow jobs or cultural ties and to build connections with neighbors in other states.

The role of the military in politics in this new era has been drastically reduced, both by its own miscalculated moves and by the international and domestic social and economic environments. After May 1992, the armed forces have basically been trying to safeguard their military and security interests, including arms procurement. Nevertheless, these corporate interests were curbed both by the Chuan and Banharn governments, as was seen in the scandal over the case of the request by the Navy to acquire submarines in 1995 (*Bangkok Post* 23 May 1996).

The highly politicized leadership of the armed forces was virtually destroyed by the May 1992 incident, and while military leaders remain politically connected, they are a less politicized group. General Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh, a former Army commander and now leader of the New Aspiration Party, installed General Viroj Saengsanit of the discredited Class 5 as Supreme Commander. However, when Viroj retired in September 1996, generational change saw the old rivalry between Class 5 and Class 7 fade as the younger members of Classes 8 to 12 began to replace the military leadership. These officers are known to be more professional and have generally been more concerned with improving the image and legitimacy of the armed forces. They are convinced that their best strategy of survival is to keep away from direct political involvement and concentrate on the protection of the military's legitimate role and corporate interests. As long as parliamentary democracy continues to provide the formal rules of the political game and conventional coup-making is therefore less

feasible, military leaders and their cliques have to realign themselves with the leaders of political parties, and be seen to be nonpolitical or, at least, nonpartisan (Lt.-General Surayuth Julanond, Commander of 2nd Army Region, interviewed 5 April 1996).

During the period of “de-authoritarianization,” which occurred with democratic consolidation, the role of General Prem was, and remains, significant. Now titled “Senior Statesman” and one of the King’s trusted privy councillors, he is considered to be above party politics. However, he is closely linked with the powerful Bangkok Bank and is chairman of the New Imperial Hotel Group which is controlled by a billionaire businessman whose company has a lucrative government sales concession for local whisky throughout the country. More recently, in April 1996 Prem was appointed chairman of the Advisory Board of the CP Company. At New Year and on his birthday, commanders of all armed forces, retired high-ranking civilian officers and powerful members of the business community visit his Sisao Thewet residence and pay their respects. His influence also extends to the Democrat and Chart Thai Parties. His social connections with big business, newspaper owners and high-ranking military and civilian bureaucrats is based on the fact that he remains an effective patron, due to his charisma (*barami*) and the favors he granted while prime minister for nearly ten years.

General Prem acts as a surrogate strongman at a time when the military itself is unable to produce a strongman or a powerful military faction. One of his closest aides, General Mongkol Ampornpisith, now at the Supreme Command, currently waits in the wings for an opportunity to take a higher military position, although then Defence Minister Chaovalit blocked his passage to the top in 1996.

It is not surprising that so many political roads lead to General Prem. Political parties remain weak and divided, the armed forces have not yet regrouped following May 1992, so no strong factions currently exist in the military. At the same time, politicians are not building their legitimacy as parties squabble over the spoils of office, while the powerful private sector cares only for stability and a

favorable investment climate. General Prem's position is thus unique. As a privy councilor Prem is not supposed to be involved in politics, yet he is one of the longest-serving prime ministers to whom the leaders of all political parties turn—at one time or another, they have all served in one of his cabinets—while high-ranking military officers regard him as a patron.

Concluding Remarks

In some ways Thai politics has not changed much. Authoritarian enclaves remain, and while they may not have formal institutional channels to exert their influence as in the past, while the cold war is over and while the CPT is now a remnant of the cold war era, Thailand experiences only incomplete democracy. The old style coups are no longer possible, but the conservative alliance of the military, technocrats and business may utilize General Prem's influence to put pressure on any government which they deem unpopular or unresponsive to their demands. For example, in February 1996 a popular television program *Mo'ng tang mum* ("Different Perspectives") which often challenged elite perspectives, was given an ultimatum to end. According to Dr. Chirmsak Pintong, the show's host, it was General Prem who told the secretary-general of the foundation which had been supporting the program to withdraw its support (Chirmsak interviewed 20 February 1996).

The military's role in politics has become more complex. The military has to seek new "linkages" for itself, both as an institution and as individuals, through new patron-client networks. Institutionally, it must pledge support to democratically elected governments, while personally the military elite has been using General Prem as the link to the new power elites of party leaders.

The decline of authoritarianism and the process of "re-democratization" have created an awkward political situation. On the one hand, democratic forces, including students, intellectuals, NGO workers, elements of the middle class and parts of the mass

media, have been pushing for political reform. On the other hand, authoritarian forces within the military and remnants of rightist groups and their allies in political parties remain important elements in the private sector and media and are standing in the wings. As for the armed forces, there are no clear signs that they are moving toward *major* reform. Moves by the military appear to be reactive rather than proactive as the military learns that, in the age of globalization, the territory and sovereignty of the nation-state are not so easily controlled. Examples of this kind of realignment may be seen in attempts to establish businesses in finance, construction, newspapers and banking. In preserving its security role and reinforcing its values in society, the role of the National Defence College and the Strategic Studies Institute of the Supreme Command have been expanded, reaching out to the active political and economic elites.

The nation-state and the military are nineteenth-century phenomena writ large in a conflict-ridden twentieth century. While the military and bureaucratic elites remain important and will continue to safeguard their diminishing role in society, they will not be replaced; they will be bypassed.

PART THREE

OUTLOOK

7

HOLES IN THE NET

Local Culture, Self-Government, and Globalization

AS OUR UNIVERSITY CELEBRATES 150 years of educating, we are entering the next millennium. The digital world has already changed our relations with time and space and will have great impact on our learning culture and learning processes. We are not only moving from the world of atoms to the world of bits, but are also trying to cope with much more complex global problems of interdependence, and, at the same time, preserving our cherished culture, traditions, and values. In this passing century, we all have striven to be independent. Although overcoming dependencies has not been an easy task, we can safely say that most nations are now freer. Our societies are now more open.

The enemies of an open society are no longer totalitarianism and dictatorship, but instability, chaotic economic situations, drugs, environmental degradation, declining family values, and poverty in the inner city. As we are approaching the next century, a serious problem of mistrust is developing to the extent that this so-called “Culture of Mistrust” is undermining not only the political foundations of democracy, but also the fabric of society.

Keynote address delivered to the International Alumni Convocation “A Global Perspective for the 21st Century,” University of Wisconsin-Madison, 6 May 1999 (on the occasion of receiving an Outstanding International Alumni Award and an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree).

Leaders of most nations are now very eager to create a “civil society.” I always tell my learned friends that the idea of a “civil society” is inherent in our nature. It is the nation-state which is alien to us. The state has been so predominant for such a long time that we tend to forget that under its net, there are small holes—pockets of independence, you might call them—which no matter how far reaching state power is, can always survive and thrive. These small holes in the net are the intrinsic strength of human societies.

So, let us not overlook the little spaces under the territorial and other institutional controls of the state. The resurgence of small communities of identities and differences came about not because they are stronger or have acquired more resources. They have reemerged and become more potent and relevant because the state is weaker and is becoming increasingly irrelevant. The state is weaker because it failed miserably to meet so many challenges brought about by globalization.

The concept of the nation-state is based upon territorial sovereignty which can be compared to a large net spreading over peoples and communities. The information revolution is undermining this old net by replacing it with *networks* of diverse interests.

States thrive under ideological conflict. The globalization process is essentially nonideological in nature and rests on cultural and economic interdependence rather than cultural and economic domination; on diversification and networking rather than integration and unification; on decentralization rather than centralization; and on participation rather than mobilization. The state has to learn to live with diversity and multiplicity instead of insisting on uniformity and conformity.

Can we build a sustainable democratic state without having a sustainable civil society? I don't think so. Globalization, I believe, is not anti-society, and it is not anti-culture. On the contrary, it enables “small holes in the net” to link up and join forces across state boundaries. While globalization weakens the state, it strengthens “civil communities.”

This brings me to the “bypassing of the state” phenomenon which is occurring on two important levels. On the broader, macroeconomic level, the weakening of the state is opening up the possibility of regional economic growth that follows trade “flares” instead of artificial state boundaries. On the micro level, people have been freed to follow jobs, or cultural ties, and to build connections with neighbors in other states.

These trends suggest that rather than facing Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” (1993), the future world is more likely to witness dynamic interactions over and under the state propelled by the coexistence of opposing and complementary forces. The combined forces of globalization, the historical *longue dur* of distinct civilizations and ethnic pluralism across the world will, I believe, give birth to “globalized communitarianism” and not the “clash of civilizations.”

They have also opened up new opportunities for interactions between economic and noneconomic factors that are becoming more and more important in regional and subregional cooperation. Culture, ethnicity, community belief and rituals, languages, dialects—all of which are not normally included in economic equations—have become more intertwined with patterns of migration, trade and investment, natural resource utilization, productivity, technological transfer, and human resource development.

But globalization has its dark side too. Among these are excessive consumerism, economic speculation, and unwise allocation and utilization of resources.

Globalization has enabled consumerism to expand beyond national boundaries. Consumerism and transnational corporatism are the two characteristics of the new “Internationalism.” Small nation states can not withstand such rapid, complex and multidirectional changes. Most of them have to face the double jeopardy of becoming more dependent and struggling to be a part of the global economy.

How could we best balance economic values inherent in modern liberal democracies with other cultural and political values? Young democracies need more cooperation and compromise rather

than incessant conflict and competition. Above all, trust of and loyalty to democratic rule are prerequisites for a sustainable development. Globalization has made our societies much more open, but it has also brought about rapid changes, some of which we have little experience to handle effectively. An open society has great costs, and these costs sometimes have eroded and uprooted our age-old traditions and culture. The most urgent task is to encourage civil communities to regain their self-confidence which has been lost during the periods of overdevelopment of the state and materialistic modernization.

The birth of nation states was the dawn of local culture. Both Marxists and non-Marxists have excluded culture from the equation of development. Culture is nonproductive and stands in the way of progress. In the digital world, culture regains its importance as a form of capital, or, to be more precise, “formless capital.” Local culture is perhaps the only trait or symbol of community identity. It is also an important constraint on excessive consumerism and materialism. Cultural heritage (as formless capital stock) must be sustained and increased. Cultural diversity and pluralism must be tolerated both at national and global levels. Both are complementary and can coexist.

Civic education is necessary for the building and consolidation of a global communitarianism where universal values are upheld among nations and local culture respected. Civic education is inseparable from the historical, cultural, socioeconomic and political context of the society in question. Priority areas of learning are different in the Asia-Pacific region. For Koreans, they are democratization and unification, free and fair elections, and a workable electoral system. For Sri Lankans, they are conflict resolution, ethnic harmony, and national integration. For Cambodians, human rights, toleration, non-violence and the culture of peace, and gender awareness are the highest priorities. The Indonesians and the Thais are concerned with good governance, social awareness, human rights and decentralization. The Philippines puts a high priority on upgrading the skills of individuals and the capabilities of organizations to be more effective in

responding to the demands of democracy; and developing the proper character, disposition, and commitment to the fundamental values and principles of Philippine democracy. In Malaysia, which is a multiracial, multiethnic society, civic education goes beyond learning about democratic values and institutions. Among its highest priorities are awareness of and sensibility to understand and respect the values and cultures of other ethnic groups.

Whatever the priority areas for civic education may be, they all involve changes in beliefs, world views, attitudes and behavior of different and diverse groups of people. Life experiences and ways of life are extremely important for new orientations toward sustainable democracy. For some peoples, the culture of peace is a prerequisite before moving to other areas of civic education. Others may have to go back to the basics of politics and accept it as a non-personal public affair. No matter how diverse these priorities are, the underlying reality is that people (especially children) have different styles of learning and they learn more from families, the media, and good models and examples, than from the formal curriculum.

Self-development and good citizenship are both universal and culture-bound, and these two aspects of self-development and good citizenship can coexist. Universalism and Thainess, Malayness, or Chineseness can coexist like Yin and Yang.

Self-development and self-governance in Eastern philosophy involve the capability to give and to sacrifice, the ability to maintain mindfulness and disinterestedness, the pursuit of “enough” rather than of “more,” and the minimization of desire and greed instead of the maximization of profit. Civility calls for a continuing self-development on the part of every citizen so that a civil society can be achieved and maintained. The real issue facing us in the next millennium will not be finding a workable relationship between state and non-state organizations or actors, but achieving a proper and balanced relationship among humankind of diverse cultures, political belief systems, economic and technological pursuits. The most important aspect of democracy, which is universal, is its faith, trust and respect for humankind. For centuries, self-development

and self-governance have been regarded as religious or philosophical goals. We have taken away the spirit of democracy from democratic governance, resulting in the reduction of governance to exogenously-imposed activities for humankind. I maintain that self-development and self-governance are inner-directed and are inseparable from the universal ideals of democracy. In the age of globalization and the world of bits, we also need a new kind of democracy which aims at self-development and self-governance rather than only at representative, responsible and good governance. Local culture and globalization can coexist only in such a system, and then the holes in the net will be linked together to create *networks* for us all as we enter the next millennium.

8

GOOD GOVERNANCE: ONLY THE FIRST STEP FOR THAILAND

TWENTY YEARS AGO WE WERE CONCERNED with a number of questions that are still relevant for our discussions today. At the time, “Industrialization and Democracy” was the central theme of many seminars and conferences, and industrialization was seen as a driving force for democratization. Then we were puzzled as to why the new amalgam of social and political forces had not been able to consolidate and reshape the character of the state.

This question led to others. Are capitalism and democracy related? Is democracy the only alternative political framework to support and promote capitalism? In other words, does capitalism and its basic trait—industrialization—need democracy in order to sustain itself and expand? The most relevant question is whether economic and political inequalities caused by rapid economic development are temporary and self-correcting.

Now we have shifted our concern to “Globalization and Good Governance” instead of “Industrialization and Democracy.” We are asking a new set of questions while the old ones remain

Keynote address delivered to a conference on “Globalization: The Agent of Good Governance,” Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., 25 April 2001. Published in *The Journal of the Royal Institute of Thailand* 27 (July-September 2002).

unanswered. However, it is now evident that in many countries such as Thailand, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened despite the increase in per capita income.

We assume that “change” (especially of an economic or technological nature) is automatically transformative and that its effect are totalistic. Our view of “society” is also totalistic, which in reality it is not. There is not one but there are many levels of society. While the flow of capital, technology and information across borders continues to accelerate, the effects on society have been uneven, creating new opportunities and gains, but also conflicts and losses.

This is nothing new. What is important is to rethink our concept of change in order to be more people-centered, and less institutional or process-centered. It is also important to look comprehensively at the relationship between Globalization and Good Governance in its key aspects: political, economic, cultural, and international. As explained below, we will then see that Globalization-driven Good Governance is relevant only to *part* of society—the private corporate sector. The people’s agricultural sector, on the other hand, is increasingly marginalized. Market forces are not sufficient to form an alliance between these two parts of Thailand’s bifurcated society.

The Private Corporate Sector

In the 1980s, the developmental role of state bureaucrats (or technocrats) was more pronounced than now, especially in the highly productive, so-called “key industries” as well as in planning, budgeting, and fiscal and monetary policy-making. As put forth by Robert Wade’s governed market theory (1990), the state had an active role in directing capitalist market forces. In the 1990s, however, the governed market theory ceased to apply. The Asian financial crisis forced the Republic of Korea (the champion of the governed market theory) to fuel growth through foreign direct investment (FDI) and mergers and acquisitions (M&A).

Meanwhile, public-sector reform and an urgent need for capital led to large-scale privatization, another spur to foreign investment (UNCTAD Press Release, 3 October 2000).

Authoritarian states, which had good records on industrial development, were forced to democratize politically and to adopt Good Governance standards administratively. Without the economic crisis, there would have been no need for authoritarian regimes in Asia to relinquish power. Thus, the financial crisis has weakened Asian political regimes, although they are still nation-states with full sovereignty; as pointed out by George Soros (1998), they wield legal powers that no individual or corporation can possess.

While globalization has undermined authoritarian governments, it has empowered international regimes such as the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. The Asian crisis enabled these organizations to lay down conditions and guidelines for economic recovery. They have recommended mainly public-sector reform (which involves privatization of state enterprises), liberalization of trade and services, and legal reform in line with international standards and practices.

Politically and economically, the globalization process has standardized criteria for governance and management. Indeed, the cornerstones of global networks are liberalization, privatization and harmonization of laws and policies. Consequently, this process tends to iron out cultural diversity and unify what was a multiplicity of interests. In Europe there has been an attempt to counterbalance globalization's integrating effects by evoking the Principle of Subsidiarity (which calls for resolving any matter at the lowest possible level of organization). Asia has seen the rise of Asian civil society, which actually should be termed "societies" rather than a universal, aggregate "society," in the form of oppositional social movements with diverse values.

As transnational operations replace the state in controlling and directing economic activities at all levels, elites—political, military and technocratic—lose their most fundamental power over the private sector, namely their regulative authority. Thus, the process of globalization is inseparable from good governance: both

exert pressure on the state. (By contrast, democratization involves the expansion of political participation, which involves *all* sectors of society.) On the macroeconomic level, the weakening of the state makes possible growth that follows trade “flares” instead of adhering to artificial state boundaries. On the microeconomic level, people are freed to follow jobs or cultural ties, and to build connections with people in other states.

These movements are both “above” and “under” the state. Multinational corporations are moving above, bypassing the state and eroding its sovereignty. The M&A boom is one example. Meanwhile, poor and jobless people are moving “under” the state as illegal migrants and small-scale traders. Drug warlords, the mafia and black marketeers have increased their control of local politics and in many areas have become “representatives” of the people.

Consumerism, too, has expanded beyond national boundaries. Consumerism and transnational corporatism are the two main characteristics of what is called “internationalism.” Small nation-states have to face the double jeopardy of becoming more dependent and at the same time struggling to compete in the global economy.

The Agricultural Sector

Thai society is bifurcated into the private-corporate sector (both domestic and international) and the people’s agricultural sector (composed mainly of small-scale farmers). Good governance, as encouraged by globalization, is largely irrelevant to the most pressing concerns of the latter, which, even during the rapid economic growth of the 1980s, was unabsorbed to any significant extent by industrialization. While the state has adjusted its strategic alliance with the private-corporate sector by co-opting it into the highest level of decision-making, the state has been reluctant similarly to include the rural agricultural sector, and has been less responsive to its demand for participation beyond electoral channels. Not only powerless small farmers but also organized agricultural interest

groups have suffered from the drive toward industrialization and international competitiveness.

These marginalized farmers are victims of development. They have neither economic assets nor economic rights, although they are citizens with voting and other fundamental rights guaranteed by the new constitution. Political reform has opened up new channels for participation, but this participation mainly takes the form of grievance expression rather than interest aggregation.

Although globalization is neutral and is driven by rapid change in technology and communications, good governance is not neutral. The term is value laden and refers to that which is necessary for an efficient market-driven economy. Good governance is a basic requirement for a more open and transparent public-private sector relationship. But, as noted above, Thailand is a bifurcated society. The Thai government, in its attempt to promote good governance during the past three years, passed a number of laws (such as the Business Competition Act of 1999 and the Accounting Act of 2000) favoring multinational corporations. These laws are to ensure that domestic and foreign investment do not result in anti-competitive behavior. However, draft legislation on community rights, natural resources and environmental management suffered from delays and setbacks.

The shift from an input-based economy toward a more knowledge-based economy will be extremely unstable and requires a good political strategy rather than good governance. Conventionally, such a shift is said to require modernization of institutions, incentives for competition, good corporate management, gradual privatization, targeted research and development, upgrading of skills, and support for small- and medium-sized enterprises. These technical measures are necessary for competitiveness, and enhance the corporate sector's efficiency. However, they must be accompanied by a strategy capable of forging a grand alliance between the large, rural, input-based, traditional part of society with the small, urban, knowledge-based, modernized and globalized part of society. Good governance is not the answer to this problem.

Toward a New Consciousness

As a bifurcated society, Thailand has to cope with globalization at both ends, for it cannot rely upon market forces alone. The state has to create an optimal relationship between democracy, the market, and sustainable development. Globalization is inherently market “driven”; good governance is management-oriented, but democracy is people-centered and requires both free and fair treatment of individuals.

Democratization in my view is closely linked with the empowerment of individuals, decentralization and participation. Hence it is closer to localization than to globalization. Will market-driven change automatically promote democracy, as well as transparency and good governance? There are conflicting views and experiences from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

As observed by Deepak Nayyar (1998, 81), “marketization and globalization in the developing world, so far, have provided the enthusiasm and the opportunities to the privileged few who are rich but not to the vast majority who are poor.” Amartya Sen (1999), while recognizing certain limitations of the market mechanism, firmly believes in its ability to create wealth unrivalled by any other known system. According to Sen, we have to supplement this mechanism, not replace it, to redress the ills of market-driven growth.

Sen notes that “the successes of the market economy are not achieved single-handedly by the market alone. There is a crucial need for supplementation from other institutions.” Other institutions include the government, the legislature, the judiciary, the political parties, and the media. He then proposes a “new strategy,” which requires understanding how institutions complement one another, and a broad vision that encompasses protective security, participatory politics and transparent accountability.

While I agree fully with Sen that “growth with equity” has not in fact meaningfully trickled down to the poor, we have to ask *why* economic growth driven by the market is inherently inequitable. The cause may lie in treating the market as the core, and other

institutions—cultural, social and political—as merely supplementary parts. Everywhere in the world, the problems of the market economy cannot be addressed by further institutional supplementation, but by a *rearrangement* of complementary institutions and their relationships to one another. Such a rearrangement requires repositioning the “People’s Sector” vis-à-vis the market, so that human security, participatory politics and transparent accountability would have (at least) equal weight. I think Sen’s vision is still very conventional and, if followed by developing countries, will jeopardize their nascent political democracies. Even in mature democracies, it will promote inequality rather than growth with equity. As Jacques Attali (1997) rightly points out, the market economy and democracy—the twin pillars of Western civilization—are more likely to undermine than to support one another. The market economy is more dynamic than democracy. If there are no countervailing forces, market mechanisms and corruption will eventually replace democracy, leading to a “market dictatorship.” This new kind of dictatorship is not political but economic in nature.

I think Sen too easily takes the market for granted and is too optimistic about its positive contribution to humankind. Attali is more pessimistic. Attali warns that, in the absence of strong, countervailing democratic institutions, “political outcomes will be bought and sold, and the market will rule every element of public life from police protection, justice, education, and health to the very air we breathe, paving the way for the final victory of ‘*corporate*’ economic rights over individual human rights. Under such circumstances, Western civilization itself is bound to collapse” (1997, 62).

In Thailand, the market economy is already undermining democracy largely because the “political market” is not a free market in terms of entry and competition. The 1997 constitution has many entry barriers for small and medium-sized parties, preventing their competing with major political parties and with vested interest groups strongly backed by capital.

Fifty years ago David Easton (1953) defined politics as “the authoritative allocation of values in society.” Now we are

witnessing the decline of noneconomic values in many Western societies. Industrial and post-industrial societies have been too preoccupied with that I call “value-addification,” at the expense of preserving cultural and family values. The market economy can add economic value, but sustaining noneconomic value is beyond its capability. We therefore have to redefine politics, especially in the globalized multidimensional world where economic values may be universally accepted but noneconomic values are so diverse and culture-bound.

If we regard the market as central to humankind’s development and democracy as only supplementary, we cannot meet such challenges to capitalism as the persistence of poverty, deprivation, unemployment, insecurity, and environmental depletion. In fact, to meet these challenges we need even more than democracy. We need the “philosophy of enoughness,” compassion, and a balanced, middle-path approach to development, which require not a new strategy so much as a new consciousness and ethic. Beyond national competitiveness is the spirit of cooperation, the enlightening recognition that enough is more important than more, and profit maximization and competition cannot be the only goals of development.

I do not want to replace the market mechanism, but I think we need to reposition it and use it to supplement core values such as human security, participation and freedom. If development is to be considered an expansion of freedom—if they are one and the same—then there is an urgent need to rethink the appropriate relationships between the market, democracy and development. Globalization involves change that penetrates deeply, that opens up an individual’s horizons, aspirations and expectations. Such change also creates anxiety, fear and frustration. It is neutral, with both positive and negative effects. To trust implicitly in good governance is to downplay its negative effects on the weakest part of society.

9

A BALANCED SCORECARD FOR HUMANE DEVELOPMENT

IN THE 1960S OUR ECONOMIES were largely dominated by tangible assets, unlike today where intangible assets have become major sources of competitive advantage. What I do not understand, however, is why this change has led us to become so competitive that we have become less concerned with basic human values. In the name of competitiveness and the effort to create value-added goods and services—to increase shareholders' value—considerable excesses have occurred. Most of us experienced a mixture of confusion and outrage when we heard about what happened at Enron, WorldCom, Xerox and, of course, Arthur Andersen. Are we moving too fast in the wrong direction? If there is a Balanced Scorecard, what should we be trying to balance in the scorecard?

According to Richard Alexander (1979), in evolutionary history, human beings learned to cooperate in order to compete. But as Robert Wright (2000) observes, both organic and human history involve the playing for ever more numerous, ever larger, and ever more elaborate non-zero-sum games. Wright refers to this accumulation as an accumulation of “non-zerosumness.”

Keynote address for the symposium “Lessons from Asia: A Look to the Future,” Edgewood College, Madison, Wisconsin, 13–14 October 2002 (organized to coincide with the celebration of the ninetieth birthday of Professor William H. Young).

I am interested in following the changes brought about by globalization. I also think that America needs a Global Strategy for the age of globalization. Such a global strategy must be able to address a basic strategic objective that defines the American Agenda. Is this Global Strategy aimed at the accumulation of “zerosumness” or “non-zerosumness”? Obviously, the Balanced Scorecard of the former is entirely different from that of the latter. As an American-trained scholar and as a longtime friend of America, I am naturally inclined toward an American Global Strategy that promotes an accumulation of non-zerosumness in development. Such human development will be more humane and necessary for what Francis Fukuyama (2002) calls the “Posthuman Future.” Competition and cooperation are two sides of the same coin in human nature. Competition among individuals, if not restrained, may have negative effects on a community or a society. Now we are talking about competitiveness among nations, not in armaments, but in trade. Fukuyama was quite optimistic when he wrote that “Globalization—a world order in which mankind’s largest in-groups no longer violently compete with one another for dominance but trade peacefully—can be seen as the logical culmination of a long-term series of decisions in favor of positive-sum competition.”

The four panel sessions we will have are relevant to what I will try to map out for this Global Strategy which is essentially non-zerosum. Science Education, Sustainable Development, Trade and Economic Policy, and Governmental Organization or “Human Capital Development” for Development Policy Initiatives—none of these four can be divorced from the moral and ethical aspects of human evolution. A Balanced Scorecard for Humane Development calls for a serious consideration of a Middle-Path Strategy towards development. This Middle-Path Strategy must take into account the non-material aspects of our lives.

For a decade the UNDP has been trying to address various issues of “Human Development,” first by creating a Human Development Index, or HDI, and lately by calling for more effective governance through democratization and democratic

consideration. As we entered the third millennium, the world had become even more fragmented. “Economically, politically and technologically, the world has never seemed more free—nor more unjust” (UNDP 2000).

With 140 countries holding multiparty elections, the world is becoming more democratic. But in many places, democracy is limited to a government of the people and, to a certain extent, for the people. Democracy as a government *by* the people has not yet been achieved. So we have to look carefully, not at traditional measures of political democratization—for example, rights of assembly and speech, functioning representative institutions, the “rule of law” and so on—which are static properties of a democratization process. Instead, we must look at a political system’s performance, especially its responsiveness and accountability. Globalization weakens authoritarian states and harmonizes the world’s legal systems. But in Asia, the private corporate sectors have gained considerably more from political and economic liberalization than the agricultural sectors have.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (UNDP 2002) has observed that “good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.” Yet it is very hard to find the path toward the “virtuous cycle” for the enhancement of human development. We seem to be “paddling in a bowl” in this matter because we simply hope that triggering a virtuous cycle for human development requires promoting democratic politics. In its 277 page report, the UNDP touches on every major issue of democratic governance for human development *except* a serious analysis of the relationship between democracy and the market—especially the effects that marketization in developing countries has upon democratization. It is often taken for granted that marketization and democratization are complementary. Hence, public sector reforms in developing countries usually require that public services, such as education, must rely primarily on private markets. Adam Przeworski (1991) asked “What should we expect to happen to countries that have ventured on the path to democracy and markets?” He was

interested in studying transitions in order to answer questions about the conditions and the paths that lead to political democracy and material prosperity. Now, not many people are interested in studying transitions, but the relation between transformations of society that came with capitalist economic development and the long-term chances of democratic forms of rule is still relevant (see Rueschemeyer et al. 1992), especially when capitalist economic development has drastically changed its face. Capitalist economic development is not what it was ten or twenty years ago. It is now a highly speculative system which is driven by the growth mania and is governed by the money markets. I agree with Peter Drucker (2002) that we are not moving into worldwide free trade; instead, the decline in manufacturing will force us into ever more protectionism.

In an interview in the *Listener*, Jacques Cousteau said:

When communism collapsed, the reason was obvious: a planned centralized system was no match for the market. In the west there was exhilaration over this fact. That is a big mistake. A liberal economy is fine, but there is a big difference between a liberal economy—or free enterprise that relies on the law of supply and demand—and a market system. The market system as we are living it today is doing more damage to the planet than anything else, because everything has a price but nothing has a value. Since the long term has no price in today's market, the fate of future generations is not considered in the economic equation. (quoted in Bielecki 2002)

Robert H. Frank (1985) notes that critics of the market system have argued that far from serving society's desires, the market system serves up limitless arrays of frivolous products, while distributing incomes that bear little relationship to the social value of the work people do. Frank argues that it is human nature—something inherent in our biological makeup—which motivates us

to try to improve, or at least to maintain, our standing against those with whom we compete for important positional resources. A critical feature of this motivating mechanism, according to Frank, is that it is much more responsive to local than to global comparisons. I am not sure that if Frank were to revise his book he would still maintain that “Negative feelings are much more strongly evoked by adverse comparisons with our immediate associates than by those with people who are distant in place or time.” The world is now a global village.

Anyway, I like Frank’s work because he raises so many interesting points that most economists seem to ignore. His notion of “contest” is broader than the meaning of “competition,” which has only an economic or business connotation. Important properties of contests in general are:

1. For any contest to have a winner, it must also have a loser;
2. Measures that provide equal advantages (or disadvantages) to all contestants do not affect the expected outcome of a contest, and
3. Participation in many important contests takes place on a voluntary basis. (Frank 1985, 4)

He argues that these three simple properties have profound consequences for the contests that determine who gets the most important prizes in life—that is, those contests whose winners get the best education, the most desirable jobs, the most sought-after mates, the highest quality health care, and so on. “Various combinations of these three properties suggest new interpretations of many of our most important economic, legal and ethical structures.” They also raise a number of disparate questions such as why are there ethical objections to using cost-benefit analysis for health, safety, and environmental issues? And why do many societies impose ethical sanctions against the sale of transplantable organs, babies, and sex?

Have we been so preoccupied with material prosperity and economic growth that we have ignored nonmaterial well-being?

As Amartya Sen (1999) has argued, democratic institutions and processes provide strong incentives for governments to prevent famines, so democracies are better at avoiding catastrophes and at managing sudden downturns that threaten human survival (UNDP 2002, 57). But beyond that, the pursuit of material prosperity through commoditization, marketization, and privatization has made the gap between the richest and the poorest nations much wider: the richest 5 percent of the world's people have incomes 114 times those of the poorest 5 percent (UNDP 2002, 3). So developing nations have been urged to increase their "national competitiveness."

In Thailand I serve as a member of the National Competitiveness Committee and once listened to a recommendation by students of Michael Porter that Thailand must develop a competitiveness strategy in order to survive in the New Economy. The prime minister told us that such a game allowed no handicap. Whether we are ready or not, we are being forced into the ring with Mohammed Ali and on to the fairway with Tiger Woods. Our king has called for self-sufficiency—and for critically assessing our own strengths and potentials.

Globalization leaves little space—and less time—for developing countries to prepare to enter such a race. National competitiveness is different from other contests because it is compulsory, not voluntary. Worse, smaller and weaker nations are always losers and no one cares about the outcome of the contest. It is not surprising that the Administrator of the UNDP, Mark Malloch Brown, has observed that "In some countries—and in many others that have yet to take even timid steps towards democracy—the result [of moving toward democracy] is an increasingly alienated and angry population, especially young people. That hostility is triggering a backlash against both existing regimes and the impersonal forces of globalization" (UNDP 2002, Foreword).

Perhaps we have to go beyond material prosperity by asking "how much is enough?" We have to restrain over-commoditization, over-marketization, and over-privatization. Some of our human activities can not be humane unless we refrain from commoditizing

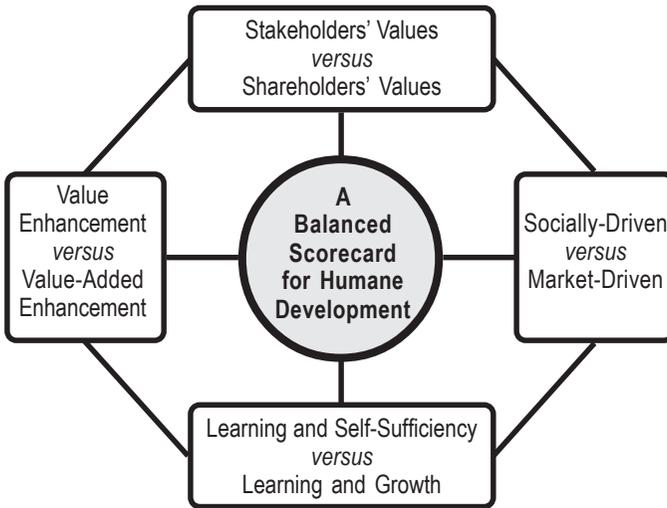
them. I once gave a lecture on the difference between Value, with a capital “v” and value with a small “v”. My economist friends commented that such a distinction was totally alien to them. They know only about “small-v” value which can be translated into price. And of course, economics recognizes neither the “priceless” nor the “price-less.”

I would like to present a chart of a Balanced Scorecard for Humane Development (figure 3). You will see no mention of democracy in this chart, but the dichotomies I am positing suggest that a democratic process will be needed to mediate their dynamic interactions and inherent conflicts.

The first compares stakeholders’ with shareholders’ value. Briefly, stakeholders’ value is inclusive, while shareholders’ value is exclusive. For a society to prosper, a state of peaceful coexistence among different sectors of peoples is a necessary condition. Too often growth and prosperity are limited to shareholders of big corporations at the expense of the rest of society. In the globalized world, we are driven more by our heads—if not our pocketbooks—than our hearts. In the process of cultural evolution we have become more interdependent and if evolution has a purpose, it surely is not exclusivity. A good example of a serious attempt to address the growing tension caused by an overemphasis of shareholders’ value is the World Commission on Dams. It has enabled and empowered stakeholders who are affected by decisions to build dams. It has also brought accountability and participation to an issue previously considered technocratic and beyond public scrutiny (UNDP 2002, Box 5.3, 109).

Next comes market-driven versus socially-driven decisions. Economists are criticized in that they value everything in terms of money, and they normally do not value anything that cannot be exchanged for money. Increasingly—with few exceptions—they appear to believe in no other kind of economy except the competitive market economy, and tend to make all decisions about public assets subject to the market and its “forces.” An important assumption here is that the market is open, free and fair. The

Figure 3
Elements of the Balanced Scorecard



reality is that very often markets are manipulated in many ways, ranging from advertising to outright collusion among market makers.

Even more importantly, in developing countries the market and money are just one aspect of human transactions. There are myriad community and nonmonetary relationships that form the social capital of the community. It is not only market forces, but also social and cultural forces that enable such societies to sustain themselves. In Fiji, for example, there are various consultation procedures based on channels of communication within the family, the group of elders, the kinship group, and so on. There are sometimes dissenters who will, in the long term, have to go along with the majority. They are not eliminated or penalized. Even dissenters have to prove that they are cooperative members of society (Ravuvu 1992).

Third is the enhancement of value—with a capital “v”—versus increments in value-added. The New Economy is far more competitive than cooperative. Yet most of the world’s population

is still struggling to have enough to eat. In order to survive, they have to cooperate, not compete. They are not producing much in the way of value-added goods and services which are demanded by a large number of customers. However, these people can survive because there are still social safety nets operating at the community level. After September 11, New Yorkers and American people throughout the country have realized how important and valuable community power is. We have to be more concerned with the enhancement of Values—capital “v”—rather than to be too preoccupied with the creation of value-added goods and services. In some poor countries, situations like 911 occur very frequently. Although the causes are not the same, the violence, catastrophe, and suffering are of a similar magnitude.

Lastly, a Balanced Scorecard for Humane Development calls for learning to maintain sufficiency before trying to compete for growth. It is sufficiency-centered, not growth-centered learning. After all, growth is for whom? At least we know that sufficiency is for all; it is an inclusive target, while growth has proven to be mostly exclusive—for the few.

If there is any lesson to be learned, it is that we are learnable animals. We are also moral animals who are not only human but also capable of being humane. For time immemorial we have evolved through cultural and social processes which are restraining forces on our insatiable desires and genetically-determined competitive behavior. My proposal for a Balanced Scorecard for Humane Development may be timely for us all, not to eliminate the market or deny growth, but rather to restructure the contests for the important, yet limited, positional resources in our world.

EPILOGUE

IT HAS BEEN ALMOST THIRTY YEARS since I drafted the 1974 Constitution—which lasted for only two years. As a senator and chairman of the joint Senate-House committee to amend the 1992 Constitution, I cast the deciding vote in favor of the creation of a Constituent Assembly composed of ninety-nine elected members to draft the 1997 Constitution. Looking back over these long years, I am glad that we have broken the “vicious cycle of Thai politics” and that we can now celebrate the “decade of coup-free politics.”

Over the past ten years Thailand has gone through a number of crises. The May 1992 popular uprising against the military regime and the economic crisis of 1997–8 are two major changes which have weakened the power of the entrenched military-bureaucratic-commercial elites. The technocratic state has been challenged by the forces of globalization which demand more liberalization, privatization and transparency. The emerging civil society has also pushed for more popular participation in decision-making processes involving big projects which have environmental impacts on their communities.

The transition from a semi-democratic system to democratic rule in Thailand is only partial. Most significantly, this transition is what I call a “constitutional transition” rather than a democratic transition. By “constitutional transition” I mean a shift from a constitutional norm which favored one-track formal political rule

based on the Westminster system to a two-track politics which recognizes direct citizens' participation in political processes beyond periodic elections. The 1997 Constitution has opened more political space for civic groups to protect and enhance their communal rights. The Constitution also established new independent organs to safeguard citizens' rights and freedoms, such as the Constitutional Court, the Administrative Court, the Ombudsman, and the Human Rights Commission. The Elections Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Office of the Auditor-General have been given an independent status.

Such a constitutional transition is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a sustainable democratic rule. What matters most is the legitimizing effect the constitution has given emerging forces outside the conventional political arena to participate in various policy areas. Although there are fewer political parties now, there are more political actors whose movements have been increasingly effective in opposing and restraining government actions in various matters. Because political parties have suffered discontinuity due to periodic coups, their support is not broadbased, while a number of NGOs have their own strongholds in terms both of area and of policy. The Thaksin government, which won a landslide victory in the 1998 elections, has to confront globalization and localization forces simultaneously. It has to pursue populist policies and promote national competitiveness at the same time. To implement global and local initiatives, it has a herculean task to reform the bureaucracy and reorient public enterprises toward a more market-based performance.

Such a transition from a semi-democratic rule to a full-fledged democracy requires a strategic re-alliance on several fronts ranging from international, regional and national actors to local communities. Thai politics has not moved in a unilinear direction, but has been turning like a widening gyre. We have reached a significant turning point with the 1997 Constitution, but we have a long and winding road to travel. On this road, there are parallel movements of parliamentary politics and citizens' politics which will need to

converge at some point. Democratic consolidation in Thailand must come from the convergence of these two paths.

Democratization and democratic consolidation in Thailand have favored the business-corporate sector. Globalization has also changed the old paradigm of economic development in such a way that economics and business are becoming synonymous. Now the bureaucracy is entrusted no longer with the twin missions of security and development but rather with competitiveness and value-added enhancement. It seems that the Thai state is more concerned with the repositioning, marketing and branding of Thailand than seeking a more balanced growth. I discussed some of these concerns in my keynote addresses in Part Three.

In retrospect, Thailand has always been an open society; its politics, however, have not been so. As an open society it is impossible to keep politics all exclusive. For over half a century, constitutions were used to regulate state-society relations, particularly in repositioning state (bureaucratic-military) power vis-à-vis political, economic and social forces. The 1997 Constitution drastically changed this relationship. It has given much more political space to non-state actors. Economic and social forces are now major contestants in the political arena. Political transitions in Thailand are two-step changes: from authoritarian rule to a semi-democratic regime and from semi-democratic rule to a constitutional regime based on a mixed system of checks and balances, not only within the conventional executive, legislative and judicial branches, but also between these conventional political institutions and the nonpartisan, independent constitutional organs. Such a constitutional design is uniquely the result of Thai political experience since 1932.

What I had predicted in my articles during the past decade has been proven quite accurate. As an active participant in most important political events throughout this turbulent period, I have noticed a great resilience in Thai society emanating from a shared reverence of the monarchy by all groups of citizens. The monarchy is deeply institutionalized socially and culturally, while political institutions have suffered greatly from discontinuity and crises.

The kind of stability Thai society has had is therefore personalized rather than systemic. As long as the present Constitution is allowed to continue, there will be mutual adjustments of contending forces—all of which will operate within the constitutional framework—with the institution of the monarchy continuing to support the development and deepening of stable and sustainable democratic rule which is still evolving in a highly dynamic manner.

December 2002

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