

# The State Nationalism vs Liberal Nationalism in Thailand and Myanmar: Focusing on the National Revolution Traits in the Process of Nation State Building

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## Abstract

This paper intends to verify with the cases of Thailand and Burma that national unity is not the background condition for democratization based on liberal nationalism, but that democratization after critical decision and habituation phases is the background condition for national unity through reconciliation putting an end to a ‘prolonged and inconclusive political struggle’. Thai society has never had a history of overcoming state nationalism adhering to the trinity of ‘Nation, Religion, and King’. Democratization as civil revolution in Thailand was bounded by “Democracy with the King as Head of State”, and there was no prototype civil revolution beyond the royalism unlike in Europe, at least before the aftermath of 2006 coup that turned over the Thaksin regime. The coup after democratization triggered intensive struggles between typical civil revolutionary forces based on liberalism and pro—official nationalism based on statism. The ‘yellow-red standoff’ since 2006 can be interpreted as the starting point of a ‘prolonged and inconclusive political struggle’ between state-national forces and liberal- national forces. The 2010 May civil war and the 2014 May coup exposed an aspect of intensive political struggles between the two forces. In Burma the prototype of civil revolution broke up in Burma in 1974, 1988, and 2007, even though all ended in a failure. The Burma case proves that the political conflicts between official-state nationalists and civil-liberal nationalists may not settle down easily, as it shows the 2021 February coup. The ongoing civil war in Burma is revealing atrocities of official—state nationalists. In sum, the cases of Thailand and Myanmar suggest that genuine national unity is not possible without reconciliation after passing through intensive struggles between official-state nationalists and civil—liberal nationalist.

## I. Raising the Question

To Thailand and Burma (Myanmar), the years of 1932 and 1962, respectively, are points in time when very significant political changes took place. In 1932, Thailand saw a constitutional revolution by a rightist military—leftist civilian cohabitation that changed absolute monarchy into constitutional monarchy, while in 1962, Burma saw a leftist military's unconstitutional revolution that delinked the country from the world capitalist system. These two cases show likewise that their projects were implemented through the establishment of an illiberal national regime regardless of left—right distinctions.<sup>2</sup>

The modern concept of nation in Thailand was formed paradoxically on the initiative of the dynasty itself so that it could maintain sovereignty in the face of Western colonial powers by pushing forth official nationalism. However, reform from above by enlightened despotism had its own limitations, which caused the subsequent constitutional revolution by the young elites. The 1932 revolution in Thailand may be compared to anti—monarchy revolutions happened in England and France. But unlike the French Revolution, this was a revolution from above, not based on mass but as a regime change in which it abolished the pre-modern monarchy, liberated the people from subjugation, and wanted to free itself from foreign interference. Instead of Siam's official nationalism based on a trinity of 'Nation, Religion, and King', the young elites suggested a trinity of 'Nation, Religion, and People', which manifested the revolutionary characteristics at that time.

On the other hand, in Burma under the rule of ancient dynasties of Toungoo and Konbaung before the colonization, quasi—religious symbolism functioned in building up the legitimacy of rulers. According to Burmese traditional theory on politics and religion, the monarchy is a quintessential

regime to defend justice under the condition of conflict among human beings incurred by innate selfish desires (Taylor, 1998, p. 35). The British colonial administration, however, abolished the monarchy rooted in the traditional thoughts and directly ruled Burma by incorporating it into India as an annexed province. Thus the concept of Deva-raja (divine king) was replaced by the authority of colonial—secular regime, and religion and politics separated. New rulers discarded laws and norms based on Buddhist doctrines (Silverstein, 1998, pp. 17-18).

As a result, the modern concept of nation in Burma, unlike Thailand that has no colonial history, formed in the process of an anti - colonial movement, having nothing to do with the monarchy, and was influenced by Buddhism as a national religion and socialism. The 'Burmese way to socialism' was promulgated in 1962 by the military forces led by Ne Win, a member of the 'Thirty Comrades' heading the anti—colonial national revolution, and integrated Buddhism and socialism against the backdrop of the bitter memory of imperial exploitation and discrimination and the following inter—ethnic civil wars, by-products of the colonial policy of divide-and-rule. To put it simply, for Thailand, 1932 is the starting point of a national revolution to create the modern Thai nation, whereas for Burma, 1962 is the conclusion of their period of national revolution.

Supposing the uncompromising political confrontations in Thailand and Burma correspond to the 'prolonged and inconclusive political struggle' (Rustow, 1970), I aim at investigating Thailand and Burma from the perspective of comparative history, the focuses of which will be as follows: For the case of Thailand, the historical context of the 1932 constitutional revolution against the monarchy led to the right—wing

<sup>2</sup> On the extreme left, there are movements which are both egalitarian and authoritarian, of these Jacobinism is the most important historical example (Bobbio, 1996, p.78).

national revolution based on state nationalism via the 1957 coup of General Sarit, which is challenged by civil revolution today. For the case of Burma, the historical context of anti-British national revolution sparked by the student's strike in 1936 led to the 1962 left-wing national revolution based on state nationalism by General Ne Win, which is now challenged by civil revolution.

## II. National Revolution and Civil Revolution in Southeast Asia

Civil revolution in Western Europe<sup>3</sup> started based on the autonomy of the individual against absolute monarchy, passed through liberal nationalism giving birth to modern nations, then was transformed to state nationalism restraining civil liberties of individuals, and finally came back to liberal nationalism.<sup>4</sup> Capitalism, in the process, with the development of printing skill, helped generate popular nationalism through the medium of vernacular languages throughout Europe (Anderson, 1991, p. 174). Under the pre-modern monarchy before civil revolutions, the legitimacy of kingship emanated not from the people but from the God. People were not citizens but subjects (Anderson, 1991, p. 37). By civil revolution,

the subjects in the empires were promoted to citizens, but subjects in the colonies remained the same as they had been before civil revolution.

Benedict Anderson paid attention to the rise of nationalism in the colonies against Western powers' official nationalism to the outer world, while they domestically saw the swing of pendulum between liberal nationalism and state nationalism. According to him, official nationalism is a consequence from the nation's mingling with dynastic empire, developed as a reaction to civil nationalism that had swept Europe in the 1820s. While this European civil nationalism is an imitation of American or French history, characterized by elections, party discipline, and cultural events, official nationalism is dressed up in the national flag, representing national unity. It was the reactionary strategy adopted by the ruling class who felt threatened, marginalized and excluded in the process of the emergence of the 'imagined community', which is the nation.<sup>5</sup> The politicians of Prussian-Germany in Europe, the Meiji oligarchs behind the mask of the emperor in Japan, and King Chulalongkorn and Vajiravudh in Thailand were the symbolic figures who galvanized official nationalism successfully. King Vajiravudh, in particular, tried all available measures to inspire official nationalism, such as state-controlled

<sup>3</sup> The French Revolution emerged in 1789 and the newly formed National Assembly declared the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" while establishing the principles which would be the basis of the new French constitution. This declaration stated that the purpose of all political associations is to preserve the natural rights of human beings and the content of the natural rights includes the rights to freedom, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

<sup>4</sup> Liberal nationalism is the classical form of European liberalism that originated in the French Revolution. Nationalism in the mid-19th century Europe signified liberalism or, non-liberalism, on the contrary. The advent of the military, racism, and xenophobia are also related to illiberal nationalism.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Gellner was the first person to attempt the modernist interpretation of the nation, and Eric Hobsbawm significantly contributed in popularizing it. They linked the advent of nationalism with the development of capitalism and industrialization. According to them, factors such as ethnicity, language, history, religion, and culture are secondary. It is also argued that nationalism was not created by the nation, rather, the nation was produced by nationalism (Kang, 2004, p.54). A nation is a human group, intertwined with each other through common culture and recognized similarities in language, history, and religion (Shively, 2014, p.65) are stated as forming factors. However, for them, nation is the newly formed 'imagined community' that inherits the role of the past large cultural system such as kingdoms and religions. It is print capitalism that caused this (Anderson, 2004). The development of printing technology contributed to the formation of a nation as an imagined community by creating the common language, history, and religion.

compulsory basic education, state—organized propagandas, official recompilation of history, militarism for display, and continual confirmations of the identity of the Dynasty and Nation. Even he utilized the Great War in Europe as an opportunity to create and promote Siamese nationalism. Vajiravudh aligned Siam with the Allied Powers (Charnvit, 2022, p. 160). His behavior was very similar to that of self—nationalizing European dynasties (Anderson, 1991, pp. 114-144). He is known for his official nationalistic policy which made him the title of Father of Thai Nationalism (Charnvit, 2022, p. 15). However, except for Thailand, almost all other countries in Asia suffered Western colonial rules, and thus developed colonial nationalism through the experience of anti—metropolitan struggles (Anderson, 1991, p. 91).

The nineteenth century saw a full—scale invasion of Western colonialism upon Southeast Asia. All imperial powers, including the British, the Netherlands, France, Spain, and the United States, came to Southeast Asia to paint their own colors on the map. The pretexts for invasion were everywhere: internal dissension within kingdoms, acts of piracy, slave trades, opium smuggling, partial encroachment on established colonies, or usurpation of natural resources, and land. Siam alone remained untouched, but it also suffered drastic economic transformation. In other words, it maintained sovereignty politically as a buffer zone of two imperial powers, Britain and France, but economically became a semi—colony (Kitahara, 1983, p. 212).<sup>6</sup>

**Table 1**

*The Traits of National Revolution by Ideology and the Subject*

		Subject	
		official nationalism	civil nationalism
Ideology	state nationalism	Ⓐ	Ⓑ
	liberal nationalism	Ⓒ	Ⓓ

Source: The table is created by author.

This article aims to present the changing characteristics of Thai and Burmese nationalism in reference to <Table 1>. For example, the Western civil revolution through which modern nations

coming into being assumed liberalism<sup>7</sup> as the ideology (on the vertical axis) and the citizen as the subject (on the horizontal axis), fall into Cell Ⓓ.<sup>8</sup> The reverse phase of civil revolution in

<sup>6</sup> The beginning of Thai modern history comes from the Bowring Treaty signed in 1855 with Britain, a representative unequal treaty. Since then, Thailand has lost free trade and custom autonomy by signing semi-compulsory trade treaties with mostly Western powers including Japan (1898) and Russia (1899) (Kitahara, 1983, p.212).

<sup>7</sup> Liberalism expressed by John Stuart Mill – concerning the need for there to be limits to power, concerning the fruitfulness of conflict, the praise of diversity, the condemnation of conformism, the absolute priority accorded by a well-governed society to the freedom of opinion (Bobbio, 1987, pp.100-101)

<sup>8</sup> Civil-liberal nationalism are based on citizenship as a democracy's guiding principle. This involves both the right to be treated by fellow human beings as equal with respect to the making of collective choices and the obligation of those implementing such choices to be equally accountable and accessible to all members of the polity (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986, p.7).

Europe was marked with an arrow moving from Cell ④ to Cell ①.<sup>9</sup> In Thailand, the leading forces of the 1932 constitutional revolution were composed of the state—nationalist faction and liberal-nationalist faction. So Thai nationalism at first can be said to have existed between Cell ① and Cell ③ along the contest of strength of the two factions, and in the end finished at Cell ①. Unlike Thailand, which has no colonial history, Burmese colonial nationalist forces led by Aung San were at first based on civil—state nationalism seeking anti—Western, anti—capitalist, and anti-multiparty democracy, as in Cell ②; then, after independence, moved to Cell ④, and settled down at Cell ①. The left—wing national revolution under the banner of the ‘Burmese Way of Socialism’ in 1962 took root in state and official nationalism like the Thai right-wing national revolution, as in Cell ①.

In short, this article examines the sequence of formation, evolution and crisis of national revolution, and the historical background of how the Thai right-wing national revolution and Burmese left-wing national revolution both drew near to state nationalism instead of liberal nationalism that had paved the way to civil revolution in Europe, inevitably leading national revolution to collide with civil revolution.

In methodology, the value of this comparative case study of Thailand and Burma (Myanmar) can be justified in reference to Dankwart Rustow who studied the cases of Sweden and Turkey from a genetic approach, subdividing their pathways to democracy into four: background condition, preparatory phase, decision phase, and habituation phase (Rustow, 1970). He points out that, instead of socio—economic indicators often brought forward, national unity should precede

democratization, and otherwise, the timing cannot be appropriate. Besides, he regards the ‘serious and prolonged nature of the struggle’ between factions under different banners such as polarization and hot family feuds on the preparation stage as hallmarks of the transition to the next (decision) phase where democracy is agreed. But this article intends to verify with the cases of Thailand and Burma that national unity is not the background condition for democratization based on liberal nationalism, but that democratization after decision and habituation phases is the background condition for national unity through reconciliation putting an end to a ‘prolonged and inconclusive political struggle’.<sup>10</sup>

This article, like Rustow’s case studies in Sweden and Turkey, intends to be a middle ground between inconclusive scholasticism, which avoids conclusions due to numerous uncontrollable variables, and country monograph in the case study of Thailand and Burma (Rustow 1970, pp. 23-35).

### III. Right-wing National Revolution, Left-wing National Revolution, and Civil Revolution

#### 1. The Right—wing National Revolution and the Challenge of Civil Revolution in Thailand

Absolute monarchy in Western Europe arose in the turmoil of confrontation between vested feudal strata and newly emerging civil sectors. Absolute monarchs built up strong kingship by harnessing the confrontation and restraint of these two rivals for their own benefit, guaranteeing the interest of commercial bourgeois to a degree on the one hand, and advocating for the interest of vested feudal strata on the other hand.

<sup>9</sup> Reverse progress is highly related to the “militarization of civil revolution.” These include France’s Bonaparte’s and England’s Cromwell regime.

<sup>10</sup> Democratization at this time encompasses the settlement of electoral democracy that can lead to a compromise between political forces with different interests in terms of class, ethnicity, and region, to consociational democracy as a political democracy that can address the problem of underrepresentation.

King Chulalongkorn, Rama V of Siam who achieved modernist reforms for the kingdom of Siam was an enlightened monarch in Southeast Asia just as those in Europe. The king and his vassals believed a strong state and absolute power were imperative for Siam to advance in the world as a member of magnitude. Most of all, the King himself claimed to be a modernist. He sent his sons and nephews to the courts in St. Petersburg, London, and Berlin to learn the complexity of the global model (Anderson, 1991, p. 40).<sup>11</sup>

The model he pursued was that of Dutch East India, British Malaysia, and Raj's bureaucratic state (*Beamtenstaaten*) rather than Britain or Japan. Following this model meant rationalizing and centralizing the royal government and promoting economic growth. Among the most conspicuous efforts for it were the construction of harbor facilities, canals and railways, and expansion of commercial farmers. King Vajiravudh, the successor of Chulalongkorn, is considered to be the monarch who developed a full-fledged nationalism in Thai history on institutional and official dimensions (Cho, 2007, p. 68). A prototype of state nationalism was featured under his reign. King Vajiravudh advanced a theory that the absolute and sacrosanct kingship was necessary to settle the discord among human beings in a society, and despite the advice of his father, King Chulalongkorn, refused to introduce a constitutional system and parliamentarism for the reason that something beneficial to Europe could be harmful to Siam (Baker and Pasuk, 2009, p. 106).

Additionally, he regarded succession based on bloodline of the royal family as inevitable for the stability of the country. According to his theory, a country is like a human body, composed of diverse organs that function as assigned. The king is the brain that gives orders to other physical

organs. From the perspective of this brain theory, loyalism and nationalism are two sides of the same coin. In sum, the loyalty to the king is itself the love of nation. This is because king represents the nation. The commoner should be uniform, obedient, and ready to submit to self—sacrifice. Unless they are ready to sacrifice themselves when the nation is in danger, they are no longer Siamese. King Vajiravudh called on for solidarity to protect 'Nation, Religion, and King'. The king in the schema is the political symbol of Buddhist country and the protector of the nation and religion. The objective of the Red Guard—like "Sueupa" (Tiger of the Jungle), founded by King Vajiravudh, was to protect the nation, Buddhism and the king, and to promote people's unity (Cho, 2007, p. 70). This theory of King Vajiravudh was in fact the traditional concept of kingship dressed in modern terms, an extension of the logic of enlightened despotism (Baker and Pasuk, 2009, p. 107).

But as the newspaper market grew rapidly in the 1920s, public opinion against absolute monarchy began to rear its head. New journalists raised questions such as why Siamese were poorer than people in Europe or the Japanese in Asia, arguing it was because a few vested classes exploited people in a society definitely divided into ruling and ruled classes. Under this mindset, on February 5 in 1927, seven men met in Paris, and for five days, they planned the Siamese revolution. Among them were three military school students including Plaek Phibunsongkhram (Phibun), and the last was a law student, Pridi Banomyong. They called themselves Khana Ratsadon, or People's Party. The term they used, 'people', at that time, had popular vogue among Bangkok journalists as the opposite concept of the ruler.

<sup>11</sup> By institutionalizing the succession of primogeniture by law as a fundamental principle, Chulalongkorn aligned with other 'civilized' European monarchies. Royalty from England, Russia, Greece, Denmark, and Japan attended the coronation ceremony for Rama VI (Anderson, 1991, p.40).

The brain of the group was the shrewd Pridi Banomyong, aged 27. While studying in Europe, Pridi learned European contemporary thoughts and detected the importance of putting the kingship under the constitution. The group set two goals. One was to change absolute monarchy into constitutional monarchy, and the other was the six-fold objective developed by the Bangkok journalists: the effectuation of substantial independence, welfare, economic plan, the guarantee of equality without exception (including the royal family), people's rights and liberties, and public education for all citizens. Seven more Europe-educated members joined afterward. In 1929, when the world economy was falling into the Great Depression, criticism against absolute monarchy reached a climax in Thailand (Baker and Pasuk, 2009, p. 118).

On June 24 in 1932, a small number of People's Party agents arrested the commander of the Royal Guards with up to 40 royal family members and aides, and declared the overturn of absolute monarchy. Growing antipathy against absolute monarchy helped the coup succeed. People joined the People's Party. Businessmen and laborers hailed. Declarations of support poured in. Political factions opposed to the revolt remained nerveless. The attention of international community was also focused on the events. Minor gunfire was exchanged, but nobody was killed. Pridi Banomyong, the leader of the civilian faction in the People's Party, released the pledge of revolution asserting economic nationalism, social justice, love of humanity, and the rule of law. The pledge contained a revolutionary level of agendas aimed at regime change. By this, the privilege of the king and his families to stand above the law was abrogated. The People's Party promulgated the constitution on June 27, 1932, stating that the supreme power belonged to the People and that the Parliament and People's Committee should organize the Government.

On the night of June 24, the King and his vassals held discussions over whether to accept the Party's action. Royalist military men suggested besieging Bangkok with military forces stationed outside the capital, but the King refused their suggestion for fear of bloodshed and decided to cooperate with the Party. The royalists, however, were looking for a chance to counterattack. They spread a rumor that the revolution was a conspiracy of communists and visited foreign embassies to request intervention against the threat of communists. The police chief, a royalist, bribed rickshaw-pullers to go on a strike to disrupt Bangkok. Notwithstanding the whirl of royalists' resistance, however, the King agreed to participate in the drafting process of the permanent constitution. Among the 70 seats in the transition parliament, 25 nominees under the reign of absolute monarchy were included; 8 nominees took a seat in the cabinet of new government as well. Phraya Manopakorn Nititada (Mano), one of the rare non-royalty members of the former Privy Council, was elected Prime Minister. The permanent constitution wrapped up as a royal grant was promulgated on December 10 in 1932. The constitution was far more favorable to the king than the original draft, but still reserved provisions to curb the exercise of king's privileges (Riggs, 1966, p. 159).

Under the water, however, persistent battles were taking place between the forces of the old and new regimes. The key points in dispute were the position of the king in the constitution and his property. Bangkok journalists insisted on confiscating the land of the royal family and aristocrats to use in boosting the struggling economy. The new government did not accept all those arguments as they were, but still prepared laws on property and inheritance taxes. Pridi wrote the 'draft of economic plan' supposing the royal family should contribute their whole lands to the government voluntarily. No wonder the royal families were thrown into consternation.

Prime Minister Mano, the King's close associate, requested the cabinet to veto the plan on the ground that it was against Thai tradition, and as a warning, dispatched troops to parliament as it planned to discuss the bill. The King and his associates in the government operations withdrew agreements with the constitutional revolutionists. King Prajadhipok wrote an essay comparing Pridi to Stalin. As a result, Pridi had to leave to seek asylum abroad, and his followers lost their positions in the cabinet. Two royalist generals won promotion, while officers affiliated to the People's Party were transferred to separate provinces. The Anti-Communist Law was swiftly passed.

The victory of Prime Minister Mano, however, was short-lived. One month later, in June 1933, young officers of the People's Party pulled a coup again to overthrow the Mano government and remove several royalists within the military. They paid more attention to the nominees in the new government and called in Pridi from exile. Again, royalists launched a counterattack by instigating social disorder and spreading rumors of conspiracy by foreign agents. In October of the same year, a group of royalist ex-officers purged from the military rose in rebellion under the command of Prince Boworadet. As the rebellion broke out, the King escaped to the South. The King did not publicly support the rebels but eventually asked for a pardon. The Party believed King had intervened in the rebellion and secretly provided financial aid. After long negotiations, the king agreed to return but then immediately left for Europe on sick leave. During his stay abroad, he refused to ratify the bills submitted by the government. Among them were legislative bills to transfer the control over the Royal Property Bureau to the government, impose an inheritance tax on the king, and reduce king's privileges. When advised to return home, he asked for a

large-scale constitutional reform in the direction of bolstering the kingship, including veto power of parliament-approved bills. In March 1935, the King declared his abdication. The government nominated his nephew, Prince Ananda Mahidol, aged 10 and studying in Switzerland, as legitimate successor to the throne (Baker and Pasuk, 2009, p. 121).

As the Boworadet Rebellion ended in a failure, the standoff between the old powers and revolutionary powers drew to an end. It was then time for the People's Party to prove that the post-absolute monarchy system could meet the aspirations of a changing society. The Party was divided into two factions, civilian and military; Pridi represented the former, and Phibun, the latter. The two disagreed on state roles and objectives. Pridi's thought was influenced by the tradition of French liberalism, tempered with European socialism. From this perspective, the role of the state was to provide an infrastructure on which each individual could develop one's abilities to the fullest. For this to be accomplished, the rule of law, a judicial system, economic assistance, and educational and health systems were *sine qua nons*. Pridi was supported by businessmen, labor leaders, and politicians who aspired to a more liberal state. His ideas were close to the liberal nationalism that had grown into ideologies for European civil revolutions. On the contrary, Phibun thought of the state as representing the general will of the people, obliged to change individuals through education, law enforcement, and cultural undertakings. His ideas were close to state nationalism. In short, within constitutional revolutionary powers, liberalism and statism coexisted. Notwithstanding these differences, both factions remained in unison until World War II (Baker and Pasuk, 2009, p. 122).

Phibun put emphasis on Rathaniyom, namely, nationalism for the sake of national unity. It was to that effect that Phibun renamed Siam to Thailand.<sup>12</sup> Pridi also expected the nation and constitution to be the new objects of popular allegiance. He urged people to love their nation and defend the constitution through the radio. Phibun and Pridi alike resorted to state nationalism, but the military faction, having achieved solid ground during the defensive war for revolution, came to be absorbed in militaristic nationalism, a most extreme form of state nationalism. In 1934, Phibun organized 'Yuwachon Thahan' (lit. junior soldiers), something similar to Hitlerjugend. As the opposition took seats at the elections, he played it his own way through rule by decree of the Prime Minister without passing through parliamentary procedures. Though a bill to organize the parliament with elected members only was under discussion in 1940, he elongated the system of half-elected parliament by 10 more years. He nominated himself as General of the Army, which had been previously nominated by the king. He tried to build a leadership cult, calling himself Leader. Newspapers ran with the slogan, "The security of our country depends on the confidence in our Leader." He had his picture hung in every house. He enacted restrictive laws such as the State of Emergency Act that approved random arrests without warrant and the Press Act of 1941. He promoted a campaign titled "To demonstrate our nation can act like a person". Critics accused him of trying to imitate Mussolini, and deify himself as a president, or even a king. Phibun was a figure like Cromwell or Bonaparte

who rose through civil revolution on the basis of liberal nationalism, but transformed it into state nationalism. During the same period, Pridi staged the Free Thai Movement and opposed Phibun's line.

The fissure between the military and civilian elite caused both factions to compete to win favor with the royal family, which in turn contributed to the gradual restoration of ground for royalists. Phibun, the leader of the military faction during the constitutional revolution, withdrew his previous position against the royal family and sought compromise for the restoration of royal family's privilege after the cause-unknown death of King Ananda Mahidol. Some royalists gathered together to form the Democrat Party to comply with the changing times. The fact that Phibun joined the royalist coup<sup>13</sup> in 1947 to oust Pridi, and by this, abrogated the 1946 constitution to restore the king's power to nominate members of the Upper House, clearly points to his position change. In the end, a military clique of General Sarit, who came to power through the 1957 coup, went so far as to consecrate the kingship with the existing trinity theory of 'Nation, Religion, and King' and with the ancient concept of the king as protector of the nation and Buddhism, reviving Deva—raja of the kingdom of Ayutthaya into modern day. Sarit was the leading figure in putting down the Free Thai Movement rebellion, led by Pridi and his navy supporters in February 1949. One year and four months later, he distinguished himself again in clearing the navy rebellion that broke out in June 1952 (Cha, 2003, pp. 151-152).

<sup>12</sup> The change of the country's name by the Phibun government reflected the intention to build the Thai empire by integrating the territories of Cambodia, parts of Burma, and Laos, which are related to Thai or Thai ethnic groups. (Cha, 2003, p. 70).

<sup>13</sup> The 1947 coup which overthrew Pridi returned Phibun back to power, but he had to share power with Sarit, representing the army, and Pao, representing the police.

Sarit employed traditional authorities, not based on Western culture and that fit in the Thai context, as the footstones of politics and culture. During his administration, 'Thai-style democracy' was advocated. Politically, parliamentarism and electoral democracy were denied, and culturally, American pop music such as rock and roll was banned under the pretext of purging Western values. In contrast, the King, the symbol of traditional authority, was well—encouraged to go on overseas trips, traditional rituals of the royal family were restored, and the King and Queen's birthdays were designated as Father's Day and Mother's Day. Answering the support of Sarit and his elites, King Bhumibol actively engaged in the businesses of social welfare, rural community development, and education.<sup>14</sup> The King himself put in his best effort at establishing a charismatic image of a traditional Dhamma—raja (lit. righteous king) who rules his kingdom according to Buddhist principles (Park, 2001, pp. 168-170).

Following the aforementioned path, the 1932 constitutional revolution resulted in strengthening state nationalism symbolized by the trinity of 'Nation, Religion, and King' on the basis of the military—royalists alliance. Since the 1957 coup that fixed the right—wing national revolution, King Bhumibol stood in the center of official nationalism with the military and was protected by the military, but he never unconditionally endorsed the political lines of the military. He was so wise as to withdraw his endorsement for then ex-army Prime Minister and his associates over the pro-democracy student protests on 14 th October 1973, and came to deeply engage in the building-up process of civilian government. The so-called Octoberists became a prominent political force. Between 1973 and 1976, they continued to work closely with leftwing labor,

farmer, and other grassroots movements. However, the escalation of anticommunist suppression measures and growing ultra-right—wing movement ended their efforts with Bangkok massacre of 6th October 1976 (Kanokrat, 2016, p. 1) In other words, when the situation turned to another phase where student leaders and mass movement leaders started to challenge the trinity of 'Nation, Religion, and King', the King acquiesced in the violent operations of the military, police, and far—right militia. The Communist take—over of Laos that abolished the monarchy in April 1975 stirred up a sense of crisis among the royal family and royalists, which in turn caused the solidarity of anti-Bangkok Massacre on student protesters on October 6 in 1976, was the initial reaction of Thai right—wing national revolutionaries to the civil revolutionary forces in germination. This event proved that while the royal family in Thailand admits the move from state to liberal nationalism, it does not tolerate the move to get out of state nationalism by even mobilizing military forces, if necessary, to control the degree of liberalism. Noteworthy from this case is that liberal nationalists failed to gain popular support strong enough to surmount state ideology represented by the trinity theory.

When the rising business tycoon and powerful politician Thaksin Shinawatra began to awaken the rural poor's political consciousness through populist policies and gather footstones for liberal nationalism to possibly overcome the trinity of 'Nation, Religion, and King', the military—royal family alliance of right-wing national revolution responded with a military coup in the name of protecting the royal family on September 19, 2006. Since then, Thai society has been divided into two: 'Yellow shirts' under the command of royalists in support of the coup and 'Red shirts'

<sup>14</sup> During this time, King Bhumibol promoted development plans to support hill tribes by establishing the Royal Medical Team, artificial limb center, medical service support organization, agricultural research and development center, vocational training center, and royal scholarship foundation (Kim, 2010, pp. 75-176).

under the pro—Thaksin forces in opposition to the coup. The red shirts regard their struggle against royalists, in which the Democrat Party constitutes a major axis, as popular resistance to stop the turning of the clock to before the 1932 constitutional revolution (Park, 2013a, p. 91). This complexion is quite a contrast to the events of October 1976, which lacked nationwide popularity.

On the other hand, as pro—Thaksin forces, supported by the red shirts, won the general elections in 2007 and 2011 consecutively, the yellow shirts indeed disagree on the fact that electoral democracy is a political mechanism to prevent the ‘politics of war’ and to address political conflicts. Their slogan, “Reform first, and then, election”, means they would not join the election unless Thaksin is ousted from the political arena first. They refute the electoral results that favor the red shirts, mainly composed of nationwide low-income strata and people in northern and north-eastern regions. In this context, the yellow shirts supported the 2006 coup. This was, admittedly, a “different coup” justified on the grounds of protecting the monarchy, as well as attacking corruption, the government’s interference with independent agencies and political polarization. The army was generally welcomed on the streets of Bangkok and gained considerable prestige as a protector and nation and monarchy (Askew, 2010, p. 13). In contrast, the red shirts, criticizing the coups and the abuse of the criminal article on lese—majesty (the crime of violating majesty) advocated for electoral democracy, and are growing into the civil revolutionary force on the basis of liberal nationalism. In sum, the standoff between the yellow and red shirts that began in April to May 2010 can be interpreted as an Thaksin’s revolutionary forces, adhering to state nationalism epitomized in the motto of ‘Nation, Religion, and King’, and civil revolutionary forces, trying to break through that obstacle so that liberal nationalism can take root.

Octoberists also divided into pro—Thaksin and anti-Thaksin. Octoberists who had been negatively affected by and disagreed with Thaksin government started to perceive the Thaksin’s TRT as a political threat (Kanokrat, 2016, p. 232). Thailand’s Democrat Party—led administration under the leadership of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva emerged victorious following the dramatic and ultimately bloody confrontations with the red shirts during March—May 2010. But this victory was achieved at the expense of persistent, in fact exacerbated, political polarization. The state’s reaction was legitimated by the application of two potent conspiracy discourses, namely “terrorism” and the overthrow of the monarchy. The “monarchy is danger” from evil plotters is a vital dimension of hyper—royalist Thai popular nationalism and an institutionalized discourse embraced and deployed by key palace—aligned conservative actors (notably Privy Council President Prem Tinsulanon)(Montesano, Pavin and Aekapol, 2012, pp. 72-73). A coup broke out again in May 2014, heralding the deepening of political bi—polarization of Thai society, leading to intensified political struggles on a full scale.

## 2. The Left—wing National Revolution and the Challenge of Civil Revolution in Burma

After losing the First Anglo-Burmese War between 1824 and 1826, Burma had to cede Assam, Arakan, and Tenasserim to the British under the Treaty of Yandabo. As a result of the second defeat of the Second War between 1852 and 1853, fought under the pretext that some British ships and crew were abused by Burmese, Burma ceded Pegu province, later renamed Lower Burma. Eventually, threatened by King Thibaw’s independent diplomacy that sought cooperation with France to check British influence, the British finally took over all Burmese territory in 1886 and annexed it to India as a province (Yang, 1996, p.84).

Burma had not kept in close contact with and had quite a distinct culture from India before the 19th century, but by the annexation experienced unrestricted immigration of Indians. For that reason, Burmese nationalist movements that developed on a full scale during the 1930s took on a disposition against Indian merchants and officials, apart from the British itself (Yeom, 2007, p. 48).

Before anything else, the British colonial rule degenerated Buddhism. The colonial authorities sanctioned persons in saffron—colored robes as the authentic clergy, but would not accept authorities of any religious organizations (Heidhues, 2012, p. 106). Buddhist schools could not get official assistance unless they accepted subjects assigned by the colonial government. Interestingly, the British pressure on Buddhism inspired the Buddhist movement in Burma (Esterline and Esterline, 1991, p. 283). In 1906, Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) launched forth, modeled after the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Cultural organizations such as the General Council of Buddhist Association and Burma Research Society were set up successively. These organizations urged for national religion and cultural pride, which were hailed by enthusiastic nationalists, young lawyers in particular who had studied in British universities but gained no job in the colonial government. As the British examined a bill to introduce a dual government system into India, the YMBA demanded provincial autonomy for Burma as well in 1917 and 1918, but to no avail. In reaction, the YMBA allied itself with more extreme nationalist organizations to form the General Council of Burmese Association in 1920. Not only Burmans, but many other ethnic minorities joined the organization.

In the 1930s, students of Rangoon University organized Dobama Asiayon (lit. We Burmans Society) and staged the Young Thakin (lit. lord or master) Movement in the cause of modern independent Burma. The Thakins insisted on preparation for an all-out resistance to the colonial rule, including military training and

armaments (Christie, 2005, p. 123). Aung San surfaced as the leader of the Thakins. These mass organizations constituted the core of the 'nation' in the making (Yeom, 2007, p. 48).

Rangoon College was established in 1880, and developed into Rangoon University on December 20, 1920. The colonial government had observed in India that universities had rapidly turned into a hot bed for nationalism. For fear of the similar development, the colonial government tried to hold tight control over Rangoon University after its promotion, which only stimulated the university students to take to the streets in protest. Nationalist movement leaders organized a nationwide education committee and set up nationalist schools all over Burma. All schools affiliated with the YMBA became nationalist schools. Among them, Rangoon University was an unquestionable cradle of nationalist movements. There were some students at Rangoon University who had studied and understood liberalism and socialism in Europe, if superficially. They were naïve but on the verge of explosion. The Thakins, representative of such students, took the lead at student protests in February 1936, which triggered the surge of popular nationalism. The student protests spread all over Burma, even to high school levels, resulting in the shut-down of all Burmese schools for several months. By enacting the Government of Burma Act in 1935, the British separated Burma from India, set up a distinct colonial parliament, and put into practice Provincial Autonomy in 1937, but the Thakins did not join, demanding complete independence. At the core of the organization were the 'Thirty Comrades', with Aung San at the head. During Japanese occupation, Aung San clandestinely organized the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) to resist Japanese colonial rule, which constituted the base for the Burma National Army. The Burma National Army (BNA) began to fight against Japan from March 1945 onwards (Christie 2005, 176).

The AFPFL was an organization based on prototypical nationalism both in name and reality. It comprised various political groups on a national scale, equipped with military forces such as the Burma Independence Army (BIA). By the end of World War II, when Japan's failure became clear, it had grown into a threat to the British, who were pondering the restoration of colonial rule. In the end, Burmese independence was put to a negotiation between the British and the AFPFL, headed by Aung San (Christie, 2005, p. 250). In the dispute, extending from 1946 to 1947, Aung San urged all factions to stand in unity to fight against and obtain independence from the British (Callahan, 1998, p. 65). In January 1947, the British and the AFPFL reached an agreement to call a referendum to set up the Constituent Assembly immediately, to organize a gathering of British representatives, Burmese, and ethnic minorities, and to approve the Aung San Cabinet as an interim government (Esterline and Esterline, 1991, p. 290).

Noteworthy at this point is the ambivalent position of Aung San and his comrades on Western democracy. At the point when World War II broke out, Aung San raised eight principles regarding Burmese democracy. Among them were the nationalization of means of production, guarantee of labor rights and social insurance, and the establishment of a judicial system based on People's interests. However, in the "Blue Print for a Free Burma" in 1941, he is quoted as stating, "What we want is a strong state administration as exemplified in Germany and Italy. We only have one nation, one country, one party, one leader. There shall be no parliamentary opposition, no nonsense of individualism." At this point in time, Aung San clearly disavowed liberal democracy. The core concern of Aung San and his fellows was the nationalization of national assets. This position contradicts Western democracies that recognize private property by law. This reveals the close relationship of the Burmese nationalist project, designed by Aung San and other youths,

with anti-imperialist utopian socialism that can trace back to Karl Marx, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Joseph Stalin, George Bernard Shaw, and so forth. The term democracy, to the young nationalists at that time, was identical with colonialism or imperialism (Callahan, 1998, pp. 52-53). In sum, to the young elite, liberal nationalism that had formed the basis of Western civil revolution seemed nothing more than hypocrisy; in response, they leaned toward Lenin's socialist revolution or Fascism based on state nationalism. However, during the Japanese rule of 1943-1945, the concept of liberal nationalism emerged again. During this period, writers, journalists, and cartoonists gathered in teahouses to discuss contemporary Burmese literature. They strengthened their connection with the public to raise awareness of resistance against fascism (Aung Myo Zaw, 2007, pp. 267-268).

But the nationalist project of Aung San and his fellows, vacillating between statism and liberalism, faced catastrophe from the abrupt assassination of Aung San and his cabinet members by unidentified agents. U Nu, ex-Foreign Minister in the Ba Mo Cabinet under the auspice of Japan and then-chairman of the Constituent Assembly, acceded to Aung San's position. But the AFPFL was torn after Aung San's death. Communists started armed struggles soon after. The Karen people, most of whom believed in Christianity and dwelling around the Delta not that far from the capital, and other ethnic minorities in the mountainous regions rose in revolt as well. Rangoon was besieged until 1948 and returned to normality little by little (Heidhues, 2012, p. 218). In the First 1952 General Election held under the First Constitution, the AFPFL won an overwhelming victory. In 1953, the lands of non-farming owners were confiscated according to the Land Nationalization Act. Lands previously owned by Indian Chettiars (the usurer) were transferred to Burmese farmers, while many Indians left Burma (Heidhues 2012, 219).

In post-war Burma, unlike Thailand, there was no objection to socialism (Esterline and Esterline, 1991, p. 293). Though the ideology of Pridi, the leading spirit of Thai revolution, failed to take root in Thailand, it could in Burma. In other words, in the process of building up an independent republic right after World War II, leaders of a young generation, like Pridi in Thailand, came to power in Burma. This was possible due to Burmese animosity toward British, Indian, and Chinese capitalism. The lack of capital, technology and governance was the problem. Nationalization started. The government banned ownership of more than 50 acres per household. Redistributed lands were prohibited from reselling or monopolizing except under special instructions. The eight-year Pyidawtha (lit. Happy Land) Plan was proclaimed in 1952. The plan set goals such as to make all people live a happy life and to achieve national GDP growth of 9% every year (Jang, 2012, pp. 63-64). But because Burma refused to accept economic and technical assistance from the United States and other Western powers, the funding assigned to the plan was largely insufficient. Foreign assistance was prohibited from entering Burma except for the war indemnity from Japan that started in 1954, worth no more than 200 million US dollars, and lasted until 1977.

Especially noteworthy regarding the threat to sovereignty was that many ethnic minorities, formerly accommodated under British rule, were now pushed out of the mainstream and became worried about ethnic Burmese domination, particularly the Karen in the Southeast. The Karen claimed independence from Burma, or at least a government structure that allowed autonomy for ethnic minorities to a considerable degree. Their claims were turned down, and secessionist movements kicked off (Christie, 2005, p. 250). To make matters worse, the AFPFL, the winner of the landslide victory of the 1956 elections was

soon mired in intra-party dissension. To quell the disturbance, Prime Minister U Nu quit and handed over the caretaker government to General Ne Win who had been at the head of the Army during the civil war. As a member of the 'Thirty Comrades' during the colonial period with Aung San, Ne Win was a socialist and nationalist leader of an authoritarian disposition. Aung San helped him to assume the role of the Tatmadaw's supreme leadership. There had been simmering tensions between ethnic minorities and the Burmans before the 1962 military coup. For example, the Burmans accused the Shans of conspiring to disintegrate the Union of Burma with the help of imperialists and capitalists. On the other hand, ethnic minorities, who demanded the federal government, labeled the Burmans as 'chauvinists and colonialists' and accused them of attempting to establish a unitary state against the Panglong agreement and the 1947 Constitution (Kipgen, 2022, p. 35). In a nutshell, he was a typical state-nationalist. Ne Win's assumption as head of the state echoes Thai history in that Phibun and Sarit grew to secure their positions leading state-nationalist forces in the midst of the revolutionary and anti-revolutionary conflicts after 1932. As anti-colonial struggles and secessionist movements rose, new military elites responded in a typical state-nationalist manner, simply suppressing the independent civil and political society. The military officers held fast to Burman centrism, refusing negotiations with ethnic minorities in the name of preventing disintegration. The deterioration of law and order was a good opportunity to say that the civilian government was incapable of maintaining political stability (Kipgen, 2022, p. 37).

In the midst of intensifying inter-ethnic conflicts and the AFPFL's intra-party dissension in 1962, a military faction led by Ne Win pulled a coup advocating the 'Burmese Way to Socialism'.

The military junta proclaimed a plan to establish a socialist economic system similar to that of the Sino—Soviet bloc and organized the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) (Mya Maung, 1970, p. 539). Ne Win ordered all the parties except BSPP to break up.<sup>15</sup> As the government came closer to the communists' voices, it became more and more authoritarian. But some educators, students, media, and ethnic minorities opposed the military dictatorship. As university self—administration was curtailed and state-control imposed, students mounted defiant demonstrations. Campus riots at Rangoon University on 7—8 July 1962 were met with state brutality, resulting in a hundred deaths. To signal its determination, the government also detonated the student's union building, long focal point for nationalist struggle, and shuttered the university (David and Holliday, 2019, p. 22). Universities re—opened in 1964, but now political activities of students majoring in political sciences were strictly suppressed, the technical fields were emphasized, and study abroad was sent to Eastern Europe. The level of education deteriorated over time (Esterline and Esterline, 1991, p. 297). As did Fascists at the extremity of state nationalism, the junta showed hatred toward intellectualism.

The 'Burmese Way to Socialism' was idealism oriented toward the anti—capitalist system through government control over production, and was a sort of nebulous humanitarianism (Esterline and Esterline, 1991, p. 297). It pursued the 'autarky' model (Tin Maung Maung Than, 2007, p. 113) that is typically claimed in left—wing national revolutions. In fact, during 1962—65, the institutionalization of a command economy was enforced, complying with orthodox Marxist guidance (Mya Maung, 1970, p. 539). Two groups gave

their absolute adhesion to Ne Win faction at that time: the military on the initiative of young officers with pro—communist dispositions and the National United Front (NUF). Following the NUF leader, capitalism was wiped out from all parts of society and agriculture took precedence over industry. In 1965, the tenantry of farming lands was banned (Heidhues, 2012, p. 251). During 1963—65, more than one thousand private companies were nationalized, and Chinese or Indian companies were expelled. Under the banner of Burmanization of the economy, during 1962—65, nationalization was advanced on a full scale but in a haphazard manner.<sup>16</sup> As part of the nationalization policy, foreigners were expelled from national economy and nearly 177,000 Indians and Pakistanis departed Burma during 1962-67. As a result, the government gained control of commerce and industry while losing businessmen, merchants, technical experts, and managers necessary in maintaining and developing the economy (Esterline and Esterline, 1991, pp. 297-299). A notable result of the process is that in spite of the revolutionary government's endeavors to develop the agriculture sector, food production dropped to pre-World War II levels. Food supplies barely met the needs of the growing population, and 1973 was the first year in modern Burmese history when Burma could not export rice. The decrease in rice exports reduced available foreign currency required for industrial development. The decrease in rice production was due to the inefficiency of the state credit system and the state monopoly on rice trade. Farmers did not use government loans as the military government ordered, seeding was inefficient, production was set to meet their own needs, and the surplus was channeled to black

<sup>15</sup> Ne Win mentioned that it was more to learn from Buddha than Marx, and fully accepted U Nu's personal political view of rejecting the communist forces that blindly followed Marx rather than the futility of religion (Jang 2012, 69).

<sup>16</sup> Rapid nationalization was carried out during the crisis management government (1958-1962) when Ne Win's right-hand man, Aung Kyi, was ousted from the Union Revolutionary Council by more radical socialists, Tin Phay and Ba Nyan (Yang, 1996)

markets or to the rebels who paid a third more than the government rate. As Burma was covered with forests over half of its territory, timber, teak in particular, had been the second largest export traditionally. But the volume of teak exports fell to two thirds of the 1940 production level, and the production of minerals and crude oil stayed below pre-War levels. This can be in part ascribed to the actions of the British, who destroyed mines and oil fields at the beginning of World War II, but nonetheless, the losses caused by nationalization in facilities, capital, and managerial and technical expertise, and the government's refusal to receive foreign assistance were to blame. Burma's per capita GNI in 1974 amounted to only 80 US dollars, the least in Southeast Asia (Esterline and Esterline, 1991, p. 298).

In mid-1974, widespread demonstrations stirred up the country. In December, students of Rangoon University raised an anti-government revolt, making use of a symbolic opportunity in the death of U Thant, the former UN Secretary General and a renowned humanist. To put it simply, it was a challenge to state nationalism by civil-revolutionary forces against the left-wing national revolution. Ne Win tackled these popular protests with martial law that lasted for almost two years, resulting in 8,900 people in custody and 300 people to prison. It was a popular movement based on liberal nationalism, heralding the 1988 civil revolution. As student protests resumed in July 1975 over price hikes and the high unemployment rate, the government shut down universities until January and tightened control of prices. When students raised a disturbance

again in March, the government imprisoned the leaders, shut down universities again, and a man identified as leading the student protests was executed for treason.

The resistance of civil society on the initiative of students and monks burst forth again in 1988. While students staged demonstrations for the termination of military dictatorship, monks staged for the withdrawal of government control over the Sangha (assembly of Buddhist monks). Ne Win stepped down in the maelstrom, but several thousands were imprisoned by August. In September, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was launched. Going beyond most expectations, the SLORC promised to dismiss the BSPP and to hold general elections in the multi-party system. The SLORC seemed to be convinced of their victory, which proved to be wrong. In the 1990 General Elections, the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of General Aung San, won an overwhelming victory.<sup>17</sup> But it was too soon to conclude that civil revolutionary forces had overcome the left-wing national revolutionary forces. Fearing for their safety after the hand-over of power, the military annulled the electoral results and instead organized a National Convention to draft a new constitution. Civil revolutionary forces and the international community urged a power hand-over to the NLD, but the SLORC brushed this off. The standoff between the military and civil revolutionary forces restarted. After a long political standoff, the military presented a blue print for political reform titled, 'Roadmap to Discipline—flourishing Democracy' <sup>18</sup> in 2003.

<sup>17</sup> In the general elections of May 1990, the National League for Democracy (NLD) won 80.8% of the seats, much higher than the 59.9% of the vote. On the other hand, the National Unity Party (NUP), the successor of the ruling Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), won only 2.1% of the seats, far below 21.2% of the vote.

<sup>18</sup> The key points of the roadmap are as follows. Phase 1: Reassemble the National Convention (NC), which had been suspended since 1996. Phase 2: Determination of necessary measures for the establishment of democracy at the reconvened National Convention (NC). Phase 3: Drawing up a draft constitution according to the basic principles prepared by the National Convention (NC). Phase 4: Hold a referendum on the approval of the draft constitution. Phase 5: Implement elections for parliament members under the new constitution. Phase 6: Formation of Parliament. Phase 7: Build a modern democratic state.

Civil revolutionary forces, including the NLD, totally refused to participate in the political schedule of the roadmap. Neither the military wanted the NLD to participate in the National Convention.<sup>19</sup>

In the so-called 'Saffron Revolution' of 2007, massive protests against the military broke out, led by monks. The international community harshly condemned the bloodshed on protestors by the police. The ASEAN, which had granted membership to Burma in spite of oppositions by the Western world, also expressed dissatisfaction. Despite this, the Burmese military unconcernedly advanced its 'Roadmap to Democracy', passing the new constitution in May 2008, holding general elections in November 2010, organizing the parliament in February and launching the new government with Thein Sein, an ex-army politician, as Head of State in March 2011. Through a deal at an unofficial meeting held on August 19, 2011 between President Thein Sein, representing left-wing national revolutionary forces, and Aung San Suu Kyi, representing civil revolutionary forces, several measures for a political opening followed, alluding to the end of a 'prolonged and inconclusive political struggle'. In response, the NLD discarded the existing boycott strategy to the 'Roadmap to Democracy', and registered as a political party. Thus, the NLD decided to participate in the by-election held on April 1, 2012. Contrary to previous concerns, the elections were conducted comparatively fairly, and the NLD won a sweeping victory. After the by-election, liberalizing measures such as release of political prisoners and expansion of freedom of speech followed. Suspicions by the military elites (Taylor, 1998, p.40), who believed that the NLD

and its overseas supporters would destroy Burmese political and cultural independence, appear to be softening. The military regards the 2008 constitution more favorably as it guarantees military privilege at a constitutional level. Now, the prospective path of ongoing democratization process will depend on the degree of civil revolutionary forces' will to achieve the civilian control of the military equipped with physical forces.

#### IV. Conclusion

The brutality of state nationalism was coincidentally seen as a kind of democide in universities such as Thammasat University of Thailand in 1976 and Rangoon University of Myanmar in 1962.

The intensive conflicts between yellow shirts and red shirts emerged as a major issue after the 2006 coup in Thailand. The 'slow-burn civil war' (Montesano, 2012) of Bangkok May 2010 was a climax point historically. The 'red shirts' argued the Thai political system had returned to its pre-1932 state. The confrontation between the military-royal-Democratic alliance and the pro-Thaksin political and social forces was compared to the confrontation between 'ammat', which means a bureaucrat or aristocrat in the pre-modern sakdina period, and 'prai' which means commoner or serf (Park, 2013a, p. 91; Somchai, 2011, p. 1). In contrast to Thailand, the process of national reconciliation in Burma between the military, which once regarded autarky as the development model, and Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD), which represents the civil revolutionary forces that led the democratic movement, was taking place, amid political transition since 2011.

<sup>19</sup> General Khin Nyunt, who announced the roadmap, often told Asian leaders and UN special envoy Razali Ismail that he wanted Aung San Suu Kyi to participate in the process of national reconciliation. However, General Than Shwe, the top military figure, strongly refused her participation. He argued that she should be given a certain role in the national reconciliation process after passing the new constitution and holding new elections (Jagan, 2006, p. 31).

Burma tested the possibility of entry into stage of national reconciliation after the grand compromise was dealt in August 2011 between President Thein Sein, representing the military and left-wing national revolution, and Aung San Suu Kyi, representing civil revolution.<sup>20</sup> However, the illegal coup on February 2021 made elite-level pact broken.

In Thailand, a civil society against absolute monarchy was in the making even before the 1932 constitutional revolution. Against this backdrop, the military—civilian coalition pulled a surprise coup for a system change in June 1932, putting the kingship under the constitution. The trinity theory of ‘Nation, Religion, and King’ as official nationalism was discarded. Noteworthy at this point is the coexistence of the military’s state nationalism and the civilian’s liberal nationalism. The civilian faction, led by Pridi and informed of liberalism and socialism in the European civil revolutions, alarmed the King and his vassals from the start as a potential communist threat. Pridi’s faction aimed at reducing the royal property through land nationalization as a major economic reform. The royalist’s hardline strategy to exclude Pridi continued, but their armed rebellion ended in a failure. As the position of the military, led by Phibun, built up in the meantime through campaigns to subdue armed revolts, state nationalism came to overwhelm liberal nationalism.

Phibun succeeded to official nationalism from the pre-revolution era, renamed Siam as Thailand, and idolized himself. Modeling after the Fascism that haunted Germany and Japan, he suppressed the autonomy of civil society and excluded ethnic Chinese in an effort to materialize the ideologies of state nationalism into policies. When World War II broke out, he supported the Axis powers

of Japan, Germany and Italy. Pridi, his comrade in the revolution, staged the Free Thai Movement in support of the Allies, and the former coalition of state and liberal nationalists from the 1932 constitutional revolution came to be definitively opposed to one another. The Allies’ victory in World War II provided a political condition favorable to Pridi and the Free Thai Movement, but capitalizing on the cause—unknown death of King Mahidol, the royalists carried out their intention to remove Pridi, and the military—royal family coalition took root. In particular, the Democrat Party, organized and ruled by the royalists, made a significant contribution to the success of the 1947 coup aimed at removing Pridi. General Sarit’s take-over of government through the 1957 coup revived the traditional concept of Deva-raja in the pre-modern era, solidified the military-royal family coalition, and completed the right-wing revolution characterized by state and official nationalism. It can be understood from the perspective of historical traits of Thailand that has no colonial past, thus no anti-colonial struggles based on civil nationalism.

The nation-building process of Burma after the abolishment of absolute monarchy by the British shares many similarities with other third-world countries with a colonial past. At first, the movements for national revolution in Burma stemmed from the surge of anti-colonialism like other Third-World countries. As colonial nationalisms that fought against Western powers did, Burmese national revolutionary forces as well assumed the complexion of anti-imperial, anti-Western, and anti-capitalist characters, indignant at the hypocrisy of the Western liberal nationalism who sought after imperialism, regarding people in the colonies as subjects. As backlash, the core Burmese young activists leaned toward state

<sup>20</sup> A specific example of the grand compromise is that the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi in November 2011, altered its boycotted strategy for the military-backed “Roadmap to Democracy” (Park 2013b, 297). The most dramatic example of that achievement is the landslide victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi in the by-election on April 1, 2012. In contrast to concerns, Thein Sein government held the election relatively fairly.

nationalism such as Bolshevism or Fascism once. In regards to the nation state—building process, Burma forms a contrast to Thailand.

The national revolution in Burma, however, suffered the same difficulty in evolving toward liberal nationalism. Most of all, the British divide—and—rule policy created conditions that led to inter—ethnic civil wars right after independence, severely hampering ethnic tolerance at a national level. At the bottom of the ethnic conflicts lay the distrust between Burmans who had been excluded and non-Burmans who had been promoted by the British. In the midst of civil wars blocking national unity, the military came to bolster their position as in Thailand, and thus the conditions grew in favor of state nationalism rather than liberal nationalism. The launch of the ‘Burmese way to Socialism’ by Ne Win, one of former leaders of anti-British and anti—Japan national movements, was the completion of the left—wing national revolution in the combination of official and state nationalism, rendering the ascendancy of Burmans over non—Burmans.

Noteworthy here is the fact that Thai society has never had an opportunity to overcome state nationalism adhering to the trinity of ‘Nation, Religion, and King’. The Democrat Party, in particular, has never shown any will to overcome it, instead, joined forces to prevent such activities from taking place. Democratization in Thailand was the result of civil revolution bounded by “Democracy with the King as Head of State”, and there was no prototype civil revolution beyond the royalism as in Europe, at least before the 2006 coup that turned over the Thaksin administration. The coup after democratization triggered intensive struggles between typical civil revolutionary forces based on liberalism and pro—official nationalism based on statism.

In this vein, the ‘yellow-red standoff’ since 2006 can be interpreted as the starting point of a ‘prolonged and inconclusive political struggle’ between the right—wing national revolutionary

forces and civil revolutionary forces. The 2010 May civil war and the 2014 May coup exposed an aspect of intensive political struggles between the two camps.

In Burma the prototype of civil revolution broke up in Burma in 1974, 1988, and 2007, even though all ended in a failure. The Burma case proves that the political conflicts between official—state nationalists and civil-liberal nationalists may not settle down easily, as it shows the 2021 February coup. The ongoing civil war in Burma is revealing atrocities of official—state nationalists. In sum, the cases of Thailand and Myanmar suggest that genuine national unity is not possible without reconciliation after passing through intensive struggles between official—state nationalists and civil—liberal nationalists.

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