The Seri Thai Movement: A Prosopographical Approach

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Abstract

This study argues that the Seri (Free) Thai Movement during the Second World War was the first alliance of anti-military authoritarianism in Thai domestic politics. It was not as much an underground anti-Japanese occupation as normally understood. The movement was in fact a continuing dynamism of factional politics since the coup in 1932. This research is the prosopography of the 600 leading members of the four elite groups in Thai politics since 1932 until the post-war period: the royal family, the aristocracy, the new elite, and the Isan leaders. Consulting several kinds of sources, including parliamentary archives, cremation volumes and interviews, this study collects information on who they were, their family backgrounds and connections, careers, statuses, business, wealth, friendship circles, and so on. This study, then, analyses every group by various criteria relevant to each group to discern its sub-divisions, the relationship between social backgrounds and their politics, schools of thought, and eventually, factionalism. This factionalism, this study suggests, was the force behind Thai politics since 1932, in the pre-war period, through the entire war time including behind the Seri Thai Movement, and eventually was the factor for the rise and fall of the Seri Thai in domestic politics until 1947, when it was crushed by a military coup group that brought Thailand into the early Cold War.

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้เสนอมุมมองใหม่เกี่ยวกับขบวนการเสรีไทย ได้แก่ การพิจารณาขบวนการนี้ในบริบทการเมืองภายในของไทยเองในฐานะเป็นพันธมิตรแรกของการต่อต้านลัทธิเผด็จการทหารนิยมในประวัติศาสตร์การเมืองไทยสมัยใหม่ แทนการอธิบายผ่านขบวนการใต้ดินต่อต้านญี่ปุ่นในระหว่างสงครามโลกครั้งที่ 2 อย่างที่เคยนิยมกันตลอดมา ขบวนการนี้เป็นผลสะท้อนของความขัดแย้งและการต่อสู้ที่ต่อเนื่องค่อนข้างยาวนานภายในกลุ่มผู้นำนับตั้งแต่หลังการเปลี่ยนแปลงการปกครอง พ.ศ. 2475 เป็นต้นมา การวิจัยครั้งนี้ใช้วิธีการ **Prosopography** เป็นวิธีการในการศึกษาภูมิหลังของผู้นำไทยจำนวน 600 คน ประกอบด้วย กลุ่มเจ้านาย 100 คน กลุ่มขุนนางเก่า 128 คน กลุ่มคณะราษฎร 114 คน และที่เหลือคือกลุ่มผู้นำท้องถิ่นที่ได้รับเลือกตั้งเป็นสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรและผู้นำทหารอื่น ๆ เช่น คณะรัฐประหาร 2490 วิธีการ **Prosopography** เป็นเครื่องมือวิจัยทางสังคมศาสตร์และมนุษยศาสตร์ที่มีประสิทธิภาพในการศึกษาพฤติกรรมทางการเมืองของกลุ่มผู้นำ และได้รับความนิยมนำมาประยุกต์ใช้ในการวิจัยอย่างแพร่หลายในโลกวิชาการตะวันตกตั้งแต่ปลายทศวรรษ 1920 เป็นต้นมา ด้วยวิธีการนี้ผู้วิจัยเห็นว่าจะให้คำอธิบายอย่างมีน้ำหนักได้ว่าอะไรคือปัจจัยหลักของความขัดแย้งภายในกลุ่มผู้นำไทย ผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นคำตอบทางการเมืองในระดับพื้นฐานว่า ผู้นำไทยจำนวน 600 คนนั้น มีความแตกต่างกันอย่างมาก ทั้งในด้านสถานภาพทางสังคม ฐานะทางเศรษฐกิจ และสำนักความคิดทั้งในเรื่องที่เกี่ยวกับประชาธิปไตยและแนวทางการพัฒนาประเทศ ความแตกต่างกันนี้เป็นผลโดยตรงจากตัวแปรภูมิหลังทางเศรษฐกิจ สังคม วัฒนธรรม และประสบการณ์ของแต่ละกลุ่ม และจะกลายเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญในการรวมตัวหรือเกาะกลุ่มของความขัดแย้งและการต่อสู้ทางการเมืองภายในกลุ่มผู้นำไทยภายหลัง พ.ศ. 2475 เรื่อยมา โดยเฉพาะในช่วงการก่อตั้งขบวนการเสรีไทย เมื่อกองทหารญี่ปุ่นบุกรุกเข้ามาในประเทศไทย และช่วงการสลายตัวไปของขบวนการนี้ หลังการรัฐประหาร 2490.

Introduction

The first alliance against military authoritarianism in modern Thai history occurred in the form of an underground resistance during the

Second World War when Japanese troops entered Thailand on 8 December 1941. After some token skirmishes against the Japanese to vindicate the country's honor, the military regime under Field Marshal Po. (Plaek) Phibunsongkhram (Phibun, the Prime Minister at that time) allowed Japanese forces to move through Thai territory and then joined Japan as an ally in the war. Phibun hoped to save the army and the country, at least its formal sovereignty, and to escape the ravages of Japanese conquest. This action, however, paved the way for his rivals to set up an underground movement against him as a collaborator and dictator.

The Thai resistance movement against the Japanese presence and Phibun's war policy started shortly after the outbreak of the war in the Pacific region. The movement was first organized by various groups both at home and abroad. Banding together as a united front under the dynamic and charismatic leadership of Pridi Banomyong or Luang Pridist Manudharm (Pridi), it became known as the Seri Thai or the Free Thai movement. Although this movement appeared in the form of an anti-Japanese resistance, as is often claimed, its activities were in fact more a response to domestic politics than to the war or the Japanese occupation. The Seri Thai movement, in fact, was a result of factional conflicts among the four Thai elite groups: the royal family, the aristocracy, the new elite and the local elite led by the Isan (Northeastern) leaders.

These four Thai elite groups were the foundation of political life in Thailand during the first twenty years of the new regime (1932-1952). The new elite or the 1932 Promoters were members of the Khana Ratsadorn, usually known in English as the People's Party. The royal family consisted of both senior and junior princes of

the Chakri family. The aristocrats were senior officers and officials who held the two highest bureaucratic ranks, Chao Phya and Phya. The local elite were those who were elected members of the National Assembly or of Parliament (MPs). Among them, there was a group that I called the Isan leaders who were the most prominent representatives from the Northeast of the country such as MP Thong-in Phuriphat (Ubon Ratchathani); MP Tiang Sirikhan (Sakon Nakhon); MP Thawin Udorn (Roi-et); and MP Chamlong Daoreung (Maha Sarakham) (For a full analysis of these four elite groups; their socioeconomic backgrounds, their political experiences, their schools of thought, and their factional formations and dynamics, see Ngamcachonkulkid, 2005). These four elite groups were the main players of the Seri Thai movement.

Specifically, the movement arose in spite of, and because of, two complex conflicts among these four elite groups. The first one was between the new elite on the one hand and the royal family and the aristocracy on the other. The second was within the new elite itself between the army faction led by Phibun and the civilian-navy factions headed by Pridi. In the Seri Thai movement, Pridi allied himself with the royal family, the aristocracy, the Isan leaders, and other factions in the new elite including the navy leaders and some key elements of the army-police forces. The movement, therefore, was a significant force in domestic Thai politics during the wartime and the early postwar eras.

The conventional history of modern Thailand, however, suggests that the Seri Thai movement was an underground operation, which arose primarily in response to the Japanese occupation during the war (For example, see Haseman, 1978; Numnonda, 1977; and

Reynolds, 2005). Contrary to the conventional history, this study argues that we should consider it as an alliance of those who opposed Phibun's military autocracy in the context of Thai politics from the 1932 coup to 1949. In this brief period of modern Thai history, the first coalition against the military regime was formed, but shortly thereafter was destroyed due to the weakness of the alliance itself.

It is clear from those events that the emergence of the Seri Thai movement and its dissolution were interwoven with Thailand's domestic political situation rather than the war and the Japanese presence. The movement was born out of the ongoing political conflict and changes stemming from the 1932 coup, which had overthrown the absolute monarchy and replaced it with a constitutional system. Although democratic at first, by the late 1930s the constitutional regime became dominated by the army under Phibun, initiating a period of a successful military dictatorship just prior to the outbreak of the war.

The war had a dramatic impact on the military authoritarianism. But since it was temporary, it is hard to discern significant lasting effects on Thai politics. In many respects the case of postwar political life in Thailand would not readily support Harry J. Benda's "transformation school," that the war resulted in new generations of elite (see Benda, 1967 and 1972; and Silverstein, 1966). In fact, the war years in Thailand, unlike few other parts of Southeast Asia, did not create a new elite (McCoy, 1980: 1-8). The Thai elite who became dominant during the war years already had influence in the decade before the war. In other words, the Thai elite experienced neither significant power shifts nor startling transformations; rather there was continuity, resembling Alfred W. McCoy's "elite continuity thesis" (McCoy, 1980: 5-6).

The major turning point in modern Thai politics, unlike that of Southeast Asia, thus was not the result of the Japanese presence itself, but was the consequence of domestic politics during the war years and especially after the war from 1947 to 1949. Both English and Thai studies of the wartime era neglect this crucial point. Even though conventional historians have factored the Seri Thai movement and its actors into the wartime picture, domestic and factional politics are still remarkably absent in modern versions of Thai history of the period.

This is the study of domestic, factional politics and its impact on Thailand and the region during the war. In other words, it is a history of the Second World War in Southeast Asia from the perspective of domestic politics instead of a Japanese occupation and presence. More specifically, the study is an attempt to reassess the most fundamental premise about the Seri Thai movement and about the wartime period posed by the conventional historians and Benda's transformation school. In addition, the study also attempts to evaluate certain hypotheses which many bureaucratic scholars have proposed to explain Thai political phenomenon during this period.

To be conscious of the Seri Thai movement and its role in the broader political context, a new method and model are required. First of all, I would argue that we should consider the movement from its origin to its dissolution as part of Thai domestic politics going back as far as in 1932 or before. In this way, we will seek the roots of its political actors: how and why the four elite groups were different in their socioeconomic backgrounds as well as their political intentions, how and why they later managed to come together in an alliance that ultimately led to the overthrow of the military dictatorship, but failed to establish a democratic government.

Despite being the main historical actors of national politics, the four elite groups, as the major political factions during that time, 1932-1952, are overlooked. No one has yet systematically analyzed them as a group in terms of "prosopography." There are a few who have studied members of the National Assembly. Yet virtually all of the studies of the Assembly to date have focused on only elected members and have been based on a few easily quantifiable variables like occupation, educational qualifications, age and fathers' professional titles. (For instance, see Morell, 1974; Ockey, 1992; and Tunsiri, 1971).

Methodology: Prosopography

To explain the dynamics of factional politics during the Seri Thai period, I applied one of the most important methods of quantitative history, namely prosopography or collective biography, as the method of interpreting this history. This method, according to Lawrence Stone, who made a survey of its literature in 1971, works best under three conditions: when it is applied to easily defined and fairly small groups over a limited period of not much more than a hundred years, when the data is drawn from a wide variety of sources which complement and enrich each other, and when the study is directed to solving a specific problem (Stone, 1971: 69). The method has been employed regularly by historians since about 1930, in particular by political historians such as Sir Lewis Namier, and is increasing in popularity because it lends itself to computerization.

The study of this method, usually but not necessarily a biography of the elite, is the investigation of the common background

characteristics of a group of actors in history by means of a collective study of their lives (Stone, 1971: 46). For example, those of the elitist school have been concerned with small-group-dynamics, power elites such as Roman or United States Senators, or English MPs or cabinet members, or assemblymen in developing countries (Stone, 1971: 47; and see Bogner, 1997 and Langston, 1980). But the same process and model can be and has been applied to revolutionary leaders, professional groups such as lawyers and military groups, and women studies as well (see Barge, 1982; Beerens, 2005; Hart, 1996; Lanzona, 2000; McCoy, 1999; Rust, 1987; Uribe Uran, 1993; and Vakili-Zad, 1994: 618-631).

The two chief works of Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (1929) and *England in the Age of the American Revolution: Vol. I* (1930), are remarkable in their analysis of the socio-political structure of eighteenth-century England. These books are also important for the development of classical and modern collective biographies. Both the classical and modern analyses look at power elites and, although both applied collective biographical methods, they differ significantly. Their differences were not in their subjects of study or the technology they used (computers), but in their presuppositions, means, and ends for investigating complex human values, experiences, ideas, life styles and cultural backgrounds.

My method for analysis of individuals is primarily based on a combination of both classical and modern collective biographies which, I hope, reveals the web of socio-cultural ties that bind the Seri Thai factions together. This study will try to keep carefully collected data on the minutiae of political interest in balance with the evidence of the beliefs that swayed men's minds and the larger allegiances

that overrode the ubiquitous factions. Accordingly, while Namier and most classical prosopographers confine themselves primarily to a socioeconomic analysis, my study moves close to that of the modern perspectives, which focus on ideas, ideology and culture, and also have developed their techniques and models out the history of eighteenth-century England.

Most modern prosopographical studies shift their methods from an emphasis on earlier classical works to modern ones, but their main focus is the economic determinism of Marxist thought (see Epstein, 1998; Hillyar and Mcdermid, 2000; and Nicolaysen, 1991). In this fashion, their methods and models are not applicable in the case of the Seri Thai movement. Although Thai society might be viewed in terms of social classes, Thailand cannot be said to have had a class system in the traditional European sense of the term (Blanchard, 1958: 409-411). The traditional Thai social structure emphasized a consciousness of status rather than class, and there is no evidence of the kind of social unrest which would indicate class conflict (Wilson, 1962: 51).

In the case of Thailand without class contention, Max Weber's paradigm of social interaction is a more useful model (For more details of Weber's ideas, see Gerth and Mills, 1947). Admittedly, the political struggle in Thai society was not a class conflict, although there was conflict between commoners and princes before and after the 1932 coup. The four principal contending Thai elite groups within society were somewhat separated by a considerable gulf, a gulf created not by class per se, but by a combination of status, wealth, political experience and ideology. In other words, the divisions among these four elite groups were

deeply rooted in terms of socioeconomic backgrounds, culture and schools of thought.

Therefore, modern Thai politics should be regarded as variances between the four elite factions, not as deep-seated conflicts between classes. The tension between the royal family and the aristocracy led by Phya Manopakorn Nitithada's group and Pridi's civilian faction over the economic plan in 1933, for example, became a battle of rhetoric and ideology, but with no class content. This is so because those who were involved in the disagreement came from every class, and they were really motivated by a mixture of status, wealth, and ideology.

Both sides consisted of members from the royal family, the aristocracy, and the new elite. But while Phya Mano's royalist-conservatives tended to be higher in status, wealthier, and hold more traditional views; the Pridi camp had a tendency to be of lower status, poorer people, and were more progressive in their ideology. Instead of a class struggle, this clash was similar to that between the deputies of the third estate and members of the nobility during the Revolutionary period in France. Political struggle among the Thai elite thus was not as the Marxists characterized it, one of class conflict; rather, it was one of "wealth, status and culture". These reasons, according to Timothy Tackett, a French historian, were also the causes of the French Revolution (Tackett, 1996).

The prominent scholars who have studied the history of the French Revolution include Georges Lefebvre, George Rude, and Timothy Tackett. Lefebvre and Rude focus on a socioeconomic analysis in their studies of the political elite and of the collective psychology of the peasants and the urban masses (Lefebvre, 1947;

Rude, 1959). But while applying the ideas of Lefebvre and Rude, Tackett also adopts the perspectives of the cultural history. Tackett's main question is not to answer what caused the French Revolution, but how and when did men become revolutionaries? To solve this puzzle, he has recourse to historical prosopography. Tackett has conducted extensive research on the revolutionary experience of the specific individuals who participated in the Revolution. He based his research on a painstaking collective biography of 129 deputies, or about 10 per cent of the twelve hundred elected to the Estates-General in 1789.

Yet Tackett, unlike Namier, focuses not only on what men did but on what they said, wrote, and thought as well. He argues, "If we are to grasp the full reality of the delegates' pre-Revolutionary experience, we must broaden the inquiry to include not only their social and geographical origins, their careers, and their economic situation, but also the far more difficult and complex problems of their values and political culture" (Tackett, 1996: 19). His investigations into the intellectual backgrounds, pre-revolutionary careers, experiences, and behavior of the deputies challenge many of the recent explanations about revolutionary origins proposed by various "revisionist" scholars (Whaley, 1997: 461-462).

Tackett's method and model fit well with the politics of the Seri Thai movement and Thai political life since 1932 in general. Because the Seri Thai movement lacked a broad political base, family ties and business-interest connections, its nature did not seem to function as described by the classical school. Furthermore, even though the Thai elite as individuals acted in accordance with their interests, they could do so only because they had schools of thought

or culturally and ideologically acquired ways of thinking about what their interests were, what ends would best serve those interests, and what strategies were available for achieving those ends.

More remarkably, members of the Thai four elite groups were inclined to be moved by a convergence of constantly shifting forces, a cluster of influences such as status, kinship, friendship, economic interest, ideas, ideologies, political principles, schools of thought, and so on, which all play their various parts and which can usefully be disentangled only for analytical purposes.

By applying the prosopographical approach, I have paid close attention to the history of the parliament and its actors based on the biographies of members who sat in the House of Representatives during the period, 1932-1952. I have included all members of the Assembly. This means that the study covers appointed members and the Senators although they were largely controlled by the government. The analysis will be conducted at the levels of the individual actors, of the group formed by them, and of the Seri Thai activities as a political or socio-cultural phenomenon. The analysis on level one and two will be based heavily on the methods of prosopography. The focus is thereby not only on the biographical data, but more on the collective characteristics of the groups, in order to understand the history of these groups as effective elements in political and social history.

This is the first study on Thai history that employs prosopography. The names of approximately 1200 Thai elite have been collected. Approximately half of them were involved in the political struggle during 1932-1952 and/or the Seri Thai activities. The portraits of the Thai elite presented in these pages are constructed

from those 600 or so men. Of these, about 100 men came from the royal family both senior and junior princes, 128 from the senior officers and officials of the aristocracy, and 114 from the new elite. The rest were elected members or the local elite, businessmen, and prominent military members of the 1947 Coup Group, which replaced the new elite in 1947 and lasted in power until the early 1970s.

Modern Thai Politics: A Literature Review of the Bureaucratic Model

For better understandings of the Thai elite groups, their political factions and ideological conflicts, a literature review of the bureaucratic model is necessary to discuss the nature of the constitutional system. Since the 1932 coup, the foundation of Thai political life has admittedly been factionalism, and the internal politics of Thailand have been in large measure a matter of factional in-fighting. A comprehensive view of factions, then, recognizes factions as a group of individuals linked together by mutual political interests. A broad approach to the question of the 'mutual political interests' of all factions encompasses at least three major elements: affinity, the exercise of patronage, and ideology.

Also Thai politics since 1932 illustrates that there have been links between ideology and factions. Factions in power were responsible for policy; policy attracted ideological adherents to a particular faction. Thus, if we focus on political issues or policy conflicts, ideologies in a broad sense, including cultural experience, ideas and schools of thought, might also play a major part in both the cause and effect of factional allegiance and divisions. In many

cases, although personal advantage rarely yielded to ideological pressure, ideology and concern for policy always remained considerations in the 1930s to 1940s. For instance, the controversy of Pridi's economic plan in 1933 was the first great contest of ideas and policies in modern Thai history. This contest was fought in every newly established major political institution and faction in the country (see Tejapira, 2001: 35-41).

Unfortunately, the use of the term faction as an analytical lens in modern Thai politics has a history of its own. I say unfortunately because it has not been the custom of Western and Thai scholars to view ideology and political factions in the same frame. Rather, within bureaucratic factions, they see only corporate means to personal ends. In such interpretations it has always been assumed that self-interest, exclusively expressed in terms of money and power, constitutes a self-evident element of human nature.

This traditionally Thai factional model, the bureaucratic clique, was first suggested by David A. Wilson (1962), who argued that Thai politics had become a matter of competition between bureaucratic cliques for the benefit of the government, and the fundamental questions of politics revolved around political status. That is Thai politics revolved around how should the rewards of goods, prestige and power be distributed within the ruling class and the military-bureaucratic factions. (see Wilson, 1962: 165, 277)

The bureaucratic model was written in the early 1960s, and other models, less judiciously, have continued to hammer the same theme (see, Darling, 1965; Riggs, 1966; Scott, 1976: 344-350; and Siffin, 1966). Except for Scott, these scholars belonged to the 1960s. They have turned this decade into one of the most fruitful in terms

of academic achievement. For almost four decades historians and scholars have employed the military-bureaucratic faction as the clearest window through which to view the dynamic elements of Thai politics. The military and/or bureaucratic factions were the foundation of political life in Thailand. These two factions in the civil and military administrative apparatus were not motivated by policy or ideological differences, but were rather centered around a more or less amoral quest for power and spoils of office. The bureaucracy was the stage of politics, and military factions were the main actors.

Wilson, Fred W. Riggs (1966) and other champions of this view, who base their interpretations of factions on restricted, a priori assumptions about human nature, deny the possibility of principled political action. They exhibit in their rejection of an ideological component in politics a deep distrust of ideas and ideals, characteristic of much of the work of historians in the Namier school.

The classical interpretation of collective biographical scholars in favor of material interests and personal ties and against ideas and principles seemed to fit in well with the explicitly stated presuppositions of such early western scholars as Wilson, Riggs, Frank C. Darling (1965), James C. Scott (1972), William J. Siffin (1966). These western scholars are not different from those of the elitist prosopographical school in terms of historical interpretations based on presuppositions, means and ends.

In a similar fashion, these great western scholars assume clearly that Thai politics is a matter of interplays among small ruling elites and their clients rather than mass movements, and that self-interest, meaning a fierce Hobbesian competition for power and wealth and

security, is what makes the world go round. In other words, their view was not different from that of the Namier school (see Stone, 1971: 47). Ultimately, these scholars characterize the 1932 coup, which replaced the absolute monarchy with a constitutional regime, as the first in a series of unwarranted power seizures by self-serving individuals who sought little more than the perquisites of office. This school still has much influence on conventional interpretations of the 1932 coup (see Samudavanija, 1989: 305-346; Chao, 1997; Girling, 1981; Stowe, 1991; and Mokarapong, 1983).

These great scholars claim that Thai politics since the 1932 coup has centered around the power struggles of small military-bureaucratic cliques (see Wilson, 1962: 155; and Riggs, 1966: 211-310). Political competition is confined to a narrow, fairly homogeneous elite with few ideological or policy differences. This means that cleavage within the elite/factions is more often determined by personal allegiances than by impersonal or categorical ties. Most intra-elite cleavages thus are based on personal clique struggles for power, wealth, and status rather than on policy issues or ideological concerns. The outcome of the clique struggles that dominate Thai politics depends overwhelmingly on control over key units of the military and the bureaucracy. As a consequence, the scope of political inconsistency is narrowed to that small elite stratum which commands the financial, administrative, and especially the coercive sinews of the state (Scott, 1976: 345-346).

Wilson and Riggs set down the definition of a Thai faction that is still widely held. They also used Sarit's regime as the model for the factional structures of Thai politics. Their restrictive model argues that Thai factions are comprised of a group of people who seek

objectives that are seen primarily in personal terms. Riggs, for instance, argues that in this context, such ideas as "right" and "left," "conservative" and "liberal," have no meaning (Riggs, 1966: 212). To some degree, more generalized policies or postures, he continues, may be espoused by rival political groups in the cabinet. Thus, the alternating supremacy of Pridi and Phibun in successive Thai cabinets has been interpreted as an indication of something like a two-party struggle between civilian (liberal) and military (conservative) political groups. Yet, closer inquiry indicates that the issues were much more personal and less universalistic than such an interpretation would suggest. Riggs continues that "We shall test this hypothesis, at any rate, by analyzing Thai cabinet history in terms of clique rivalry rather than competition over issues" (Riggs, 1966: 212).

The Sarit period (1957-1963), and that of his successor, (Thanom Kittikachorn, 1963-1973), upon which these western scholars first focused their attention, was a period in Thai history unusually devoid of major issues of controversy, and a period when the political actors formed an unusually homogeneous group--the 1957 coup group (see Morell and Samudavaniji, 1981: 5).

Hence, these scholars chose, by accident or design, a period and a ruling class which were especially susceptible to analysis by the methods they adopted. The explanatory power of the interest-group theory of politics, which has tended to be associated with the classical prosopographical approach, fits well with the period, particularly the Sarit period. The fewer the major political issues, the lower the ideological temperature, and the more oligarchic the political organization, the more likely it is to provide a convincing historical interpretation of the bureaucratic model.

But this model, as I will argue below, cannot carry the same assumptions about the politics before or after the Sarit period. For instance, more innovatively, Anek Laothamates argued that the bureaucratic polity is no longer a viable model in the 1980s. He described that the emergence of business in the 1980s negated the bureaucratic polity (see Laothamates, 1992). More seriously, the bureaucratic model distorts beyond acceptable limits our ability to lay bare the dynamics of the Seri Thai factional politics in particular and of the Thai political world in general.

Modern Thai Elite and Politics: A New Model for Enhanced Conception

In analyzing the Thai political factions, I have abandoned the bureaucratic model because the factional model set up by Wilson, Riggs and others offers little in our effort to understand Seri Thai factional politics. Basically, the main actors in the prewar and early postwar political factions were not yet military-bureaucratic factions, but they were still the four elite groups. Although most of them had their origins in the bureaucracy, they no longer represented bureaucratic forces at all. Among them only the new elite, particularly the military factions, the army and the navy, and some of the aristocrats can be categorized as bureaucratic factions. The royal family, most of the aristocracy, and the local elite, however, were not those kinds of factions either in terms of interests or bases of power. These latter three elite groups were outside of the bureaucracy and became the opposition to the new elite, particularly the military since the 1932 coup. For this reason, they represented extra

bureaucratic forces, and their own bases of power were in the constitutional or democratic institutions.

One of the convenient channels for these three opposition groups in their challenge to the new elite rulers was the National Assembly. Since 1932, Thai politics adopted a Western-style system. There has been a National Assembly, whose main function has been to legitimize the existing elite's claim to rule. It has been challenged from time to time by the despotic military rule, but it remains. Its members consisted of several factions that have formed the alliance against the military government since 1932-1933 when they first sat in the Assembly. From the beginning of the legitimate system, with the exception of the leaders of the royal family, many members of all the four elite groups including the new elite, were the members of the Assembly either as representatives elected by people or as members appointed by the new elite or the People's Party--the government at the time.

Broadly speaking, the Assembly before the war had three divisions, based not on party but on their political partisanship. One was the government side, the People's Party and their followers; the second group was the anti-government part, mainly the royalist-aristocrats and conservative elements but it also included a few leaders of the People's Party; and in between the political factions contending for determining national policies were the local elite or elected representatives whose political base was regional or local. For example, some local interest groups were led by the Isan leaders.

These three divisions might have risen on the confidence of personal connections, a desire for wealth, power, and status, and a commitment to a particular political idea and ideology or school of

thought. Any or all of these interests and commitments operated to promote factional identification and cohesion in parliamentary politics. These interests and commitments were reflected in policy disagreements among the four elite factions at the top of society and the arguments over the pace of democratic change, national economic development, and in security concerns and foreign policy during the 1930s-1950s.

In the bureaucratic model, there is little interest in the work of members of the Assembly; in the policies, projects, or important decisions; in the actual content of the political controversies of the time; and in the thrust and counter-thrust of parliamentary debate. For example, Riggs whose attention was drawn to the bureaucratic aspect of the political system devotes his study to the cabinet only. His verdict is that the assemblymen were largely used to legitimize decisions previously taken in the bureaucracy by a ruling circle of military and civil service politicians (Riggs, 1966: 153). Therefore, there can be no doubt that in practice the bureaucratic scholars attached little importance to any ideal or prejudice which ran counter to the calculations of self-interest. This is because they paid close attention to the political history of Thailand only in the cabinet dynamic, where politics became simply a struggle for power as an end in itself among competing factions.

This study devotes considerable attention to the ideological issues and policy disagreements reflected in the factional struggle among the four elite groups. It forces a shift in perspective: from power to ideological issues or schools of thought. It also takes a different path of study from the cabinet to the Assembly. This study will spend more time analyzing the contents of Assembly debates and

the question of political motivation, keeping close to the evidence which illustrates conclusively that constitutional commitment mattered to the elite groups, not to people in all strata of society.

By focusing on parliamentary politics, we should not outweigh all other considerations but expand our analytical vision to encompass democratic commitment as a motivating force. Since 1932, constitutional ideas have acted as a major catalytic agent, moving towards the forefront of Bangkok public consciousness, where it endures as a permanent feature of Thai politics. This does not deny the importance of wealth/money, status, and power as motives for political involvement, but it should not preclude an investigation of factions which acknowledges that human beings are more complex than the mere sum of their material parts. In addition, it is no a simple task to distinguish conviction, as it is often intertwined with self-interest, but the ideological content of the Seri Thai factional politics becomes clear if we allow those involved to tell their own stories, particularly the first alliance for democracy among the 600 men.

Of these 600 men, there were between 100-128 men who would represent and play a major role in each of the four elite groups. These four elite groups were originally divided into distinct socioeconomic groups. The primary division between them was still justified by the social and economic structure of the time: the traditional or privileged elite, the Chinese including many Sino-Thai, and the commoners. The same individuals occupied the same place in this hierarchy as in the social status hierarchy. The so-called old ruling class including the traditional elite, for example, was usually the richest and represented 'a government elite.'

In my prosopographical study of the social origins of the four elite groups, there is a certain variation in the socioeconomic

characteristics of their memberships (see Ngamcachonkulkid, 2005). Though the four elite groups shared in the same forms of occupations, they enjoyed very different rank and wealth. The royal family and the aristocracy, as is well known, were for the most part of the nobility, whereas the new elite and the Isan leaders came from the commoners and therefore had substantially less status, and were decidedly not aristocratic. Also this fundamental difference was complicated by the other. For instance, the two traditional elite groups consisted on the most part of property owners; however, the two lower standing groups were less moneyed. Most of the new elite and the Isan leaders lived in a substantially different economic universe than their colleagues of the royal family and the aristocracy.

Above all, these different backgrounds did have a determining effect on the four elite groups' political standings and ideas. These also colored their political tendencies. Simply put, the differences made most members of each elite group have their own characteristics and tendencies when they were involved in Bangkok politics after 1932. More importantly, the differences would affect their political platforms and ideologies. Subsequently, they came to head opposing political camps and to struggle bitterly for control of the government's procedures. Their struggle for control of the government policies thus reflected their differences not only in status and wealth, but in their schools of thought as well because the differences in social origins and ideologies made the four elite groups inhabit substantially different political worlds.

Politically, the four Thai elite groups identified themselves with their factions and leaders. Due to its small size, each of these four governing elite groups had to search for supporters as alliances from

other factions which had same socioeconomic backgrounds and/or ideas to determine national courses of action. Supporters not only indicated the status of their leaders; in a more profound sense, they constitute of it. In the post-1932 politics, political power was a function of the number of followers one had, and achieving the goal of having power therefore entailed acquiring followers. Powerful politicians had many supporters; a politician with no followers would be powerless. Successful military-bureaucrats were often lavishly generous; generosity brought them renown and increased the number of contacts who could be potentially utilized to advance their own endeavors. These activities not only cultivated the appearance of power; they also make people powerful.

Several new powerful leaders like Phibun, Pridi and Khuang Aphaiwong had lots of followers or supporters recruited from their enemy's camp by developing complicated levels of personal ties, or using patronage connected to terms like "cronies," "clients," "relatives," "friends," "trusted men," "underlings," and so on. Many of these people were constantly looking for new and better ways to achieve their goals. So, these factional relationships were temporal depending on varied subsidiary interests and goals, and therefore not stable. However, these did not affect the core of the elite factions (see Ngamcachonkulkid, 2005).

Besides individual or group interests, the four elite groups also were motivated by guidelines or ideological differences because each had its own schools of thought. The scramble to dominate a new national policy, as already mentioned, began in earnest 1933, and various political rivals would seek to settle their positions and to form alliances. Each of them as individuals or as a group therefore were

engaged in varying degrees of cooperation, competition, or divergence with each other in the post-1932 politics where privilege, wealth, and military power determined success. As a result, they formed into several loose, shifting, and complex coalitions depending on their status, wealth, schools of thought, and connections, such as through family, marriage, friendship or business, and so on. The most outstanding coalition amongst and between the four elite groups during this period was the so-called 'Seri Thai movement.'

The Seri Thai Movement as the First Alliance against Military Authoritarianism

The goal of this study is to trace the development of the Seri Thai movement, which represented the long term conflict and changes of Thai politics since 1932. Exploring the composition and experience of the Seri Thai is also crucial for our understanding of the origins and early formation of the first alliance against military authoritarianism in modern Thai society. I believe that through a new and productive approach, we will realize the significance of the Seri Thai movement in domestic Thai politics. Consequently, we will also comprehend the roots of political action and the character of Thailand's ruling elite and its role in modern politics, particularly the uncovering of the deeper interests and ideologies that are thought to lie beneath political rhetoric.

Though much of the study is organized in chronological fashion, it should not be considered as a political narrative in the traditional sense. It makes neither pretense of covering all aspects of the Seri Thai movement, nor of providing a comprehensive treatment

of war events in Thailand. It focuses rather on the collective actions of the four elite factions and on the central participants. The main question that this study deals with is how to explain the outbreak and development of 'factional constitutionalism' among members of the royal family, the aristocracy, the new elite and the Isan leaders in politics of the post-1932 coup, particularly the Seri Thai movement.

Based on a close examination of the backgrounds of Seri Thai leaders, this study provides detailed analyses of the conduct and impact of the movement on domestic politics, especially its early formation as the first alliance against military authoritarianism in modern Thai history. More importantly, this study challenges the hypotheses and conventional wisdom of many historians; such as the transformation school and bureaucratic scholars who have tried to explain the Seri Thai movement as a result of the impact of the war and/or of the Japanese presence on Thailand and Thai politics.

One of the main principles of the conventional school is that the Seri Thai movement was a large mass movement opposing the Japanese presence, an anti-Japanese underground operation primarily in response to the war. The evidence explored here, however, does not support the conventional argument that the war and the Japanese presence were fundamental to the elite groups' actions on the eve of the Seri Thai movement. Instead from the beginning until the end, the Seri Thai political target was the military government rather than the war or the Japanese presence. In fact, the Seri Thai movement was an alliance of the four elite groups with sharp differences in socioeconomic and ideological backgrounds in the context of domestic politics. It was born out of the ongoing political conflict and changes stemming from the 1932 coup.

More importantly, the evidence explored here also does not support both the Benda transformation thesis and the contention of several bureaucratic scholars that Thai politics since the 1932 coup has centered around the power struggles of small military-bureaucratic cliques, and that political competition has been confined to a narrow, fairly homogeneous elite with few ideological or policy differences.

The principal argument in formulating such explanations is that the Seri Thai movement was not a mass wartime resistance. Rather it was an underground movement among the elite comprised of well-educated people organized into several political groups who had opposed the involvement of the military in politics. That's why the establishment of the Seri Thai was carried out not by a particular elite group, but rather was part of the continuum of the interrelated discords among the four elite groups dating back to the 1932 coup. It developed in fits and starts, in a series of successful and failed stages, each of which entailed a distinct alignment of forces, a distinct configuration of causes and consequences. For the period that concerns us, from the coup in 1932 through Pridi's rebellion in 1949, our inquiry confirms that the movement represented a long-story of the democratic discords and changes in Thai domestic politics. In others words, it demonstrated a continuity of the anti-military authoritarian movements in modern Thai history dividing them into three periods: the prewar, war, and the postwar periods.

For the first period, our study contradicts two central tenets of the bureaucratic polity. First, Thai politics since the 1932 coup was not merely become a matter of competition between bureaucratic cliques for the benefit of government. Second, the fundamental questions of politics were sometimes motivated by policy or

ideological differences, instead of always being centered around the amoral quest for power and spoils of office. In fact, our inquiry confirms that the transfer of power from one elite group to another was not merely the substitution of one oligarchic elite by another, but a matter of major policy and ideological dissension amongst the four elite groups, but not the military-bureaucratic cliques.

From the prewar to the post-war periods, political groups were not yet military-bureaucratic factions, and ideology and concern for policy always remained a consideration among and between the four elite groups. The royal family group, the aristocracy, the Phya Song Suradej faction, and the Isan leaders, were all the prewar movements against the military regimes and all were divided and weakened, and failed due to their small size and lack of powerful leadership. With the exception of the new elite, particularly the military factions and some of the aristocracy, most of the four elite groups no longer represented bureaucratic forces at all, even though they had their origins in the bureaucracy. Instead, the royal family, most of the aristocracy, and the Isan leaders represented non bureaucratic forces, and their own bases of power were in the constitutional or democratic institutions, the National Assembly and later in political parties.

In addition, the prewar anti-military movements showed that the main actors represented the four elite groups, and their factional formations and dynamics represented ideological struggles or policy conflicts. Along these lines, the quarrels between and amongst these elite groups and the military regimes of both Phya Phahon Phonphayuhasena's and Phibun's governments demonstrated that intra-elite cleavages were based not only on personal faction

struggles for power, prosperity, and status, but on policy issues or ideological concerns as well. Simply put, undemocratic systems and/or authoritarian courses of action left the military regimes all the more open to charges of being insufficiently democratic and eventually a dictatorship. Meanwhile, the reformers from Pridi's faction and the Isan leaders struggled with their conservative counterparts, the royal family, the aristocracy and the military men. Often these fierce confrontations stimulated new ideologies, and were expressed in factionalism and in policy conflicts from the 1930s until the late 1940s.

There were two major ideological divergences within the Thai elite, one between democracy and the military rule, and the other among democratic ideas and forces between the reformers and the royalist-conservatives. The major policy conflicts that determined the four elite groups' factional formations and dynamics were based on their differing views concerning democracy and national development. The former discord involved the timing for full implementation of the democratic system; the latter discord reflected the struggle on which sector, military-armed modernization or civilian-social and economic developments, should come first in national development policy. These two major policy controversies in the classes of the four elite groups reflected their sharp differences in socioeconomic backgrounds and schools of thought.

These policy controversies persisted and continued to play important roles in the second and the third phases of the anti-military alliance led by Pridi. The first dispute--democracy versus military rule--gradually led to the build up the establishment of the Seri Thai movement during the war. The other dispute caused this alliance

to fail as an active force in setting up a democratic government in 1947. When the Seri Thai leaders began their movement, they called for democratic reforms, which reflected their resentment of the military involvement in the post-revolutionary politics. Yet when the Seri Thai leaders were in power, they were unsuccessful in establishing a constitutional system owing to their disagreements on both democratic models and national policies in the early postwar period. In view of that, the wartime alliance was strengthened by their desires for political reform, but their deep differences in socioeconomic and ideological conditions divided and weakened the movement.

To empathize with the political actions of the four elite groups before and after they were brought together in the second and third periods or during the Seri Thai movement, we use both the classical and modern methods of prosopography to clarify them. These elite groups were separated by a considerable gulf, a gulf created not by class per se, but by a combination of status, wealth, political experience and ideology. Their members had different social origins. Each elite group had its own social, educational, cultural and political experiences, which determined their ideologies and policies for the nation. From this perspective, we therefore focused on the three areas of the four elite groups' differences: status, wealth, and schools of thought to explain the formation, development and outbreak of the anti-military alliance amongst members of the royal family, the aristocracy, the new elite led by Pridi and the Isan leaders in the post-1932 politics.

Of these three areas, all directly impacted on the four elite groups' political tendencies and factional formation and dynamics in

the Seri Thai movement. As we have seen, in my discussion of the socioeconomic and ideological milieus of the four elite groups, there were significant differences among them, and these backgrounds did have a determining effect upon their political standings and ideas. The royal family and the aristocracy were inclined to possess higher status, greater wealth, and a more traditional view; the Pridi civilian and the Isan leaders tended to be of lower status, poorer people, with a more progressive ideology. Between them were the naval and the Police General Adul-Dejcharas-army factions. Because of their differences in terms of socioeconomic, political experiences and ideological backgrounds, major policy controversies unavoidably arose among the classes of these four elite groups. Subsequently, these elite groups came to head opposing political camps and to struggle bitterly for control of government policies. Status, wealth, and schools of thought thus were the roots of the four elite groups' political actions.

Insofar as the status, wealth, and schools of thought of the four elite groups are concerned, the present inquiry demonstrates the sharp differences in socioeconomic backgrounds and ideas among them. A large percentage of the royal family and the aristocracy comprised most of the property owners and enacted the most traditional ideas. These individuals were extremely wealthy, trained in the military, and owned lots of land. They were of the highest status and the wealthiest of the parliamentary members, who represented the traditional elites' ideas, and would be among the most vigorous leaders in the struggle for the traditional elites' interests, particularly protecting their access to land from the progressive elite, led by Pridi and the Isan leaders who advocated social reform. They were the

land owning elite in the country that had played a largely background role in maintaining their property under the new regime. They were naturally status-quo-oriented so that they could serve the primary economic and social institutions of the society. That's why they felt great sympathy for one another and hostility toward the new groups resulting from the coup in 1932. Based on their privilege, high social status and wealth, the royal family and the aristocracy would not have great difficulty returning to their pre-prominent positions in the early postwar period.

By contrast, the great majority of the new elite and the Isan leaders, as is well known, were substantially inferior in standing and less prosperous, decidedly not aristocratic. Mostly, the new elite and the Isan leaders grew up with non-elite background origins and lacked titles. They were commoners and had entered government service as a result of the reforms and social mobility since King Rama V's reign. If the royal family and the aristocrats were dominated by the highest and most distinguished elements of the traditional aristocracy, the new elite came primarily from the lower ranks of the bureaucracy. Unlike the royal family and the aristocracy, the new elite's main power was based neither on their privilege nor wealth but on the bureaucracy, in particular the armed forces and the neo traditional ideas.

The Isan leaders, like the new elite, lived in families that did not have a history of high bureaucratic service nor high social status as in the Bangkok traditional culture. As a whole, they possessed none of the three fundamental factors: high status, wealth, or military authority that determined success in the post-1932 politics. More importantly, as Laotians, they also did not have any connections

with the royal family or the aristocracy, or the military leaders, or the successful coup members. Even so, they were more progressive than the other three elite groups. The Isan leaders retained strong ties to the rural communities which formed their constituencies, and they became prominent as an active opposition against the military governments in the Assembly.

There were, to be sure, numerous exceptions in the four elite groups, and a certain degrees of overlap. We must not lose sight of a small minority of the progressive members of the royal family and the aristocracy sitting in the government and Assembly, many of whom would play leadership roles in the course of the democratic reforms. Yet the great majority of the four elite groups had roots in three very different schools of thought; the traditional, the progressive, and the neo traditional. In the post-1932 struggles, the four elite groups were transformed themselves into these three distinctive schools of thought, and the three schools were the broad spectrum of political ideas that resulted in a lack of consensus on policies, as each of them held on to their own ideas on the main issues for the nation.

The three schools then bickered with each other over Thailand's future, which would be determined by a series of factional fights and major policy controversies. The military involvement in politics was the most important issue disputed among the four elite groups. But they also disagreed on a variety of other significant topics as well, namely the democratic system, national development and security concerns including war policy and reactions to nationalist movements in Southeast Asia.

These four elite groups without a preconceived goal in the 1930s, divided by their socioeconomic backgrounds as well as by

their political intentions, managed to come together in an alliance that ultimately led to the overthrow of the military dictatorship during the war. They resented Phibun and his army faction either for being a dictatorship or for his excessive spending on the military, or both. The royalists resented the dominance of the new elite since the 1932 coup and wanted a more conservative system so that they could once again have access to power. The Isan leaders strongly opposed the excessive military budgets and also demanded a progressive democratic regime in order to share and determine the national developmental polices when they became elected members of the Assembly in 1933. Pridi's civilian faction and naval officers were a loose amalgamation of men and groups at the heart of Phibun's faction from the beginning of the 1932 coup; even so, they then contested the army's recent political ascent as a major political and budgetary shareholder. These two junior factions finally became leading members of the opposition against their own revolutionary friends for the duration of the war.

The four elite groups became an alliance but were still different wings of the Seri Thai movement. Although they joined forces to oust Phibun and to reform the political system during the wartime alliance, their compromise was temporary. Each member maintained the same political position he occupied before joining the Seri Thai. On the right wing of the movement were the royal family and the aristocracy, who did not accept certain principles of a democratic government, but supported a constitutional system in which their members could share power by demanding their political rights and seeking an extension of the constitutional role of the monarchy.

On the left wing were the Isan leaders, who showed their willingness to put democratic principles and processes into practice for the people and wanted such system to develop into a full democracy. At the center would be the new elite led by the civilian and naval factions, who hoped to lead the country back to the democratic system they had attempted to establish in 1932. This goal of political reform was the only factor that held them together. Accordingly, the need for parliamentary reform was a coherent campaign for the Seri Thai movement against the military government and against the Phibun alliance with the Japanese side, after the outbreak of the war.

For the second and the third periods, this study reinforces McCoy's key argument of that the wartime years did not create new elite and therefore did not foster a political transformation in Thailand. In many respects of the postwar era, the four elite groups would not readily support Benda's argument. In Thailand, the transfer of power from the old elite to the new one took place in the prewar period. Though power changed hands frequently and new constitutions came and went in the 1940s-1950s, the elites who were in power in the postwar politics were the same as those who had taken charge in the 1930s.

The Seri Thai movement looked like a major new political phenomenon of the wartime and early postwar Thailand, but in fact the movement was the same factions that informed the character of domestic politics from the prewar until early postwar periods. In this sense, the Seri Thai movement, neither the war nor the Japanese presence, provided a new assessment of the meaning of the wartime and postwar periods as informed by character of the four elite

groups and their factions. This is to say that the movement gave us the way for the reassessment of Japan's impact on Thailand and on the whole of Southeast Asia.

Undoubtedly, the war and Japanese presence did not herald a new era for Thailand. The war produced endless rhetoric but few readily visible political changes. The war exhibited a dramatic impact on Phibun's military despotism, yet, as we have seen, it did not have a significant lasting effect on the quality of Thai political life. The most profound societal changes during the wartime and the early postwar periods occurring at the top, among the elite, were slow and insignificant.

In fact, important changes that reverberated throughout society had already occurred within the Thai elite in 1932. The four elite groups still were there and would be drawn back into the policy conflicts, into the Thai elite's continual struggle to maintain their factional and alliance balance throughout the war and immediately afterward. In other words, in opposition to the transformation thesis, the study provides strong evidence that the composition of the Thai elite demonstrated a remarkable continuity of development. More importantly, older military men with more authoritarian principles of leadership began to reemerge after the war. The war years therefore did not constitute an important break in the historical continuum, as the main actors and their schools of thought were unchanged.

Unlike their counterparts in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia, the Thai elite experienced no important power shifts. Political power has been-and continued to be-the more powerful elite group. Though the outcome of the war reversed the political trend of

the prewar decade--Pridi's Seri Thai alliance attained power while Phibun and the military faction declined--this switch of dominant factions was only temporary. The 1947 coup and Phibun's subsequent return to office signaled the return of the military to the dominant position it had occupied in Thai politics for most of the period since 1932 and that would last until 1973.

Again, the major turning point in the case of Thailand, therefore, was not the result of the Japanese presence itself, but the consequence of domestic politics during the war years, especially the years from 1947 to 1949. This short period was remarkable in modern Thai history when the first alliance of the anti-military authoritarianism was formed, but was soon destroyed due chiefly to factional division and weakness. It was a tragedy that the first Thai democratic constitution and the government it established never succeeded. Nevertheless, in this way the new account of the Seri Thai movement is evidence for the story of the first alliance for democracy in modern Thai history.

Conclusion

This study tells the story of the first alliance against the military authoritarianism in modern Thai politics and its impact on later political tendencies. By thinking and acting globally to attain their domestic political goals, the Seri Thai leaders revealed how even with their differences in social origins and ideas, they could still be authors of their own democratic story, a story in which the war was a small but essential part.

The story of this anti-military authoritarianism perhaps informs us about the anti-military culture in later political conflicts from the postwar parliamentary democracy through the 1970s and beyond. Beyond Thailand, I believe that this study will provide us a general concept and theory which will enable us to better understand the pattern in the rise and fall of national elites and in the quality and natural character of many movements against military regimes elsewhere. Hopefully, the precedents set by the Seri Thai show the way and smooth the path for other democratic movements in the so-called Third World as well.

Though the Seri Thai movement was short-lived, its legacy was lasting. In the post-Seri Thai age, countless independent forces would continue to seek ways to remove the armed forces from politics. The anti-military movement in Thailand, of course, was not over. It was just beginning. Yet for the democratic struggle, the Seri Thai alliance was an initial great act and was perhaps the most remarkable period in the lives of modern Thai politicians, a period of great effort against military authoritarianism. In the history of the Constitutional system after 1932, there were other instances of factional alliances against the military regime, but none produced reactions with the democratic scope and character of the Seri Thai movement.

By the end of the Seri Thai political life, the seeds of ideological support for democracy and of a constitutional government had already been sown in Thai society. Although the military retained power, in the long run, without legitimacy, the military would have great difficulty standing up to the Seri Thai's spirit. Many major political problems that confronted Phibun and his successors have remained unresolved. In the end Thai society was dominated

by the military and its neo-traditional school of thought; yet it found a substantial, growing place for the aspirations and the activities of the Seri Thai heritage. Despite the best effort of Phibun and his men to return to the stability of one-man rule, the nature of Thai politics has been gradually incorporating Seri Thai principles. Military control of government in Thailand has become a fact, but it was not a popular ideal: their legitimacy is open to question.

In this sense, the Seri Thai sprit would create an anti-military cultural force among the urban educated people. The Seri Thai movement was not carried out by a particular social class but by a "cultural force." It was a great "cultural expression" of the anti-military authoritarianism. As such, the broad social composition and democratic ideals would make the movement quintessentially modern in terms of political weapons such as thoughts and actions. The power of the Seri Thai movement, simply and unadorned, tells a story in ways that other anti-military authoritarian movements could. Interestingly, if we realize the potency of the Seri Thai movement, we can see how the construction and use of the wartime alliance created the political model and the anti-military culture that has been deployed in later political conflicts from the postwar parliamentary democracy through the 1970s and beyond.

The spirit and model of the wartime alliance were still strong and effective in the postwar politics. Although most Seri Thai leaders have been eliminated from the political scene since the 1947 coup, their ideals never die. Pridi's ideology, for instance, remained in the group of young Seri Thai and might be expected to be strong among Thammasat students who had faith in constitutionalism as the principle of government. The Seri Thai movement did much to

enhance the prospects for the establishment of a constitutional system. Undoubtedly, the movement increased political awareness in the liberal forms of political thought and action which restricted and limited the power of the state, and spread the basis of constitutionalism and of democracy among the well-educated middle class in and outside the bureaucracy, and more importantly, spread their demands into political action against the postwar military dictatorships. Therefore, the fruits of the Seri Thai spirit and model has grown and gained in strength afterwards.

As the first alliance of the anti-military authoritarianism, the Seri Thai movement did lay the groundwork for the eventual development of mass politics in Thailand. The ranks of the Seri Thai movement were filled with the four elite groups and non-elite, people of great diversity in political ideologies and social groups. It included the royalists, conservatives, liberals, radicals, princes, commoners, bureaucrats, professors, schoolteachers, students, and local people. These different types of people united to oppose the military regime. They worked together successfully in an effort to remove the military faction from power and initiate the parliamentary democracy. An awakening urban educated class was cheering the victorious Seri Thai movement, and wide-spread cooperation also came from upcountry. In effect, the wartime alliance established the high-water mark of the democratic ideal and the spirit of constitutionalism and effectiveness in the post-1947 politics.

The Seri Thai movement also opened the way for the participation of new social forces in politics. Throughout all the changes in Thai politics, including the return of the army to center stage, the protests against military rule have continued to be effective.

In the long run, this means that the state, from which the military and their alliances traditionally derived the significant power they were intent on maintaining, slipped away from their exclusive control. It may indeed be the start of an incomplete transition, perhaps even the beginning of a long process toward developing a democratic society. The legacy of the wartime alliance pointed the way towards a future of continuing conflicts. As the ideological conflicts shifted from intra-elite conflict to confrontations between the military and the middle class, many soon became convinced that the Seri Thai movement placed the fate of the nation in their hands.

In post-Seri Thai politics, the ideals of constitutionalism and democracy as well as faith in supreme law and the people, still remained amongst the people, and have increasingly gained prestige among young Seri Thai and the well-urban educated middle class, who later would become new social forces. They have been members of political parties, and are academicians, students, journalists, and bureaucrats. These groups, being a part of Phibun's populism before the war, were impressed by ideals of government by popular consent and by the institutional mechanisms of political parties, periodical elections, and parliamentary regimes intended to achieve these ideals. The middle class, which the Seri Thai had been able to stir during the war, would at last begin to awake and grow vocal as conditions worsened in the post-1947 military regime. Puey Ungphakorn, for example, a one-time young Seri Thai member and later the Governor of the Bank of Thailand, became one of the most prominent leaders against the military government in the early 1970s, which was the last time that the military ruling elite would dismiss its vast constituency.

Puey, like Pridi, was successful in ousting the military regime because of the alliance that consisted of people of great diversity in political ideology and social groups/classes. The wartime political cooperation thus reemerged as a prevalent model against the military authoritarianism at least two more times. These were the two major bloody political uprisings. The first was in 1973, the anti-dictatorship uprising, when independent students and intellectuals led an alliance to challenge Sarit's successor, the Thanom regime. This regime fell in 1973, following a student-led mass uprising and a royal intervention by King Rama IX to stop the bloodshed. The second was in 1991, when an organized political movement created from military factions, business people, intellectuals, students, and political parties opposed the 1991 coup. This one ended the military rule in 1992.

The wartime precedents, of course, had been set in 1973 and 1991. Both incidents, like the Seri Thai alliance, first succeeded in ousting the military dictatorship with its commercial associates and royal family, and then initiated rewriting of a constitution to ensure that serving military officers were constitutionally barred from politics. Although they successfully established a parliamentary democracy, they failed to sustain it. Their success was due to widespread respect for constitutionalism among the new social forces and uncertainties of the international political arena which has become much more extensive in Thai politics since the war. And their failures were mainly because of conflicts in the midst of the groups in the alliances. They lacked cohesion which weakened them. This major weakness remains in recent years even though the military was unable to return to the dominant position it had occupied

before 1973. More importantly, in a society dominated by the military, only the King could be the final power against the authoritarian regimes. In this sense, the military rulers in Thailand have been constrained because of the role of the monarch.

Finally, the Seri Thai movement provides us a general concept and theory which enable us to better understand a pattern in the rise and fall of national elites and in the quality and natural character of many movements against military dictatorships and/or authoritarian rule elsewhere. In Thailand, like most countries in the Third World, the membership of the governing elite underwent significant changes in the prewar or the postwar periods involving, not the complete replacement of the old elites by the new ones, but rather a mixture of the incorporation of new social groups and the recruitment of new individual members from the lower strata of society. With the exception of a few nations such as Indonesia, the traditional elite retained their status, wealth, and ideas, and remained the most important players in the post-war era although some could not retain their pre-eminent positions.

More importantly, in Thailand like most of the Third World, the new elite were unable to perpetuate themselves as the ruling political party due mainly to differences of ideas and occupations. The men of law and the men of combat were more often rivals than allies, and the former always became leaders of factional alliances or of the anti-military movement against the latter. The anti-military authoritarian feeling in its representative function at its broadest did extend beyond a group of the factions in the movement. It represented a democratic ideology in the class of educated urban people who demanded political reforms and a full

democracy but always failed due to their sharp differences in socioeconomic and ideology.

In that sense, it is not hard to see that the model of the Seri Thai movement has also occurred in the Third World as a result of internal or of external politics or a combination of the two, and its outcome has not been much different. Simply put, a legacy of the wartime alliance shows that a successful anti-military movement must depend on popular support. People power does not always prevail. Indeed, it rarely prevails. It was crushed many times in many countries. Yet without mass support, civilian politicians are powerless, and a democratic system will be replaced by an authoritarian regime.

By the same token, the difficulty for establishing democracy or the failure of a constitutional system should be not always blamed on people or on the failure of the elections or qualities of MPs, but rather on the class differences of the elite groups. More remarkably, a failed anti-military movement was not only because of an interference of the military but because of conflicts among the groups of several civilian factions themselves as well. Due to their sharp differences in socioeconomic and ideological backgrounds, these civilians' discords prevent them from working together although they are now in the age of people power.

More remarkably, the Seri Thai legacy shows that ensuring democratic forces against military intervention was something beyond the powers of developing societies. The underlying political question remains how to proceed toward the goal of a democratic society not only without the interference of the military but also without disharmony of the civilian factions. These also pose an array of interesting problems in terms of facts and concepts, whose significances are more appropriate for a different study.

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