



**ATTEMPTS AT DEMOCRACY:
A STUDY OF NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS IN
THAILAND'S 80 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY**

BY

MR. MOHAMMAD ZAIDUL ANWAR HAJI MOHAMAD KASIM

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (ASIA PACIFIC STUDIES)
COLLEGE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY**

ACADEMIC YEAR 2016

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THESIS

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ENTITLED

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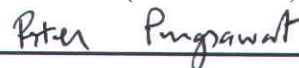
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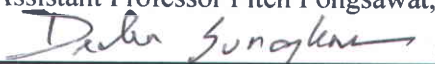
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ABSTRACT

In 1932, the regime of Thai absolute monarchy comes to an abrupt end. Ever since, Thailand's attempts at democracy haven't been smooth. The country had fallen into decades of turmoil due to political instability and lack of readiness of Thai interest groups and society to absorb and maximise the new changes that had been brought to them. For the past 80 years, Thailand political landscape can be said as politically unstable. Unstable due to the domestic struggles of what define 'Thai democracy' as well as what model of democracy could fit in the context of Thai politics. Thai democracy per se is a continuous process and a work in progress, which every interest groups still struggle to find their 'corners and positions' which could serve everyone interest and the same pattern still persist today.

This paper seeks to clarify and examine the existence of negative perceptions towards Thai politics that engineered negative and distrustful attitude of the Thais towards democracy. Why, after 80 years of experiments, trials and error does no good to Thai democracy but ultimately almost destroyed the democracy altogether. This works explore the development of the negative literatures and narratives on Thai politics over the past 80 years to see the pattern of such hypothesis. As the pioneer of such work, it is hope that this finding will shed light on the severity and impacts of such narratives, in a way it is hoped that it can bring new perspectives in looking at Thai politics.

Keywords: Thai politics, democracy, fragmented power, key interest groups



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Mr. Mohammad Zaidul Anwar Haji Mohamad Kasim

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BIFC	Bangkok International Finance Centre
CAPO	Centre for Administration of Peace and Order
CC	Constitutional Court
CDA	Constitution Drafting Authority
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KMT	Kuo Min Tang Party
MPs	Members of Parliament
NACC	National Anti-Corruption Commission
NARA	National Administrative Reform Assembly
NESDB	National economic and Social Development Board
NIC	New Industrialised Countries
SOEs	State-Owned Enterprises
NSPRT	Network of Students and People for Reform of Thailand
PDRC	People's Democratic Reform Committee
POMC	Peace and Order Maintaining Command

Terms

<i>Chao Pho</i>	'Godfather', provincial businessmen turn politician
<i>Pho Khun</i>	Father of the Nation following Sukhothai tradition
<i>Ratthaniyom</i>	A set of guideline preferred by the state
<i>Thahan Prachatipatai</i>	Democratic Soldier
<i>Seri Thai</i>	Anti-Japanese and pro liberation movement

<i>Siam Rat</i>	The envisioned new Siamese nation state under absolute monarchy
<i>Jao Sua</i>	prominent Chinese business families those are quite influential in the inner court of Chakri.
Corvee system	lifelong labour service to the state originated from the early days of Ayutthaya
<i>Sak dina</i> system	a system of social interaction and positioning through one's status in the society
<i>Devaraja</i>	worshipping lord as 'Demigod' or 'god reincarnate' that comes to rule and pour blessing across the lands
<i>Prachatipatai</i>	Thai word for democracy
<i>Siamisation</i>	Phibun's extensive efforts to create a single unified identity for the new state
<i>Premocracy</i>	Semi Democracy, a system of which the government is created by a weak coalition of parties and Prime Minister come from the military ranks
Young Turk	a group of military ranks and staffs that comes from the fifth class of the Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy which helped to bring Prem to power and later led the 1981 & 1985 coup attempts
<i>Kin Mueng</i>	' <i>eats the country</i> ', a metaphor stating about the politicians abuse their powers at the expense of the state
<i>Phalang Tham</i>	' <i>Power of Dharma</i> ', a political party that seeks to straighten the moral of politicians by following the teaching of Lord Buddha.

<i>Sor Phor Khor 4-01</i>	Land management scandals that brought Chuan Leekpai first government to crumble, ironically it was caused by Suthep Thaugsuban
<i>Buffet Cabinet/Parliament</i>	a metaphor explaining the cabinet fights to get projects that can enrich their own pockets and the parliament has become a bidding place to get such lucrative projects
<i>Thai Rak Thai</i>	' <i>Thai Love Thai</i> ', a political party that sweep Thaksin to power in 2001
People Alliance for Democracy	Collectively known as PAD or the Yellow Shirts, this movements start a protest group to bring Thaksin and its proxies down
<i>Nawaphon</i>	' <i>New Force</i> ', a radical right wing cum religious-nationalist groups that persist in the 1970's
<i>Red Gaurs</i>	also known as ' <i>Krathing Daeng</i> ' is a paramilitary vigilante group that leans to the right

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In 1932, the regime of Thai absolute monarchy comes to an abrupt end. The bloodless coup happened in the early hours of 24th June changed the course of Thai politics forever. Even so, Thailand's roads to democracy are not smooth as expected. The country fallen into decades of turmoil, coups and counter coups happened soon after as the stakeholders of Thai politics from the old and new regimes try to awkwardly complement each other. Alliance were forged and broken, networks of allies built up overtime and grip to power solidified by certain groups within the society; Thailand's transition to democratic parliamentary system had consumed a lot of sacrifices from all section of the Thai society. Thus this research will focus on the efforts and sacrifices made in order to bring about democracy in Thailand. In 2012, the country should mark its 80 years of anniversary of embracing democracy, the first in Southeast Asia. However, 80 years on, Thailand still grips in political differences and stalemate, with many of the Thais losing their trust on the democratic government. This issue of negative perception towards democracy is what to become the hallmark of this research as no one has ever done it before. This can served as a foundation to understand the nature of contemporary Thai politics and the origin of enmity between two political camps that existed in Thailand at the same time to understand key developments that move democracy forward as well as those forces that are trying to regress it. Thai politics is one of the most controversial democracy that existed in Asia. However, to look at it at the surface is not sufficient. This research will explore the history of Thai politics from the start of democracy in Thailand to the current democracy pause in Thailand to find out the root of such negative perception that led to a temporary suspension of Thai democracy. This research will also serve as a memorabilia of Thailand's 80 years attempts at democracy since 1932.

1.2 Problem Statement

The research is discussing the issues pertaining to lack of trust towards Thai democracy amongst the Thais. It is widely accepted that to have an elected government abiding to the Constitution and to have an election is an integral part of the Thai politics and prolong military rule should not be tolerated with despite that fact, doubts and distrust toward democracy still lingers amongst the society and partly. This is due to continuous political differences between key stakeholders in Thailand as a whole as well as the nature of Thais politics itself. Thus two main questions can be raised here, what triggers the negative connotations towards the Thai politics and at the same time, quite intriguingly, why the Thais still has hope in their democracy. These two key elements will be discussed extensively in this research in order to understand the real reasons behind this phenomenon in Thai politics.

1.3 Research Objective

In doing this research, the author found out from review literature process that the majority of scholars on Thai politics have some sense of implicit negative connotations attached to it. It can be in term of their conclusion that there is no way out in Thai politics, blame games which can be seen quite often in many narratives and the attacks on democracy itself rather than other key parties that involved in the politics. The research objective is to figure out what may cause this tendency to happen at the first place. Most importantly, this research is the first trying to understand subliminal messages that can extracted from major works on Thai politics although despite their critical analysis of the Thai politics, the Thais still believed in democracy themselves. Hence, the objective of this study is to discover the existence and the root cause of negative perceptions attached to the Thai politics. By understanding these negative connotations, it is hope that it will give new perspective in looking at Thai politics and democracy as a whole.

Another objective is to find out what may cause the Thais still believe in democratic principles although their trust on democratic institutions and process

deteriorate over time. The author believe, this interrelated with the first one, as the former will helps to explain despite all the negativity develops within Thai politics, Thai people remains true to democracy as the only legitimate way of choosing government that governs them and the state. Democracy therefore in part has been successful to make its mark in a modern and affluent Thai society. These two objectives will become the motivations throughout this study.

1.4 Scope of Study & Limitations:

This study will start off with several episodes in which will look at Thailand's attempts at democracy since 1932 up to 2014. The reason for this is to provide a clear picture of political developments and stalemate that have occurred during this time in order to understand the struggle to democracy. At the same time, this will provide a foundation in the understanding of the nature of negative perceptions develop later towards the end of the 20th century. As the timeline between the 1932 towards 2014 might be long, the author still believes that to look for the root cause of the problem, it must be explored thoroughly through a whole period. The author will look at this in a retrospective approach to celebrate the sacrifices made during the initials years towards democracy. At the same time, the author wants to acknowledge of the inability to use Thai documents in this research. Thus all the data and materials use in this research will be primarily English sources in pursuing this research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

As the oldest democracy in Southeast Asia, Thailand's political scene never lose its 'charm; of attracting attention of both media and scholars scrutiny. Since the overthrow of the absolute monarchy back in 1932, Thailand's road to democracy has been an uphill battle; with series of coups and countercoups, the rises and falls of authoritarian regimes as well as the birth and demise of political parties which has left the marks on Thailand' political landscape in the 20th and early 21st Century. In 2012, it supposed to celebrate a 'vibrant' democratic pursuit with pomp and pageantry, however the situation was solemn and most Thais feel the need not to celebrate the democracy since the country just endured another tough period in their political struggle. After 80 years, Thai democracy wasn't well received by the society at large, contrary to normal practice. Thus it is important to reflect back and analyse what Thailand has gone through during their pursuit for democracy in order to understand what went wrong and why democracy is perceive with a lukewarm reception. A lot of scholar however agrees, Thailand's democracy is still a work in progress. It still needs time to develop proper institutions in order to have a functioning democracy at the same time compromise between key parties in politics must be dynamically readjust from time to time. As long as the ideals to have a proper democratic and civil society are still there, the will of the majority can't be suppressed and the time will come eventually. Such a positive mind set is what is quite rare in these days amongst the Thais and scholars whom studied Thai politics, and this mystery is what the author tries to break through this research.

It is understandable that, democracy is an area of struggles and negotiations of competing interest groups in the society. In order to arrive at the power to govern the people and run the country, it must first get the trust of the people, as a democratically elected government means their powers comes from the will and consent of the people. However in Thailand, a clear presence of authoritarian

force and the will to have a limited kind of democracy persist. This so called 'hybrid or Semi democracy' has become problematic as the whole concept of democracy just 'translated' in Thai contexts and "idealized" it to legitimise some interest groups that are operating in the country. This issue of power has been extensively studied by Kevin Hewison in his work 'Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation' that entails the existence of a strong force whom truly yield the real 'power' in Thailand despite the existence of a functioning democracy just to appease the population (Hewison, 2002). To add into this complexity of power, here comes the issue of forces that exist in Thailand since the old days up to the present day that has been discussed a lot by the scholars too. For example, a work by Michael H. Nelson explains the 5 forces that exist in Thai politics and compete to two different ends i.e. to preserve the status quo at one end and to liberalise the country by the other (Nelson, 2012). By looking at this two brief example, it is true that Thailand's model of democracy is flawed or in other words, it is far from the liberal democratic ideal that has been observed religiously by many democracies. Thus it can be said as a work in progress. It has been 80 years, these players still playing the old games despite some pressures did shaken their interests and at some instances, changes to the society structure of the dawn of globalisation almost bring their demise from venturing in politics. However, the author believes there are still room for Thailand to improve its democratic institutions provided both sides fully utilise politics as the arena for an equal and democratic struggle and negotiation or in Thai context, '*a compromise*'.

2.2 Approaches to the Study

For the past 80 years, Thailand can be said as politically unstable. Unstable due to the domestic struggles of what defines 'Thai democracy' as well as what model of democracy could fit in the context of Thai politics. Thai democracy per se is a continuous process and a work in progress, which every interest groups struggle to find their 'corners and positions' which could serve everyone interest at the same time be aware of any changes that's happens around them and Thailand. Due to the nature of complexities of Thai politics with its endless scandals and blunders,

the main stream media and academic tend to focus on the surface of the whole story, according to what the masses wants to hear or see, but not the reality. It is a natural occurrence that every conflict, the first emotion to resurface is the hardships endured in due process. However, the author chose not to follow this pattern and decided to explore Thai attempts at democracy in positive limelight through historical flashbacks and 'revisited approach' to look back at what has been achieve during these 'true democratic era', semi democracy period and Thaksinomics. This research key theme is to study few attempts to have a 'true' democracy in Thailand, particularly in the period of 1932, 1972 and 1992-2014. The research focuses on these efforts to introduce to readers the period when the ideals of having an everlasting democracy seems surreal, despite it was rolled back later, and served as reminder of the times when Thailand is 'normal', as the old forces tone down their presence and let the people have their way in the country. Although the democratic period is often short, yet their contributions are enormous and inspiring at the same time. The main intention is to put some hopes on Thailand's attempts at democracy, to prove that all these sacrifices, bloods, sweat and tears is not for nothing and will not be forgotten.

At the same time, this memorabilia is among the first to study the development of negative connotations attached to democracy since 1932 until recently. It is interesting to know the root of these negative images and information seems to be accepted in Thai society at large. This pattern intrigue the author's interest to analyse this further and what has cause this perception to exist both in Thai society, the media and the academic circle. This will becomes the pillar of this research with a focus to see how it started, what might have caused it and how it develops to the current state and intermittently assess Thais evaluation of the importance of democracy in their life. On the other hand, the research will lead to question of what prolongs the spirit of democracy in Thailand as the summary of the whole research. This works as commentary of positive way forward for Thailand despite majority out there think otherwise. This is an important component part of the study as it will make sense of everything from the very beginning of the research until the end.

2.2.1 Celebrating 80 Years of Thai Democracy

As the oldest democracy in Southeast Asia, Thailand's democratic journey has never been smooth. It has been a rocky and an uphill struggle just to reach a certain point and rolled back to the starting point. This are the concept believe by most academicians who study Thai politics and translated to the masses by the main stream media. To certain extent, this concept can be true but at most part it can be misleading. In democracy, no suit fits it all. It is a process by which competing interests group in the society using the 'agreed platform' to negotiate with each other in determining the power and authority to preserve the interest of each individuals in the society. But in the case of Thailand, rather than each interest group playing the same game, each one tries to overtake each other thus 'hijacking' the democracy itself. Such a bizarre conception of democracy earn Thailand as having 'a hybrid democracy' which elements of authoritarian and democracy tries to complement each other. In short, Thai politics is not that simple, and democracy is a process that can tire individual, any institution, any system, due to continuous struggle and negotiations between competing groups. Having said that, the author believe it is wrong to conclude everything that happened in the past 80 years as confusing, tiring, too complex, there's no way out, fears lingers around and many other negative conclusions that can be found in media and academic works.

The author becomes attracted to Federico Ferrara (2014) works entitled 'The Political Development of Modern Thailand' which discussed Thai politics in a relax and neutral manner (Ferrara, 2015b). The basic arguments of his work is about the return of similar struggle that 1932 had in the past, where Pridi forces of liberal minded 1932 coup was counter by royalist coup the next year which wipe out the basic structure of what could been the foundation of an equal and democratically progressive Thai society, which later was branded as 'communist' leaning. Ferrara studies the events, the key players, the environment, the ideals etc. which he found similar pattern of those between 1932 and the 2014 coup. It is quite interesting despite few decades gaps, Thai politics seems to return to the same cycle this time than ever before, as the key players transform to becomes something else but still yield powers and influence; the environment is catapult by 1997 economic crisis and the

establishment nod for people's centred constitution, where later on after some trials and errors is wipe out and a return to the status quo. He also made comparative studies between Pridi and Thaksin which despite dissimilar characteristics and ideals, for the fact that both believe in democracy is something to be admire upon. Both popularity went skyrocket and at the same time manage to shaken the long established conservative force, trying to invite the other side to 'play' on a level playing game.

Thus Ferrara works gives quite an inquisitive thesis on the recent political development in Thailand. His works inspire the author to look at what has been achieve during these 'true' democratic era of 1932, 1972 and 1992, simply because this show the progress of democratic ideals in Thailand itself. Despite all these changes were rolled back in subsequent coups, yet there a lot of lessons can be learned from those eras itself. His style of writing can be seen as adequately neutral, without obvious sidings of particular groups that being studied. Fore mostly, his positive attitude in every chapters' summary further becomes an added value to his studies which is uncommon in this particular field. Therefore the research itself inspire from Ferrara works in order to build upon the case studies of Thailand's attempts at democracy during its 'true' democratic era.

On similar note is Nicholas Farrelly, of which his works on Thai politics quoted a lot by academician in this field. In one of his works, he made a strenuous study of each coup and their distinctive characteristic, where similarities and differences of each coup can be observed (Farrelly, 2013). He provide a conclusion out of his observation is that; the coups itself was made normal and accepted by most Thais as the only way out for their political struggle. He blamed all parties that made these coups as a political culture, which just destroyed blooming democracy every time, making Thai democracy never mature. He did celebrated what Thaksin has done during his first term but at the same time he blamed Thaksin for his eagerness to cling on power and his attempt to establish one party system for Thai democracy, as the one that are in place currently in Malaysia and Singapore. He explained, Thaksin's popularity added with his populist policies shore up his popularity higher than that of the establishment, which Farrelly suspected as the key reason for toppling him. His bold method to openly compete with a much stable conservative factions is what

bringing him down, despite the good that he brought into Thailand. However, Farrelly argued, the establishment failed to see the strength of Thaksin phenomenon, which prompted the political upheavals since 2006 that end up his proxies winning every time ever since. Not only that Thaksin successfully empower new groups of people, which were suppressed and marginalised for decades i.e. the lower class of far reaching regions away from the core centre in Bangkok, which becomes his stronghold up to this day.

The most important part of his work is the positive attitude and suggestions in wanting to see Thailand to have a healthy democracy. In order to move forward, he suggested to cultivate a culture where coup is wrong and despise by many, at the same time, the Thais must 'revise' and learn by heart of their rights as a citizen in order to fight for individual and human rights as a unit in the society. The trust on parliamentary system must be enforce, as Thailand should exercise their rights by educating self about politics and not to let only the 'minority' (the educated, interest groups, middle class, the military, NGOs) to do political work for them. In short, he suggested masses to organise themselves to become a political force themselves that could push the idea that every vote is counted. At last, Farrelly suggest, it's time for the Thais to realise military intervention might not the best answer to their 80 plus years of political struggle, if Thailand really wants to be prosperous again. These 'way out' suggested by him is something that is rare in this field as many scholars concludes with no way out at all, other than compromise or total bail out initiated by the junta. In a way, his work helps to give the author confidence that there are literatures out there looking forward for the future of Thai politics despite a strong wave of currents tries to prove otherwise. Both Ferara and Farrelly works provide positive contributions of the democratic era while at the same time remains neutral in all their arguments. These two works is what becomes the aspiration for the author, of what this proposed research end products will look like.

2.2.2 The Root Cause of Negative Connotations towards Democracy

In finding literature discussing where the negative perceptions on democracy come from, the author comes across with some literature discussing this in passing. For example, Thitinan Pongsudhirak did mentioned in his work entitled

'Thailand Since Coup' about the fears of conservative force against the wave of liberalisation and globalisation brought about by Thaksin regime since 2001 (Pongsudhirak, 2008). The central theme of the work is about what hinders Thailand democratic advancement, and the changing contours of Thailand's socio political scenes. The 'force' as he sees it; is between the conservative faction which he coined as the holy trinity of the monarchy, military and the bureaucracy. On the opposite side is the 'force of globalisation' pioneer by Thaksin through his populist policies which gained momentum in term of popularity against the conservative force. He argued, since 1932 up until now, the enmity between these two forces still going strong, a '*deep seated and irreconcilable conflicts*' (Pongsudhirak, 2008). The globalisation forces made up of the marginalise groups such as the farmers, lower class, workers, labourers, outer Bangkok dwellers etc which their voices had been suppressed by most of the lifespan of Thai democracy. As the Tom Yum Kung Crisis brought the establishment to its knees, they had no choice but to give in to the popular movements which catapult Thaksin to premiership.

As of now, Thitinan thought there are no way out for Thai democracy, and look up to another chance given by the conservative force to allow democracy to flourish again. He believes, the establishment is the only force that can 'initiate' real changes in Thailand, as they see it fit. This is where he explains the efforts by the conservative to brainwash the society in any channel within their reach as money is not a problem for the establishments in Thai politics. He believe that the dream to have an egalitarian, equal enfranchisement of the whole Thailand have to wait, until such a time the conservative force are ready to give in to the popular demand as they did during 1973 Student Revolution, Black May 1992 and subsequently the 1997 economic crisis. In simple words, due to reluctance of the conservative force to complement in the liberalisation and globalisation efforts of Thailand, Thai democracy will succumb to their smear campaign and political factionalism can't be avoided. A lot of rumours and scandals erupted just to lessen the integrity of democratic institutions in the eyes of the Thais and it seems this pattern will not go away very soon and might even get worse in the future, as evidence from the 2014 coup.

Pei Hsiu Chen shared the same sentiments. In her works she argued Thais understanding on few particular issues such as the sacredness of constitution, the supposedly unacceptable idea of having coups and lack of trust to the parliamentary system is different from what commonly held in a civic society (Chen, 2014). Hsiu Chen found the Thais has a unique understanding of constitution for example their lack of regards for constitution has becomes a vicious cycle which leads to their political struggle going nowhere. The volatility and vulnerability of Thai constitution, which rather than made sacred as a source of inspiration; reduce to become a playground for competing forces' interests. In so far, there are already 18 constitutions (as of the writing) with each have a lifespan of 4 years on average and it seems the force itself doesn't allowed the literary politics to flourish and solved their differences by themselves. Not only is that, Thais understanding of coup very unique. The coup itself was accepted by most people as the only way to settle political differences without giving a chance for democracy to settle political dispute by itself. It has becomes a 'tool' for the conservative to keep their interest intake. She argued, according to a poll conducted in 2003 to review people's trust on institutions added to stabilise the 1997 constitution, the Thais trusted constitutional court, the military and the anti-Corruption Agency more than the parliament, Government House and Thai politics itself. This just show how unpopular and messy Thai politics is to the point the people trusts the conservative faction more as the provider of national stability and security. This led to the question the author tries to explore; what makes the Thais at large accept the fact that constitution should be changed after every coup and why coup is so prevalent and has becomes 'institutionalise' in the life of the Thai society. These kinds of questions are what the research will look at in order to understand more the nature of negative concepts in Thai democracy.

Furthermore, the author found out Michael H. Nelson works of 'Some Observation of Democracy in Thailand' of which discusses quite comprehensively the model and formula use by the conservative force to 'indoctrinate' the masses (Nelson, 2012). He divided the interest groups into two camps; the elitist interest group and the liberal minded group. The elitist interest group whom has perfected their model of 'hybrid' democracy throughout 80 years of

Thai democracy through trial and errors as can be seen through history. This group will not hesitate to sacrifice whatever in their disposal in order to maintain their status quo by looking after each other's interest. This group indoctrinate the concept of 'paternalistic, top to bottom approach', together with the evergreen nationalistic ideas of nation religion and monarchy as their emblem and motivation to mask their real interest. They expect the masses to be passive and obedient to these ideals and will slash any kind of dissent. On the other, the liberal camps have a high regards for democracy and parliamentary system, to trust the electorates and gain power through the people itself. This interest groups believe in individual liberty and rights, constitution is the a sacred documents that bind the democracy and society altogether and coup shouldn't be happening so that it will allowed politics to solve its differences by itself. This camp despite its majority powers doesn't yield much influence and power in the media and at times lacking of capable leaders to lead them, indirectly made them a victim of the former camp mention earlier. Due to this imbalance of power, influence and capacity held by the later, the democratic ideals easily fall and demonise by the elitist groups through their extensive networks and unlimited capacity. Therefore, Nelson piece of works had laid the foundation of what enables negative conceptions of democracy to seep in the minds of the Thais.

Last but the least, a work by Pasuk Phongpaichit & Chris Baker named 'Thailand's Crisis provides invaluable insights in explaining the origins of negative trends develop since the era of semi democracy (Chris Baker, 2000d). The rise of 'godfather' paternalistic provincial businessmen-turn-politician trend was so engrained in Thai politics in the 1990's; many sections of the society trying to straighten the democracy with the push for 'a people's constitution' and total reform of the democracy itself (Chris Baker, 2000d). This work laid the foundation of the research through case study of what happened in each premierships which leads to the developments of negative perceptions towards Thai politics and deterioration of trust in its institutions. Beginning with Chuan Leek Pai first government, continued with a series of short term Prime Ministerships such as Barnharn Silpa-archa, Chavalit Yongchaiyudh and subsequent Chuan Leek Pai second term, this period of time is when the democratic government and its institutions face greater tests to determine

their survival and image in the future. In ability of the democratic government to portrayed a good image together with delivery of good service to the people force the people especially in the urban goes to the street calling for electoral and democratic reforms. Furthermore, in ability of these Prime Ministers to handle the economic situations appropriately further corner them against the massive surge of antagonism supported by the establishments, the affluent urban dwellers and generally the Thai people themselves. Thus this works helps to pinpoint the author arguments of what constitute the negative perception in the first place.

2.3 Conclusion

It is obvious from the literatures provided earlier that, negative assumptions and perceptions exist in most of the literatures. In the author's part, the author does not choose the literature sparingly due to limited numbers of literature existed on Thai politics with English as its medium. Therefore, with abundance of negative tendencies found by the author in these works enables he author to make sense where these perceptions comes from, its development overtime and how it affects the Thai politics to this day. Together with that, the author extensively studies works by prominent Thai scholars on their thoughts of Thai politics and tries to 'decipher' any subliminal or direct example what may cause or facilitate these negative ideas to easily accept by ordinary Thais.

However, in recent years, there is a surge in comparative narrative that tries to balance these negative tendencies. Works by Ferrara and Farrelly just few examples out there that tried to see Thai politics in different light, although their suggestion is seemingly surreal to be applied in Thailand. Yet their positive attitude in conducting research on Thai politics contributes greatly to counterbalance those of the mainstream media and the academics. This is the reason why this research is important and served as both a memorabilia to value Thailand's attempts at democracy and act as a pioneer in explaining the roots of negative connotations attach to Thai democracy.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the literature given, the air of negativity towards Thai politics in recent years becomes a norm. It struck the author, how Thai politics i.e. democracy arrived to such conclusion. It is pretty much hard to comprehend for someone to flair openly of one's political thoughts and affiliations without running into a risk of arrest or political thoughts 'correction'. It does not stop at the people, but it has penetrate deep into the non-partisan professionals such as the academics or the technocrats, whom all these while have been aloof from politics. Such a strong presence of negative connotations towards the Thai politics is what motivate the author to study the motivation and development of such narrative in an attempt to understand what it is all about and how it arrive to the current state.

Giving the nature of the study, the author decided to employ on full scale historical approach in doing such research. By doing so, it helps the author to have a better plan and framework in undertaking such a huge research. The main essence of using the historical approach in this study is the stringent observation of historical timeline in Thai politics that served as the foundation of the discussion. The approach will look at fore mostly how things (i.e. formulation or development of negative connotations) develop overtime. Through such study, it gives the author some idea of how it develops as well as reasons behind such phenomenon. In the end, using historical approach throughout this study helps to prove the author's hypothesis. It is important to note that, the author's primary concern is to understand such phenomenon and nothing else.

Looking back at some of the other approaches towards studying politics, the author uses this opportunity behind the decision to use historical approach as the method to do research. One might ask, as this study focus on Thai politics, why not use the political approach? As shown from the literature above, a bunch of political analysis has been provided. Yet, there are little to none of such works conducted in historical approach. Therefore, by using such approach, this study will give another kind of perspective in looking at Thai politics.

With reference to the word choice used to explain phenomena, the author would like to use the word, “negative” rather than “anti” or other similar words. The cultural activists might disagree with the author’s choice of word but the usage of the word ‘negative’ has been chosen after a careful observation of literatures and Thai political scenes itself. According to Oxford Dictionary, the word negative carries the meaning of ‘*expressing or implying denial, disagreement, or refusal* (Oxford, 2016) and this meaning just enough to summarise all the narrative that the author is trying to prove. To just pin point certain narrative but to omit others just make the whole study illegitimate. Therefore, the usage of the word ‘negative’ is wisely chosen to fit the study and to give legitimacy of the author’s works.

Last but not least, due to the nature of the work and the author’s research questions, this study can’t be done comparatively since it will explode the whole research into somewhat unknown territory. In short, the author is trying to keep the integrity of this study through this research methodology.

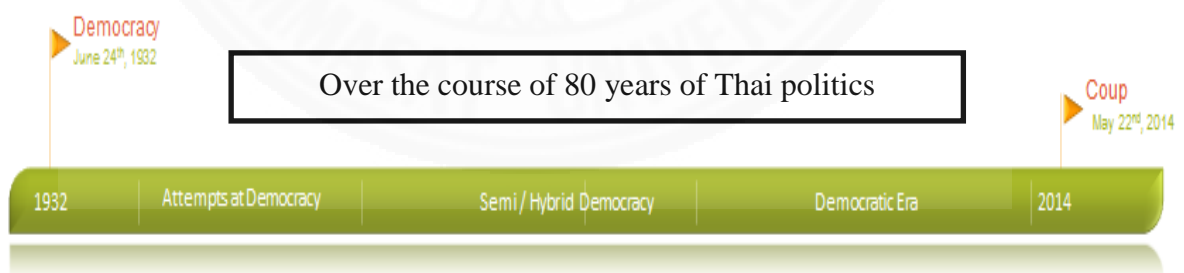
3.1 Time Frame of Research Study

The author chooses to study the whole period of 80 years of Thai democracy is not without proper reason. The long timeline chosen is to give the research ample data to study the development of such narratives to develop. The author believes, the negative connotations that is prevalent these days does not develop at later years, but it has been around since first inception to the Thai society. Therefore, the study has to be undertaken since 1932 until the last coup happened on 22nd May 2014. With the help of historical approach, it enables the author to analyse the development and the motivation of such narratives across 80 years of Thai politics.

It started off with a little bit before 1932 to understand the nature of governance and political scenes before the abrupt change in 1932. The study actually begins in 1932 itself with the study of the performance of democracy in the initial years. From 1930s to 1980s onwards, the author focuses on several attempts at democracy that happen and the gradual formation of negative perceptions on Thai politics. From 1980s onwards, the author focuses more on the study of the negative

connotations that seems to be exploded soon after the failure of the 1973 political ideals. While in 1990s, such narratives further enhance with the Scandalisation of politics throughout the decades despite for the first time, Thai politics is coloured by electorate governments all the way. Dawn of the new millennium brings a lot of hope for a better Thailand, both economically and politically. The rise of populist leaders across Southeast Asia, with special reference to Thaksin, has changed the nature of political games in the new millennia. With a boost on executive powers given by the 1997 People's Constitution, Thaksin phenomenon either brings a good fortune or a bad karma to Thailand, the current political impasse in a way of another contributed by him, in a sense that he braves the currents of old political networks and bourgeoisie.

After proving the historical existence of such narrative overtime, the author proceeds to prove the severity of such narrative to Thai politics. 80 years in the making means such narrative has grown from slowly being sown; now it's time to reap the fruit. 2014 political crisis and the subsequent coup that follows is a classic example on the persistent negative connotations that runs high after the ill-fated Amnesty bill until the coup happens. To prove the author's point, the author pick the 2014 protest umbrella movement, the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) as a case study to study such negative connotation. The 22nd May 2014 coup marks the end of the timeline of the study as Thai democracy is effectively paused.



3.2 Method of Data Collection

In order to prove the author's hypothesis i.e. to understand the existence of negative connotations of Thai politics and its severity, the author employ an extensive study of both primary and secondary data:

3.2.1 Secondary Data

Through the review of literature, it helps the authors to find out the motivation and study the development of negative connotations on Thai politics. The secondary data retrieve from the works by local and foreign scholars, journals and websites. Secondary data comes first so that this data helps to link up and explain with the later chapter detailing on findings in term of case study i.e. the PDRC. Mostly from secondary data of other scholars' works, it does not hinder the author from having new findings all the way. It is interesting to note that, despite the extensive use of the secondary data, a lot of overlapping data means the findings are reliable.

3.2.2 Primary Data

To prove the existence of negative connotation as shown extensively in prior chapters, the author immerse in extensive study of local and foreign newspaper such as Bangkok Post, The Nation and Xinhua News Agency. Archival research can be done especially for these findings simply due to its abundances to collect such data. It gives further legitimacy to the author's work in a sense that this political event plays an important part in proving the author's hypothesis. The author tirelessly studied 6 months' worth of newspaper clippings in order to study the movements and understand their strategy and ideology throughout the protest period.

3.3 Potential Limitations

Due to inability of the author to speak and read Thai scriptures, the author relied heavily on the English version of such literatures. However, this does not hinder the author from engaging extensive research on Thai politics as there are

already a sizeable number of credible works written in English and there are some important data that can be found translated from Thai to English.

Furthermore, due to the nature of the research that use extensively historical approaches, it might struck some readers why the authors don't pinpoint certain major works that contribute to such research. The author's reason is simple, as it study retrospectively, the author have no choice but to focus on either historical works or political history approach on pursuing the research. Hence, heavy reliance on certain works, though deemed unnecessary for other discipline, but for the author, have contribute much in building up the research as well as a guide to the author's findings. Apart from that, the author would like to warn readers that they can get overwhelm while reading the work simply because of the amount of discussions given. The author also wants to emphasise that, as the work is trying to understand a phenomenon; it will not attempt to predict the future of Thai politics.

CHAPTER 4

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The details of the extensive research findings are divided into two chapters. Chapter 4 explains the development of negative connotations of Thai politics while Chapter 5 explores the severity of the connotations to the Thai current political situations. The followings are the result of the study that entail the motivation and the development of the negative connotations from numerous attempts of democracy and later on the transition to the democratic era.

4.2 Attempts at Democracy

The early hours of 24th June 1932, Siam woken up to a totally different setting, she will never be the same anymore. Through ‘the Promoters of Democracy’s’ Manifesto of economic nationalism, social justice, pure humanism and to uphold rule of justice; the regime of absolute monarchy brought to an abrupt end. This important event served as a turning point in modern Thai history as this lead to the start of an uphill battle in order to realise ‘an ideal democracy’ for Thailand that has never ceased until today. From 1932 onwards, Siam (later on known as Thailand) had experience a series of attempts to find a working formula for its young democracy. This initial year is important as it will mark what will become of Thai democracy as the country moves along to readjust with the new system. Each attempt show each episode of Thai democracy in a different nature that took place, different factions playing their roles and ever changing interest at the centre of the Thai politics. Democracy as a level playing field whereby each party playing the game according to a set of rules agreed upon each other is nowhere to exist until the dawn of semi democracy. Hereby, it should be understood the real motivations behind the introduction (or should be it be called as ‘installation’) of democracy to Thailand,

which at the very first place never meant for the people due to the following arguments.

4.2.1 Continued Struggles from the Past

Since the establishment of Chakri dynasty, the Siamese monarchy maintains a dual system from the ancient era of Sukhotai called ‘Sakdina’ and Ayutthayan ‘Devaraja’ (Baker, 2005). Through this two ideologies, the monarchy served as both the source of unity, an incarnation of god on earth and the father to all Siamese people (Jumbala, 1992b). The daily running of the country runs on the ability of each king to act diligently in balancing the factions that existed in Siam under the Sakdina system. These factions holds the real power in providing a thriving economy, stocks of slaves, a standing army, steady streams of tax incomes amongst others. This system continues well into the mid-19th century, when Rama IV (1851-1868) ascends the throne. Siam at that time is at a juncture, either eaten alive or escapes with its sovereignty in a vicious imperialism competition amongst the western powers in Southeast Asia. Rama IV realised the institution no longer can sit back and watch the country from afar. In order to save Siam from being swallowed or broken apart by the western powers games, the monarchy needs to take charge and brings about change on how to do things in Siam. Therefore, Rama IV embarks on ambitious programs to modernise Siam along the western lines and promote rational & scientific ideas amongst the new generations of nobles to counter the pervasive counterproductive conservative thoughts around the palace. His modernisation programs runs on two schemes; first is state buildings whereby a new ad modern state of Siam with its centre and periphery is well drawn as well as having an organised centralised bureaucracy through the creation of new organisations and structures that can penetrate and make an impact to the society (Baker, 2005). Second is a longer term program that is to create a nation from scratch, whereby loyalty is gradually switch from the lords of the lands towards the new state. Each individual is engineer to be instilled with sense of belonging and commitment to commit their live unto the service of the state.

This efforts continues well under his successor supervision, Rama V (1868-1910) with expanded programs that sees the consolidation of royal rule to the

entire new state as well as the continued empowerment of the bureaucracy that's has been founded by his father. Renowned sons of the outlying lords of the lands join the ranks of nobles in prestigious page schools in Bangkok that will prepare them in leading key important posts in a rapidly changing Siam centred upon in Bangkok. At the same time, the military was reformed following the western model to act as the frontline defence for the new state. This in return will enhance Siam image as on par with the western allies who has increasingly getting intimate with the palace court. The key feature of these modernisation efforts is to catapult what is used to be a loosely tied feudal state to become a modern centralised state whereby the monarchy at the centre of the power assisted with the bureaucracy and shielded by a strong military, this historical imaginary state of Siam is what the Chakri Reforms wants to achieve before it was disrupt with 1932 Revolution (Samudavanija, 2002).

However, such an effort without its own struggles. Chakri Reforms brought about total reconfigurations on how powers were delegated and immediately gain disfavours from the old elites and lords of the land. This antagonisms is what we can reflects about in discussing Thai politics; it always been the same struggles between factions on how to agree upon themselves on the issue of the usage of power in politics. For example, the lords whom have given Siam its stability through Sakdina system immediately disagree with the new arrangements which will directly affects their income such as the tax collections and the service of slaves. In an incident called as the 'Front Palace Crisis', The aristocrats shows their influence against Rama V that the nobility remains at the helm of Siamese politics despite the Chakri Reforms. However, this supposed warning to the young Rama V does not work; it emboldened him to restructure the whole system of power in Siam (Baker, 2005). On top of that, the palace increasingly become wary of the influence of Chinese business communities centred in Bangkok. The institution is concerns with a possible outburst of Chinese public opinion in the height of developments in their homeland China, which makes Siam as their base for nationalist activities. With so much economic activities given to them, any retaliation from the palace will cripple

Siamese economy¹ (Baker, 2005). Some other oppositions comes when the reforms includes social justification such as the gradual abolishment of slavery practice and the corvee system, which took a while as the state needs to repay the owners that is comparable to their loss. Not only that, according to Chaianan, Chakri Reforms only address key interest areas that deemed as immediate to their cause, while letting the most pressing and substantive issues at bay; such as the people's plights on daily basis and an increasingly inefficient bureaucracy due to corruption (Samudavanija, 2002). Therefore, from these explanations, it can understand that Thai attempts at democracy up until today is indeed a continued struggles from the past between interest groups vying for power in Thai politics.

4.2.2 Analysis of the Performance of Democracy during the Initial Years

During the period since 1932 up to 1938, the ambience of political environment is still tight. Anxiousness of political factions can be felt from every corner. On one side, the military and the bureaucracy whom help pulling the string for the revolution to happen is running out of patience for the lack of progress in constitutional movement lead by the liberals. At the same time, the weakened Royalist slowly fled from Siam as one by one members of the clan was purge leaving only a handful of brave souls left behind defending what is left out of the institution (Stevenson, 2001). Uneasiness lingers due to the fact that the people increasingly became sympathetic to the latter. One such people are the Co-Prime Minister, Phra Mano; a post dedicated to appease the military factions. The military especially the senior officers felt uneasy with Pridi's socialist leaning economic measures, which they quickly interpret as favouring communist's ideals indirectly. Using this as a capital, the senior rank officers together with Phra Mano launch an internal coup, purging any of Pridi's socialist ideals and effectively suspending the assembly as well as a call for a new cabinet. The new government is quick in discrediting Pridi's initial

¹ Chris Baker entails the existence of Jao Sua, the prominent Chinese business families that are quite influential in the inner court of Chakri. They were given privileges in handling a handsome number of economic activities during transformation from feudal to a modern centralize state such as the collection tax and the rice milling industry.

constitutional progress in favours of pro royalist factions and encouraging him to take exile. With a strong attachment to the royal retinues that is left, other factions within the military couldn't agree to this measures due to afraid of a total rolled back of their revolution. Lead by Phya Phahon, a counter coup was launched restoring the original arrangements whereby Pridi was given back his position and to continue his work with the support of the military and the bureaucracy but not for long.

However, the democracy lead by Pridi hasn't producing much result as expected by many. Critics come from all fronts stating the weakness of the new government in promoting liberty as well as establishing good relations with what used to be 'the Catalyst' of 1932 revolution (Baker, 2005). For example, business community whom amongst the first group of people that openly go out and support the revolution were disappointed with Pridi's lacks of interest in listening to their proposals for joint developments in his 'Progress Plan' for Siam. Pridi has been criticised in his unrealistic ideas of common production and distribution which according to him will led to an egalitarian economy. While there are some businessmen were invited to be part of the assembly, however their presence does not count as the representative of the business community due to the fact that it has become a lame duck Assembly that has become an instrument to rubber stamp the proposed bills. Furthermore, the Chinese community in Bangkok increasingly becomes wary of the government introduction of bills that have notion of nationalism that will eventually exclude them from the Siamese socio economic activities. There is a prolong suspicion between the political factions and the Chinese community in the issue of the latter loyalty and their commitment either to the KMT or the new Siam Rat. It has shown that, Chinese led strike in the street of Bangkok is violently suppressed than any other factions which eventually led to the banning of their association (Baker, 2005). Another catalyst is the printed media industries that have been heralding the coup issues in the past and raise public opinion towards the revolution. However, government deep intervention affects the industry badly, that sees many newspaper has to close down and those who stay are only pro government newspaper.

The military whom has been carrying out this task happily suppress any dissent in the name of safeguarding the revolution. Phibun once said that:

“If a country is a house, then the military is its fence”

(Jumbala, 1992b).

Such a metaphor is enough to illustrate how they see their role in carrying out their job. Dissents either force to take exile or were sent to the prison indefinitely without the access to lawyers. Monk as a revered figure in Siam once ask for the Sangha to be reform, end up with the military forcing them to disrobe and never allowed them again to enter the monkhood. Chaianan argued, Pridi has been collaborating in suppressing dissent incudes the civil society, which according to the norms, it should be allowed to generate a robust democracy and develop the political potential and ideals (Samudavanija, 2002). This is the mistake of Pridi in his efforts to safeguard the revolution; he sees there’s no need for the existence of an opposition in the assembly and a robust party system which can help to accelerate the maturity of the democracy. Without the existence of civil society, the task to strengthen and develop democracy falls into the hands of only a few interest groups that exist at that time. Therefore, it will be harder in the future to expand the democracy to includes other civil society as part of the interest groups in the democracy as the democracy itself is used to such arrangements of having so much while having so little configurations within themselves. Consequently, the initial years of the democracy was dominated by the military as the frontline of the country, the weak liberal democratic movements and an entrenched bureaucracy whom has absorb most of the elements of progress during this time. The Bureaucracy as the oldest and biggest institutions slowly develops its own influence within the democracy via the notion of power sharing. The bureaucracy will never allowed the democracy to walk independently as it acts as another political actor that helps the country to shifts from absolutism to democracy. Such a grand strategy in keeping the democracy within ‘the frameworks’ and interest of the bureaucracy makes Thai politics as bizarre as it is today (Samudavanija, 2002).

It is wise to see the logic behind the Chakri refusal in accepting democracy head on. Rama VII in his memoir explained that the monarchy knows democracy will come, provided that Siam is ready for it (Samudavanija, 2002).

Democracy is therefore inevitable but a sudden introduction of it will lead to a premature democracy and will eventually lead to a lot of problems as can be seen today. Rama VII delicately explains the situation in Siam as not ripe for a democracy as it lacks of an educated and affluent middle class. Majority of the people are illiterate peasants with only a handful number growing middle class groom from the old elites. If democracy is introduced right away, people will end up confused and the whole idea of electoral system could be manipulated by certain groups of people (Chen, 2014). As education still exclusive to only a number of people, the political thoughts are limited to the upper class and absorbed by the bureaucracy and the military. People's rights and the duty of democracy towards the people is unknown and democracy falls to the trap of becoming an instrument for interest groups to fight for power. Last but not the least, Rama VII afraid of the system is hijacked by the Chinese due to their enormous influence in Bangkok at that time, effectively make the court of Chakri feel unconvinced to introduce the parliamentary system in Siam. Therefore, an entrenched bureaucracy and powerful military as opposed to a strong civil society and liberal democrats is not suitable in a flourishing democracy and this becomes the dilemma of Thai democracy. Later on, Pridi's trust towards the military and the bureaucracy taking a toll when Phibun decided to take the matter on his own. Phibun's rise is expected as the system of representation is shaky and cannot provide the stability as well as the security Siam needs while facing a fast changing nature in global politics at the advent of Second World War.

4.2.3 Phibun's Military State

Phibun knew for the fact that Siam currently in dire need of a stability of which the democracy couldn't provide. With the democracy itself is fragile together with endless political squabbles amongst themselves, Phibun decided to take the matter on his own and launched a coup on December 1938 (Jumbala, 1992b). He immediately made himself the Supreme Commander, the Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of Foreign Affairs and packed his cabinets with military officers, to the dismay of the politician. With mounting protest to pressure him out from power, he decisively suspended any democratic principles and arrangements, effectively rule by decree. Inspired with the fascist ideology, he brought Siam closer to the Japanese fascist regime and the state itself slowly becoming a

militarised state (Suwannathat-Pian, 1995). He embarks upon a series of tough crack downs on freedom of speech and individual liberty to silent his critics. As to curb the influence of the Chinese, Phibun went to extra length by instilling a sense of fear for the military as the custodian of the state. Presses were censored, radios were controlled, and coup plotters will be dealt harshly; Siam increasingly becoming a total authoritarian regime with democratic ideals nowhere to be seen. When the Second World War is coming, Phibun sided with the Axis Front and declare war on the Allied powers.

He mobilised the whole country to have nationalistic feeling in safeguarding the state and change the name of the country from Siam to Thailand (Land of The Free). He released the well planned ‘Rathaniyom’ or ‘the preferences of the state’, a list of guidelines to reminds individuals of their responsibility to the state and society of which all in all have a strong sense of patriotism, militarism, heroism and chivalry; values that is being hold dearly by the army (Baker, 2005). Not only that, Phibun create a cult of personality revolving around him to personalise and idolise him as ‘the Father of the Nation’ following the idea of patrilineal Sukhothai in the past. He also initiated a period of time where, the economy is directed by the state. Under the so called ‘state directed capitalism’, he successfully rallied the businessmen and prominent Chinese community to help him set up a number of State Owned Enterprise (SOE) to facilitate his ‘Economic Nationalism’ plan. However, as the war changes its course, Phibun’s popularity went rock bottom and he struggles to keep intact of what he has built. He was blame as the person whom holds the responsibility of bringing Thailand at the brink of the allied powers occupation as the Japanese scale backs their military operation. Pridi comes to his rescue by offering him a passage without trial by handing the power to the liberal factions.

4.2.4 Democracy at a Crossroad (1944-1957)

Pridi since Phibun’s coup in 1938 has fled Bangkok and left the constitutional movements scattered around to figure out how to work with Phibun. However, with Phibun invitation, Pridi made a comeback in 1942 but not in politics, but merely as a ceremonial post as a regent to Rama VIII. A rift between the two has developed yet each other still needs each other support in keeping with individual interests. When Phibun plunge Thailand into war, Pridi secretly organised a secret

underground organisations that dealt with the Japanese called 'Seri Thai'. The movement has been active in carrying out secret missions to weaken the Japanese strategic interests and influence around Thailand. Seri Thai has been making contacts with the Allied powers and help coordinate missions as well as giving vital information of Southeast Asia and the Pacific for them (Jumbala, 1992b). Indirectly, Seri Thai as an anti-Japanese movement has become the government in exile for Thailand during the course of the war. With the support from the public and the Royalist groups, the movement came up strong until the end of the war. Due to Seri Thai contributions, the allied powers refused to recognise the fascist dictatorial regime of Phibun, effectively saving Thailand from being occupied by the allied forces.

With the military suffered a debilitating bad image from its misconduct during the war years, this give the liberals and the civil society a room to make a return. Pridi compromise with the royalist or the conservative force led to a revival of conservative force in the country. Under the leadership of Seri Thai government, the new constitution was promulgated in May 1946 which saw a return of many liberal policies and freedoms (Ngamcachonkulkid, 2001). Control on printed and mass media slowly relax, political thoughts openly discuss after few years and democracy ideals blooms. It seems Thailand is on the right track towards having a functional democracy. Unfortunately, Seri Thai ministers have done some that change the calmness of the situation. The military increasingly dislikes of Seri Thai continuous literature in blaming their past cooperation with the fascist Japanese regime. Pridi intentionally purge Phibun's military wings to cripple the former dictator from returning to power and hope the civil society will thrive this time. Seri Thai government also deliberately excludes the military and bureaucracy in the new arrangements of politics, further increase the dissatisfaction of once a friendly foe. On the other hand, the conservative hold grudges against what Pridi has done post 1932 as well as the feeling that the current collaboration is not sufficient. Therefore, they are quick to shift side when the tide starts to go against the Seri Thai government. On the public eyes, their popularity quickly go sour as the reality of life after the war hits the ordinary people badly. Thailand was hit by hyperinflation and food supplies running low, making ends meet is a daily struggle for many people.

The matter made worst with the bureaucratic mishandling by Seri Thai government, further increase people dissatisfaction to the democratic government. The whole situation took a dramatic turn when the young Rama VIII found dead in his Bangkok palace. There is an immediate mystery surrounding his death. The Pramoj brothers with the help of the Chief of Police are quick to implicate the blame on Pridi and his group (Baker, 2005). A coup was planned and carried out to bring the Seri Thai government down on 08 November 1947 plotted by angry military factions led by Sarit Thanarat. The reasons given were to crush Seri Thai Republican ambition, to clarify the royal assassination and to create a new system of order for Thailand. This marks the start of the collaboration between the military, the conservative force and the bureaucracy for decades to come. Sarit invited Phibun as a respected senior in the military to return to power. Between the period of 1947 until 1952, Phibun second time in power hasn't been smooth. There were few assassination attempts against him and surprisingly the most daring of all launched within the military itself, the infamous kidnappings attempt by the Navy (Suwannathat-Pian, 1995). This act sends a signal to him that even within themselves, the key interest groups in Thai politics are wary about each other hands at power. Seri Thai movement had been scattered all over the country post-coup and their plans to make a comeback for Pridi was foiled beforehand. The cabinet is swarmed by the military, bureaucrats, conservative and democrats. When the democrats proposing bills delimiting the power of the military in favour of increasing the power of the King, Phibun dislikes those propositions and launched internal coup the night before scheduled return of Rama IX, effectively soured their relations between the two since the very beginning (Jumbala, 1992b).

With the loss of French forces in the definitive Dien Bien Phu battle, this result becomes the determinant for the United States to actively engage in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. The United States afraid of the domino theory to happen in the region and if communism can be contain to only Vietnam, the super power have one less region to worry about. This is the time when the second and Third world countries are at the crossroads, either entangled between the two superpowers game or be part of the game itself; Thailand choose the latter. The United States is quick to forget Phibun's past collaboration with the fascist regimes

and immediately seek to upgrade bilateral relationships in order to turn Thailand as their base in fighting against the possible spread of communism (Jumbala, 1992b, Suwannathat-Pian, 1995). This is perfect opportunity for Phibun and the military as this will help to empower them and further give a sense of legitimacy in taking control of the country in the name of security while downplaying democracy. Phibun's track records in keeping tabs on the communists are quite excellent themselves. He knew perfectly what the communist is capable of and had been targeting them since holding to power back in 1938 and even more at the current moment. Since 1950 onwards, the regime has been active in cracking down on any elements of communism or the leftist ideals that exist in Thailand (Fineman, 1997). Earlier on, he has launched 'Siamisation' efforts to subdue any subtle opposition against the state. Furthermore, the Anti Communist Act made effective since 1952 gives expansive powers for the authorities to track down on communist leaning individuals. For example, many of the pro Pridi MP were killed and prominent leftists were shot at. To corner the Chinese from making any contact with the communists, restrictions were imposed on Chinese schools, an alien tax was introduced, priority was given to Thais which forced them to embrace Siamisation policy to show their loyalty and escape such harsh restrictions.

During his second time in power, Phibun set his eyes on setting up an oligarchy of many factions, so that the powers in politics are well delegated. This is his way in going against democracy, which he has been on and off for quite some time. The United States patronage does bring a lot of advantage to Thailand, especially in opening up and giving access to the rural areas that led to a lucrative business opportunities in the outlying areas. The US also helps in upgrading key facilities and general standard of infrastructure of Thailand, which is used both by the military and the public and served dual purpose of sending troops as well as increasing connectivity for economic activities. However, the most prized advantage is an access to the much needed economic and military aids that comes in many forms. Such generous aids keep increasing in number and volumes since 1954 onwards and expand to a wide range of areas. However, US patronage in Thailand does bring some side effects such as the rise of the provincial godfather that can threaten the power in Bangkok and the divide within the security force with regards to the aids. It is a known fact that the army led by Sarit Thanarat has been receiving different sources of

aids other than those of the police force led by Phao Sriyanont (Baker, 2005). This ultimately led to an enmity and competition between the two and Phibun sees this as not healthy at all. He led the struggles between the two to continue until 1955, when he saw the influence between the two has a high chance to overpower his authority. Phibun initiate a plan to return to democracy by bolstering support for political parties, relaxing control on the printed and mass media and lowered the restrictions imposed on the Chinese community. Phibun decided to collaborate with Phao on a dual ticket to run in the election which led the duo to win the election. Earlier, Phibun decided to slowly break away from the US and restore Thailand relationship with China that resulted in ease in travel and bilateral relations. Not only that, Phibun goes on an all-out campaign to ridicule US presence in Thailand that hurts the relations between the two. As Thailand remains strategically important to the US interest in the Pacific, the White House instigated a coup led by Sarit Thanarat on 18 September 1957, effectively ending Phibun second and the last tenure in power.

4.2.5 Return to Authoritarianism: Sarit Military Regime (1957-1963)

After the 1957 coup, Thailand is in a mess. The communist activity has expanded to the Indochina and if the politics remains unstable, many afraid of Thailand will fall to the communist trap. However, the United States presence at this current moment ensures such worst case scenario will not happen. The US has been in the country since 1950's and helps the country to upgrade itself through economic and military aids. To appease the US of the coup, he installed Pote Sarasin, a US educated bureaucrat as Prime Minister and allowed the parliamentary system to straighten itself up while the military keep busy keeping an eye on the communist advances. However the parliamentary process often leads to nowhere as politicians can't agree amongst themselves due to political differences (Jumbala, 1992b). For a while, Sarit resort to bribe to get some bills passed. However, as the cost to maintain democracy increases while the outcome has been counterproductive so far; Sarit launched internal coup on 20th October 1958, officially suspending all democratic principles and activities for the next 10 years.

Sarit followed similar move that Phibun undertake when comes to power for the second time. He embarks to solidify his regime against the known and unknown enemies through persuasion and coercion. First, he crippled his competitor,

the police force by draining its budget and transfers its sophisticated equipment from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for the military to use (Baker, 2005). He then ensures a total clamp down of the police force by making himself as the Chief of police force. In the public eyes, to ensure his legitimacy to rule, he shows to the public how dire the situation is with the advent of communist, therefore the military needs to take charge to save the country all together. All members in the legislature are appointed, effectively making the assembly as the rubber stamp for the regime. While ruling by decree seems enough, he goes extra mile by initiating Article 17 that gives him overpowering powers in the name of national security (Chaloemtiarana, 2007). These days sees a return to pre Phibun era of press control, limited individual's freedom and liberty, severe crackdown on dissent, moreover if anyone has any links to the communist. He revived the same model that Phibun founded, the Sukhothai 'Pho Khun' model where by the people sees him as 'the father of the nation' to increase his legitimacy to his rule.

Sarit known legacy however is term of development his regime led, initiating a period of rapid economic progress thanks to his shift from state directed capitalism towards market economy. Thanks to the US patronage and aids, the military regimes of Phibun and Sarit were able to breath and able to push for speed up economic activities without the check and balance of the 'nosy' democratic government. With the help of the US and the World Bank, this development age promoted market competition as well as private investments to flourish under the direction and supervision of National economic and Social Development Board (NESDB). However, the military influence in big companies' remains as military officers enters the exclusive board of directors as a sign of courtesy between the regimes and its clients. As a result of the development era, there is a surge in the portion of middle class as well as the professional sectors (Fineman, 1997). Despite like that, the rural urban disparities widened due to the concentration of growth in urban centres while the rural was left to their own device. Not only that, due to extensive focus on industrial sector, the production and the contribution to GDP of the agricultural sector reduce significantly; affecting still a large number of poor peasants (Samudavanija, 2002). The regime favours the urban dwellers at the expense of the rural dwellers by levying tax on the sector through their inconsistent price

intervention scheme. This force the poor farmers to abandon their intra generational traditional occupation in favour for lucrative opportunities in urban centres, only to find more frustrations due to limited number of jobs and no qualifications. Their frustration further fuel by the harassment by the security force for their inability to make a living in the city or making fun from where they come from, seeding anti-government sentiments amongst them.

In order to match with the demand of the industry, the regime intervenes in opening up the tertiary education. Prior to this, the primary education has been made compulsory and on its way to achieve universal status. As for the tertiary education, the regime intends to groom graduates that can fill in the post needed by the industry. However, the tertiary education remains exclusive for those who can't afford only and the one who benefit the most is the children of the middle and working class that allowed them rapidly climb the ladder in the society. With the regime collaborating with the industry leaders and the university, this gives a boom in the professional and technical occupations. This means, the middle class has become affluent and have the ability to observe what happenings around them particularly in term of politics (Samudavanija, 2002). While the offspring of Chinese businessmen and those who are western educated rise independently to fill their own business interest and aspiration by working on establishing networks with groups that can advance their interest. In short, the development era brought a lot of changes to the societal structure and at this juncture, Thai politics slowly making a comeback in a polarised Thailand.

In politics, the politics itself underwent a process of depoliticisation as democracy is curbed and dissent is dealt harshly. On another note, another political groups brewing from interest groups coming from provincial leaders and businessmen that created by the development age. These so called 'Chao Pho' or the provincial 'Godfather' absorbs the dissatisfaction of their people or constituency made up of poor farmers and rural dwellers with the power of money and charm (promises) (Phongphaichit, 2000). This group of people slowly made known of their existence at the same time mobilising these poor farmers under the patrilineal loyalty to the local chiefs. Sarit also intelligently crop up a role the monarchy can play with minimum military intervention such as social works in empowering the livelihood of the poor

and far flung region of Thailand (Hewison, 1997). This window of opportunity gives the institution a chance to do their part and win the hearts of the public. Through such activities, the military and bureaucracy helps to develop an image for Thailand that led to the personification and sacralisation of the monarchy as the unifier of the nation. This becomes the foundation for the institution to infiltrate Thai politics as their popularity remains high therein after. Sarit successfully makes the monarchy to become statesmen on their own right. Sarit didn't rule for long as he passed away in 1963, succeeded by another dictator, the duo Thanom Kittichakorn and Prapass.

4.2.6 The Road towards Guided Democracy

Sarit successor, Thanom Kittichakorn continues what Sarit has laid down during its brief but eventful dictatorship. He continued the so called 'Saritian System' of development, where the regime continues to benefit from events and developments happening around Thailand especially the United States involvement in the Vietnam War. For a while, things goes as normal with high cash inflow, businesses are brisk with activities and the interior is bustling with economic activities related to the war efforts; all was well until the US start to change its strategy in the war by slowly pulling the army out and ran after the communist along the Ho Chi Minh trails, leaving the regime scrambles to stand on its own (Fineman, 1997). On top of that, the Thais in general dislikes prolong American presence in their own turf, further added the pressure to the authoritarian regime. With American gradual departure, this means the entire economic package will be gone soon. With such realisation, Thailand quickly realigns its economy towards export based economy and strengthens the growth of its industry (Baker, 2005). Gradually, Thailand receives an influx of investments from Japan thanks to the East Asian economic miracle in the 70's. The economy took off on an unprecedented scale together with strong economic growth of the neighbouring Asian Tiger economies. With the departure of Bretton Wood system and the liberalisation of the financial sector, the economy expanded further, benefitting Thailand as a whole. However politically, anxiousness remains as the regime had been in power for quite some time while the constitutional progress has been stop totally. After 10 years, the regime yield to the public demand and promulgated a new constitution with the election slated to happen the next year.

During this time, the political situation is totally different from that of 20 years ago. With rapid economic growth for the past decades led to a big reconfiguration on how the society works and think. The public in general has a large chunk of them who are educated and have the ability to seriously discuss and express their political thoughts and ideals. For example, due to the expansion of tertiary education and the abundance of commercial and technical jobs in the market, a sizeable affluent middle class rise up from this (Baker, 2005). On top of that, conservative ideals slowly faded such as gender pattern has shift significantly as the society become more open to allow women to work and become a career women, wives and mothers. The society also influence by the mass media, thanks to the advancement of technology and the expansion of education on all level. Readership increases across the country that led to a booming press industry and has a wide readership of all walks of life. Not only that, the middle class now has the ability to consume more due to their sizeable paycheques. By now, every household are able to buy motorcycles, house, electronic appliances; showing the Thais is embracing new stuffs in front of them. While the old conglomerates made of prominent businessmen continued to receive protection from the military regime. With the economic boom, they become wealthier, confident and politically influential in protecting their interest. As Second and Third generations come up, some received western education that makes them have different mind-set from the rest of the population and this can help to advance their business interest. Moreover, Thailand now gradually accepts Chinese businessmen of the 'Luk Jin' as part of the Thais due to their enormous contributions to the economy.

Furthermore, the labour structure also changes significantly. Poor farmers or semi-skilled labour moved to the urban centres, seeking for jobs in the industrial and service sectors. Some migrate just for medium length of stay while others stay indefinitely in the city. With the arrival of Japanese investments, Thailand underwent rapid industrialisation (Doner, 2009). The regime tighten their grip on labour laws to keep the investment flowing. The regime seeks to maintain a docile labour by break and rule them, so that the labour union will never be united to fight for their rights against industrial leaders. The regime also maintains close links with these labour unions through patronage so that some give and take can happen and can

be arranged rather than holding a strike. With such attractive package, the military regime was able to keep an inflow of investments into Thailand. During this time too, the politics experience reconfigurations with its key interests groups. The military reform its factions by bolstering military linked political groups and parties (Baker, 2005). Few of such entity are the infamous Young Turks, though not in the limelight until 1980's. Yet they already had band together since they fight alongside each other in Vietnam. Another is the Thahan Prachatipatai or the Democratic Soldier, which led by general staffs within the military yet having the same character as the Young Turks. Such military group seeks to have some influence in the future democratic government.

The Left movement makes a return after the fall of Seri Thai and a severe crackdown on their ideals and movement. The movement itself has a long history dated back to the very beginning of the revolution with Pridi amongst its pioneer. With a strong believe in social justice and government responsibility in providing for the people, the Left fights for a functional parliament and a healthy trade and workers union. During this time, the movements succeeded by new generations of student activist such as Kulap Saiphradit, Suphasirimanon amongst other (Baker, 2005). The Left has been brave enough in comparing Thailand with the Marxist theory as a way to achieve social justice. Not only that, the religious community also shown their solidarity with the Left with their idea of combining Buddhism and Marxism. Preached by Buddhadhasa, a monk in Surat Thani, this movement gained a lot of followers as it explains democratic principle of Buddha can be found almost similar to that of Marxist. The students quickly pick up the works and many forms of social idea openly discuss and compare with the Buddhist teaching. The New Left movements in Europe quickly spread amongst the students as those studied overseas brought back related works and translate it (Darling, 1974). The student as one of the key interest group in politics comes as the education enlightened them of their rights and past dictatorial propoganda may no longer works. Decades of persecution of their senior fellow, entrench poverty in the outlying area, exploitive nature of the regimes; all of these bands them together to fight for common cause of being a proper civil society and having social justice in Thailand. Their common aim is to give back what's belonged to the Thai and led the Thais do by itself. Indirectly,

the student mobilised the public opinion against the US interference and existence in Thailand, strong opposition against Japanese firms dominates Thailand's economic activities and the prolongs rule by the military Junta; all in all it seems for the first time Thailand have a proper pressure group in pushing for a fully functional democracy with the booming of democratic ideals and activism.

Business community also emerges as an interest group in Thai politics. Thanks to a rapid economic boom, their influence grew, so does their sophistication in handling their interest. The business community no longer needs the military protection as the economy has taken off and integrates to the world's economy. These people are either the businessmen rise through military patronage in Phibun's era or through the US patronage in subsequent Sarit years; the so called Chao Pho (Godfather) or Nak Leng (Tough Guy) by the public (Baker, 2005). Their rise and fall no longer in the hands of domestic politics but changes in the world's supply and demand chains. However, that doesn't mean they shouldn't remain vigilant as domestic politics still can make some impacts on their interest in the country. Politics will ensure their influence and opportunity grow therefore they must monitor the political situation closely. The budding Rightist movement is more or less radical conservative that believes in military solution. Their cause is just the opposite of that of the Left; to maintain status quo and social order above all else. This interest group wary of the popular movement, which according to them have a high chance of being hijack by communist elements. The earliest organisation that sprang out of this movement is the royal inspired Village Scout since 1941. Its main purpose is to serve as a voluntary border patrol body that defends the Thai borders against guerrilla or revolutionary fighters activities to take place. The success of Khmer Rouge in taking over Cambodia creates a need to vigilantly protect Thai border from fleeing Cambodians fighters or a possible intrusion by communist fighters. The body has no problem in finding supports as funds come pouring in from the urban dwellers in Bangkok. Therefore, it makes its way to Bangkok as a key participant in Thai Politics.

From 1968 onwards, for a brief period of time, Thailand makes a return to democracy. Under the precept of 'Guided Democracy', the top job must remain in the hands of old elites and the assembly itself packed with like-minded people under the bicameral parliamentary system (Case, 2015). Thanom contested

under the banner of United Thai People's Party and through persuasion and coercion, bring about majority to the assembly and wins the election, with the Democrat as the opposition. During this brief return to democracy, the Democrats went on an all-out onslaught on the degree of corruption done by the previous Regimes for example; they claimed Sarit had embezzled State's funds in total 2.8 Billion Baht (Baker, 2005). In addition to that, they exposed military cooperation with businesses to level parts of National Parks with the excuse to crack down on hiding Communist activities in the jungles with proceeds divided between the illegal loggers and army officers. The Opposition party went on to expose that most of the budget bills in the past were siphoned off, as the real value of each project is intentionally hike to benefit individuals and corrupt officers along the way. Democrat MPs also blocks proposals by the military numerous time for example the military attempts to bolster their influence to undermine the integrity of the judiciary process. Due to political stalemate and embarrassment stemmed from the scandal that broke off, Thanom launched a self-coup and reverts back to authoritarian rule in Nov 1971.

(1) A Game Changer

With the return of authoritarian rule, the regime thought situation will calm and things can continue as before. Unfortunately, Thailand has change drastically thanks to development that is happening for the past 20 years. The society per se has change; the urban dwellers and the middle class has become confident and can express their own thoughts, business community can stand by themselves, the civil society band together to create a strong non bureaucratic entity; this time they sought for a change in the game. Resurgence in civil activism especially those led by the students garner wide support from not only the urban dwellers, it also extend to farmers and workers. To organise amongst themselves, university student led by Thirayuth Boonmee former the National Student Centre of Thailand (NSCT) (Darling, 1974). Through their campaign, they manage to raise their membership to 100,00 by January 1973. The organisation launched its first major campaign against Japanese firms, by calling for a boycott of Japanese products. The student claimed these firms of evading huge sum of tax by bribing the officials on duty. The regimes responded with their demands and move to imposed strict regulation against foreign firms. The NSCT sees this as a major accomplishment and with no crackdown from

the military regime, this emboldened them to protests more often on major issues surrounding Thai politics such as the US presence, social and economic justice as well as unsolved corruption scandals from former military regimes.

Gradually, the movement becomes more serious and intensified their activities. During the course of 1973, the student held protests against university administration with alleged corruption. His Majesty in his speech to the Village Scout, indirectly urged the students to extend the campaign to include pressures to end the corruption within the military (Baker, 2005). Thanom suspected all along there is a third party that encouraged the student to protest against his regime. By August onward, the student worked on drafting their own constitution and coalesced respected figures in the society to back the constitution. The regime responded by arresting Thirayuth and 11 others on the ground that they are plotting to bring down the regime by working with communist elements. Through the course of 6th to 12th November, the protest grew in number, coming from all walks of life, not only the student. It was reported to have reached 400,000 on 13th of November yet the negotiation to release the students went nowhere. The next day, the crowd decided to seek for audience from the king with intention of asking His Majesty to intervene, much to their disappointment their plea wasn't entertained. By early hours on 15th of November 1973, the police started their operation to disband and disperse the protesters; however it went violent due to enormous number of people. The whole operation killed 66 people and injured 800 more in the process. By nightfall, His Majesty announced through the media that the regime has ended and Sanya Thammasak was appointed to oversee the power transfer prior to the next election. His Majesty pleads both parties to remain calm and Thanom together with Prapass and Narong was asked to leave the country together with their dream to establish a political dynasty of their own. Thailand now entering a new era of democratic experiment after prolonged authoritarian rule and brief military-sponsored democracy that's led to nowhere.

4.2.7 Attempt at Democracy in a Pluralised Thailand

Soon after the whole episode unravels, a close aide to the royal court and the Rector of Thammasat University, Dr. Sanya Thammasak was made as Prime Minister. He immediately took to fulfil the demand of the popular movement, to lead the path towards an election and to reduce the remaining powers of the military and

the bureaucracy. The 1973 episode was seen as a popular uprising but fall short of a revolution (Jumbala, 1992b). Never before Thailand has been a number protesting on the street and intense pressure mounted against the military junta. This episode shows a changing time for Thailand, a polarised Thailand on the height of big political change. Thailand has never seen such hope for quite some time, after a prolong persecution and downplay of pro-democracy activism. Brief democratic governments in between those prolong regimes rule at least give the people an idea of an alternative to the authoritarian rule; where the principle of freedom and liberty are respected and cherish on daily basis and the people free to live and express their thoughts without the fear of being crackdown. Working closely with the palace, Sanya embarks on having a constitutional committee made of the conservative and the liberals to appease the crowds. His Majesty screens 2,500 people's backgrounds coming from all section of the society to select the best suitable candidates for 299 individuals that will advance Thailand's political ideals (Samudavanija, 2002). The expected constitution came up in 1974 guaranteeing civil liberty, the parliament with have more checks and balance in such a way the Prime Minister must be an MP and the multiparty system is strengthened. Aspiring bureaucrats must quit the job in order to pursue political post. To reduce external influence, the upper house is reduced in power and size, giving the assembly more rooms to do their biddings.

Post violence of 1973, the student start actively in advancing each other political ideals. The once powerful NSCT started to be shaken as everyone starts to create their own interest and pressure groups. Throughout the course of 1974, the student led a democracy propagation campaign, seeking to reach to create an awareness of the importance of democracy in a modern society. These students even goes to extra mile by entering Thailand's country side to propagate, ends up picking up poor farmers grievances as part of their cause. Through their enormous networks, they collaboratively helps to settle the farmers' debt, negotiating on behalf of the interest rate imposed to them and settling curt cases; exposing them to the darker side of the bureaucracy (Baker, 2005). This experience serve as an eye opener for them to delimits and straighten up the bureaucracy at the same time blaming the inefficiency of the government in not listening to the struggle experience by the farmers in favour of the urban dwellers opinion. With the help of the student, on the other hand, the

student joins hands with the worker to organise strike to demand for a better pay and better job conditions. The 1972 inflation together with low wage pay made the working class suffer the most. Therefore, the student forges a tripartite alliance with the two groups.

Back in Bangkok, the student continues to protest against the ashamed military for their past suppressions and injustice towards the people. They continue to fill the streets in defiance of government orders calling for a total US withdrawal, against Japanese dominance in business as well as the cases brought on behalf of their new found allies, the peasant and worker. This disrupts the daily life in already congested Bangkok, pushing the patience of the middle class and business circles to the limit. These affluent group of people starts to withdraw their support for the student's cause, calling them as the 'menace' that brought political instability due to their insatiable hunger for more. The attitude of the student has led to the rise of other opponent to their cause, especially the ultra-rightist which their main aim is to subdue these extra bureaucratic forces from messing with the social order. Ultra-rightist organisation such as Nawaphon or the New Force and the Red Gaurs (*Krathing Daeng*), established 1974 and 1975 respectively; believe in military solution and works as a paramilitary organisation. Ben Anderson argues, due to the divide in ideology and thanks to the changes happening to the class strata in Thai society, a breakaway group established themselves to become the Rightists and Ultra Rightists groups. Boost by the weakening power of the military, the group put forward the ideology of Nation, Religion and Monarchy as their soul. Anderson argues, this group emboldened public execution of their foe thanks to their strategy of being an adept propagandist, fanatics and manipulators of those key players in politics (Anderson, 1977). Apart from that, they collaborate and organized themselves with most notable ultra-rightist groups such as the Red Gaurs, whom vigilante attitude create fears of the public and often attacks the students peaceful protests with clubs and light weapons, making the protests immediately become violent (Alagappa, 1995). The newly establish Peasant Federation of Thailand cripple from the beginning due to their leaders were targeted by the Red Gaurs and killed one by one.

On the political front, coalition government made up of the democrats and other smaller parties just being form. Before long, division within the

assembly can be seen as Kukrit struggles to keep the integrity of the coalition government as ally starts to fight over the portfolios in his cabinet minister and the perks coming with it (Jumbala, 1992). Furthermore, Kukrit's Left strategy of anti-imperialist stance and attacks on the flaw of capitalism by exploiting the workers further fuel the hatred of the Rights, with the gradual rise in the support of the middle class and the business community leaning more to the rights. With mounting street violence and political squabbles, under the pressure of General Kris, Kukrit decided to dissolve the parliament to avoid the seemingly imminent threat of a coup that could destroy a budding democracy. Leading up to the April 1976 election, the situation didn't improve either. The Thai Nation (TN) party led by Pramarn launched an offensive campaign against the Left. The Rights actively conducted violent measures to cripple the Left campaigns such as a series of assassinations, smear campaign and deliberate bombings of political gatherings.

The political campaign was tense, with heavy weapons making its way to these gatherings, often leading to deaths and casualties. The suspected perpetrators go to the vigilante group within the rightist movements such as the Red Gaur and the Village Scout. The result of the election again led to no majority government being formed, prompting another fragile coalition government to form in this time of uncertainty. Political differences continue to prevail in Seni Pramoj's government and within the same aisle, the MPs fighting over political differences. Looking out at this situation, Pramarn increasingly becomes close to the Thanon-Prapass group, and helps to bring about their return to Thailand such as Prapass attempts to come back, before a quick surge of protests that force him to flee again. Thanon however managed to return under a strict protection of Nawaphon and the Scout Village and escaped criticisms by immediately ordaining as a monk, though protests against his return continued until the incident on the 6th October. During these protests, rightist groups continued to incite violence by hijacking supposedly peaceful protests. In one incident, 2 student activists were beaten to death in Nakhom Pathom, and their bodies were hung (Baker, 2005). At this critical juncture, Seni Pramoj received criticisms for not answering the demands from the public while at the same time seems powerless to stop violence on the street. Seni Pramoj decides to reshuffle the cabinet, resulting in the sacking of 2 rightist ministers. This event led to a big

protest by the Rights at the government house and not far from there, the student protest continues in the ground of Thammasat University.

The whole situation took a dramatic turns when the student mocks the hanging of the students in a play (Ferrara, 2015b). The media are quick to point out that one of the dummy resembles the Crown Prince; thought there is no such intent is meant to happen in the play. Seni has lost total control of the street as the Rights collaborate with the police and made their way to surround the university compound. In an effort to reduce the tension, the students engaged in the play hand over themselves to Seni government but the public opinion has been too emotional to contain. In the early hours of 6th October 1976, the Rightist groups and the police open fired the students despite pleas from the students. The student has no place to flee and a gruesome act of revenge mounted by the rights can be seen from their inhumane killings of the students within the compound of Thammasat University. On the same afternoon, a coup was launched against Seni government led by admiral Sangad Cholryu with reasons stated as to stop the communist plot and to safeguard the monarchy. Indirectly, the coup was launched by a moderate faction within the military itself to subdue any coup attempts by the rightist's elements that have a strong links with Thanom. At the same time, the coup answers the call by the affluent middle class giving the continued protests and social disobedience activities that more or less disrupt their daily life. This marks the end of Thailand's first attempts at firmly having a democracy, thought this not the end of the journey itself.

4.2.8 Summary

Since 1932, Thailand's road to democracy hasn't been smooth. As delicately put by Rama VI in his personal memoir, Thailand must has been not ready for democracy, therefore since the very beginning the democracy was fixed to accommodate only key interest groups that exists when the revolution happens. As a result, the democracy struggles to accommodate more participants as the country experience rapid change that brought reconfiguration in socio economic spectrum. The same key interest groups had prevailed every time in Thai politics and this pattern is another reason why Thai politics can be switch on and off by the same people. It good to point out, Thai politics has been receptive to the world's event, which more or less affects what kind of system will take place in each turn of the event such as the

military during American patronage and brief democratic return in accommodating American pull out from the Vietnam. As can be seen, due to limitation on democracy and the advent of Second World War, authoritarian regimes prevails in the name of national security that last well into the 3rd quarter of 20th century. Brief returns to democracy initiated by the dictatorial regime such as in 1957 and 1968 fall short of anything democratic. Military sponsored politics can't be count as genuinely democratic but just a way to release some pressure out of the chest. In the end, when there are conflicts, the military is quick to launch a coup to save whatever left from the democracy. Therefore, Thai democracy until 1976 still unstable and not yet fully reach institutional level, given to its weak nature in keeping various key interest groups to agree amongst themselves under the framework of democracy as the rule of the game.

However, Thai democracy is well on its way to the most intense chapter of its life and the 1973 revolution is just a pretext to much more what is coming next. The dawn of semi democracy lay down by Prem and his subsequent successors change the way Thai politics charts its way. What important is, despite the short age of each turn of democratic governments in Thailand, much have been achieve in strengthening its process while further erode the influence of the old cliques in the politics.

4.3 Semi Democracy

4.3.1 Reconciliation Period (1976-1980)

Thailand by 1976 is politically in a deep mess, decades of development era have catapult the old Thai way of doing things to the modern era; both in physical appearance and way of thinking. A pluralise Thailand makes it even harder for the old elites to maintain power as they used to, through the use of state apparatus and indoctrination of the masses as can be seen during Phibun and Sarit era. But that day is a by gone era, Thailand and its people has change and become more open in voicing their share in the name of Prachaitipatai. Thailand has seen so much violence during the course of 70's alone prior to 1976 coup, with key interest groups in politics go against each other in the worst way possible. On top of that, the

influence of supposedly neutral institution such as the religious communities as such promote by Phra Kitti that promotes killings against the Leftists makes things even worst (Chris Baker, 2005). In short, Thai politics have no ground rules to start with and all factions are free to use whatever they have on their disposal to cripple their opponents in the midst of a weak and disunited democratically elected government.

After the 1976 coup, Thanin Kraivichien launched what he called as the 3 Phase - 12 yearlong of 'Democratic Reform' (Jumbala, 1992). Known as a staunch supporter of the old elites, he made it known of his dislikes of Communism, student activism and progressive politics; which he blamed as the cause that led to the political mess which Thailand's experience during this time. Sarit's system makes a comeback as he favoured an all appointed assembly called National Administrative Reform Assembly (NARA) to help him pulled out his democratic reforms. Thanin further strengthen the use of Article 21, a resemblance to Sarit Article 7 that allows him enormous powers to subdue any elements that can threatened the state. He brings back military tribunals as opposed to civil judiciary process effectively cracking down communist elements and silenced the liberal (Patrick Heenan, 2013). Thanin even extend his paranoia of progressive politics by intervening in local university administration, by combing all books available in the university and burnt any left leaning books and publication. With the business communities, Thanin have a very cold relations with them by intentionally not consulted them in the new arrangements of power. With so much concentration of power in the hands of one man, the Thais felt restless and afraid what Thailand will become after 12 years of Thanin's iron fist rule. Much important of all is the rise of the Young Turk, whom has been making headlines in showing this batch of military officers' desire in having a hand in determining Thai politics. Though their first attempts fail, however with the help of Sangad Chaloryu, Thanin eventually resign after acknowledging his failures in improving the overall situation of Thailand on top of worsening economic situations.

The coup makers decided to appoint General Kriangsak Chomanand as the interim Prime Minister. A conservative himself, yet Kriangsak set his mind straight of not repeating the same mistakes of his predecessor and tries to accommodate the interests of all key interest groups. Within the military itself, Kriangsak sees the needs to rebalance between the senior and junior officers whom

have different agenda. The old elites made up of military ranks, bureaucrats and conservative fills the important positions in his National Policy Council. Yet he makes sure the politics remains calm by relaxing controls over the printed media and radios. The biggest political achievement held by Kriangsak is his move in releasing political prisoners through mass amnesty (Jumbala, 1992). Political prisoners since the time of Thanon or even earlier were released in batches as a sign of courtesy between the old elites and the liberals. Kriangsak move on to set a constitution for the country by allowing democratic principles to make a comeback. He ensured the constitutions will have voice from the academics, bureaucrats and most importantly the leaders of 1973 and 1976 student activism and later on some amendments in the legislative assembly, which mainly being controlled by the military. The constitution was promulgated in December 1978 and the election slated to be held in April 1979.

The 1978 Constitution itself is not a transition to democracy as many would hope, it rather become an instrument to smoothen the friction that happens between the old elites and the emerging key interest groups in Thai politics, notably the Chao Pho or provincial businessmen turns politicians. It rather can be seen as a compromise between the bureaucratic force with the extra bureaucratic force which has been vocal since a brief return to democracy during Thanon time in the early 70's. As for the military itself, it needs stability after a debilitating embarrassment for the institution for their harsh treatments of student activist in 1973 and 1976 together with problems of divisiveness that exist within the military itself (Samudavanija, 2002). Despite making a return to democracy, concept of semi democracy taking roots, as the coalition government can't agree to appoint a leader amongst them and invite a senior military officer to become a Prime Minister. This led to an era where democracy lives and breathing in Thailand but not in its form as understood in the west. Kriangsak therefore reappointed as Prime Minister however his tenure proves to be short under this new arrangement. Due to multiple problems at the borders and worsening economic situations, Kriangsak choose unconventional way of escaping a coup attempt; he voluntarily resigns from his post and relinquishes his duty to General Prem Tinsulanond, whom proved himself later having the same aspirations of keeping democracy intact through the arrangements of Semi Democracy.

4.3.2 Prelude to Semi Democracy

The 1973 and 1976 episodes remind a lot of Thais of the potential of having a true democracy however so far they had failed to do so. However, these two episodes do teach an important lesson for the old elites, old way of doing things no longer works. Post 1976, Thanin and Kriangsak realise the potential of progressive politics can be done to Thailand if not 'guided' properly (Chris Baker, 2005). To hold them down like Thanin will bring their own falls, too little incentive like Kriangsak means there will be more 'noise' from the civil activists. There are calls for the introduction of a fully democratic system to take place post 1976 yet the time is not yet ripe. Chaianan argues, Thai democracy is unstable and not yet institutionalised as can be seen from political squabbles within the course of 1973-1976. If the rule of law and political thoughts has no antecedents and foundation, he is afraid Thailand will fall into a vicious cycle of political violence (Samudavanija, 2002). He looks back at the way Thai democracy was introduced, all those social developments happening in Thailand are rather forced than natural, forcing the society to accept whatever being 'serve on the plate'. This can be looked at retrospectively during Chakri Dynasty Siam Rat ideology, Phibun Siamisation period and Sarit's system; all of these social developments have made little space for the Thais to have self-inquiry over their own identity and thoughts. However, with the dawn of the development era, the Thais for the first time exposed to a new social thought that once is so alien to the society. With the expansion of tertiary education and the rise of professional professions, the Thai society in general becomes knowledgeable and aware of their surroundings. Pioneered by the brave student activism together with Non-government organisation in the rural areas, Thailand was exposed to new political thoughts and ideas, showing them an alternative to prolonged military rule. However, as shown by history, too much debate merged with strong conservative sentiments sparks unprecedented political violence to which a lot of young Thai blood were sacrificed.

Not only is that, class antagonisms seen as limited. There are an outcry against the government's lack of support for the plea led by the poor farmers and workers. However these under-privileged groups are not effectively represented despite the help of the students. The affluent middle class, despite their high education level, is easily swayed with the conditions that will affect their urban livelihood. For

example, at first, the urban dwellers mid class shows their unwavering supports leading towards October 1973 incident yet their supports wavered towards 1976 as students' activism started to disrupt their daily life. Such a lack of empathy and common understanding that can be shared amongst all class is something is lacking despite a major change is happening within the Thai society and this patterns prevails until today, making it one of the reason for the failures of democracy to achieve full maturity in Thailand. Furthermore, with this divisiveness, it is hard for the state to nurture the masses to counterbalance the influence of an entrenched bureaucracy. If different classes within Thai society can come together with the spirit of fellow countrymen, the merits and ideals of democracy can be spread evenly. The competition between the bureaucracy and extra bureaucratic forces ends up with the bureaucracy prevails over the latter, thus Thai politics in favour of more bureaucratisation but not democratisation (Samudavanija, 2002). Therefore, these are just some of the explanations why democracy per se can't be immediately introduce post military regimes in Thailand, paving the way for semi democracy to take shape.

4.3.3 Premocracy and its legacy

The 1978 Constitution Kriangsak helps to mould can be said as paving the way for the semi democracy to take shape. Under the new constitution, key democratic principles make a comeback such as general election, elected assembly and a working parliament. However, to create a sense of unity in an unstable coalition government, a neutral person shall be appointed to lead the government, and the obvious choice would be that from senior military ranks, looking back at long history of military rule and to ruled out the potential coup attempts if the head of government itself coming from the old elites. Such an arrangements is what being called as semi democracy; as the process of decision making and power sharing follow that of democratic principles yet the head of government is not elected through election but that through appointment (Ferrara, 2015a). Some scholars might argues semi democracy as more or less a compromise between the old elites and the extra bureaucratic forces that sprang out and coloured Thai politics since early 1970's, looking at how many time those two comes into head with each other and created political stalemate. Therefore, semi democracy is seen as a political breakthrough of which both sides agree to accommodate each other in order to bring Thailand out of

political mess. While others might see it as a transition towards a true democracy, a small step that will determine the future of Thai politics. The flexibility of 1978 Constitution helps Thailand to avoid another coup for the next 20 years or so, allowing ample time for the democracy to readjust itself in a changing and pluralised Thailand in the face of globalisation.

Semi Democracy makes an apparent impact especially during Prem's tenure as Prime Minister from 1980 to 1988 hence it was also known as Premocracy. Prem, whom is known as an incorruptible person, has shown his intent to balance and tries to accommodate the interests of each interest group in Thai politics; especially those in military, the business community and progressive politics. In 8 years of Prem's Prime Ministership, he has endured many challenges in order to keep each faction happy, making his time in office to have the most number of changing administration since the introduction of democracy in 1932. He faces a lot of pressures and coup threats as well as coup attempts yet his strong determination and own wits, he managed to keep Semi Democracy intact. It was also known as Premocracy due to his wit in manoeuvring Thai politics from rolling back to a total military rule. Although during his 8 years in power, there are voices that are afraid of him becoming a dictator yet his administration shows the otherwise. One of his strategies is his realisation that there is no long term enemy or friends. This is quite true, through his 8 years in office, he was stabbed few times, making and breaking alliances plenty of times and has been trying to save himself and semi democracy numerous times in the face of pressures from all corners of Thai politics (Jumbala, 1992). Within the military itself, there are factions that seek for a hand in Thai politics and have different agendas from one another. The Young Turks, which helped Prem to gain power in 1980, started to go against him less than a year he was in the office. If not with the help of an estranged frenemy, General Arthit; Prem's legacy as we know today might not exist. Between Prem and Arthit Kamlang-ek also shows another face of how deep the disunity of the military itself in the face of uncertainty of military holds on Thai politics. At first, Prem believed in military intervention and his early years show his desire to stabilise the army and enhance military influence in the politics, hence he prolongs his term as the Commander in Chief by two years after a mandatory pension due to age.

Prem knew his apparent successor will be restless with this arrangement, so he promotes Arthit to the post of Deputy Commander in the North East Battalion, leaving him some space to breath in Bangkok. For a while, things goes according to Prem's plan until the Young Turks sees Prem tried to break away from them and what has become of the military after Prem took over the rein of the country, which according to them has becomes 'a client' to corrupt politicians(Chris Baker, 2005). The Young Turks launched the April Fools coup in their attempts to oust a corrupt political system in place at that time. General Arthit comes to his rescue to quell the rebellion as the coup couldn't receive any blessings from His Majesty while His Majesty himself remains firm with Prem's government. This incident led to a purge of Young Turks's influence within the military and marked the start of an awkward friendship between Prem and Arthit. Prem in due course until 1988 has to tolerate a lot with Arthit, as such he reluctantly relinquish his Chief of the Army post to Arthit after the 1981 coup attempts, Arthit attempts at enhancing military intervention in the face of rising Chao pho phenomenon in Thai politics and Arthit – Pichit coalition for top post in the military against Prem 's nominee, Chavalit; all these just shows how the military tried so hard to enhance their influence in the face of dilapidating old image they inherit from Sarit era that no longer works (Chris Baker, 2005). The military has been in decline since 1973 incident couple with changing nature of defence in Thailand that no longer needs entrench military protection and intervention in all matters of society life not like before. Their roles has change in the 80's, from the saviour of the state to become a mere border patrol; therefore their survival lies on new innovation in convincing the people that the Thailand still needs them in public space. The sorry state of the military further enhance with the loss of one of its biggest sponsors, the United States as the superpower retreats from the region after a humiliating defeat in the Vietnam War.

After a while, Prem shifts his stance amidst new development happening during this time. Tired of continuous military pressures, Prem conviction to preserve semi democracy has brought him to an unlikely ally that is the business community such as the affluent business conglomerate in Bangkok as well as industry leaders(Girling, 1996). As the foundations lay by Chavalit, Prem focus on the economy as globalisation starts to take off with the dawn of Washington Consensus.

Though being pressure through ultimatums plenty of times, Prem won't give up by resigning but decided to dissolve the parliaments instead with the hope the assembly will bring fresh coalition that come together for common goals. However, even by doing so, he can't avoid the same problems to crop up again such as the problems of coalition MPs jump towards the opposition side and the rise of anti Prem movements in favour of Arthit in his place. The biggest challenge to his administration is the rise of a new key interest group in Thai politics that can harm his long struggle to keep semi democracy intact, the Chao Pho.

(1) Chartichai Government: Democracy Reign Supreme or Hijacked Democracy?

In the course of 1987 – 1988, another course of political unrest erupted, forcing Prem to dissolve the parliament and called for election, which sees Thai Nation Party led by Chartichai Choonhavan wins the election. Though invited to lead the government, Prem however refused to continue his time in the office, heeding to advice by Prawase and his colleague to allow a democratically elected leader to lead the government. Therefore, Thailand sees its first elected head of government after prolong military dictatorships and Premocracy. Chartichai government was seen as a pro business in nature, therefore it explains his attitude in strengthening the influence of Chao Pho indirectly. Through his famous remarks wanting to change Indo China 'from battlefield to market place' Chartichai use everything at his disposal to bring economic prosperity into Thailand (Chris Baker, 2005). His time in office, although cut short by a military coup; sees an annual growth rates up to 13%. The focus in revamping Thailand infrastructure sees the expansion of telecommunications networks all over the country that can help boost economic development and helps to ease as well as to promote communications. Furthermore, more sophisticated networks of roads and railways make its presence in Thailand to ensure logistics and trade to run smoothly.

In order to realise this, Chartichai aligned himself with business communities especially those whom rises in politics through the Chao pho schemes. He boosted the role of the parliament and participation of MPs that are coming from provincial areas, as he seek to drained away the budget from Bangkok to its peripheries and the outlying areas (Hewison, 2002). This political move brought him

into two interrelated problems; first, this caused the military and the old elites increasingly unhappy and second, his deliberate supports for the Chao pho subsequently led to mega corruptions scandal to erupts. The military in recent years in constant decline and now rely heavily on government budget for their survival. Prem tenure in office helps to increase their budget from 17% in 1975 to 22% in 1985 but reduce significantly during Chartichai time in office (Chris Baker, 2005). Chartichai also skillfully side-line the old elites from taking part in the daily running of the government by strengthening the integrity of the parliament so that it will left no room for them to intervene. The elites therefore felt powerless in the face of strengthening Thai democracy in the hands of Chartichai. Therefore, the old elites crop up a movement that is determined to clean up the politics as a way to divert popular supports away from Chartichai government success. The so called politics of moral ran by one of their own, the conservative Major General Chamlong Srimuang will see the first successful mega campaign in Thai politics to associate Thai Democracy with negative connotations that persist till today.

4.3.4 Chao Pho and Politic of Moral

The rise of Chao pho can be traced backs since the development era in the 60's (Chanthornvong, 2000). United States has been pouring millions of dollars trying to improve key strategic infrastructures such as road networks and airstrips as well as clearing the forest trying to keep in check communist advances in Thai borders as well as making Thailand as their bases for military activities which intensified with the Vietnam War. They are basically either local heads or new businessmen joining in the hype of business opportunity created by the development of the outlying areas. They become rich and powerful as they supplied materials needed for the war efforts such as military equipment or machinery and related services needed to maintain US military operation in Thai interior. Furthermore, the concept of patrilineal loyalty and patronage deeply observe by the rural communities, making these provincial leaders turned businessmen becomes politically powerful in the grassroots level. In the past, as can be seen from Phibun and Sarit time, the ideology and concept of patronage by respected leaders continue to prevail in Thai History; dated backs to the time of Sukhothai and Ayyuthaya (Chris Baker, 2005). Such ideology still exists in the rural areas of Thailand despite the other parts of the

country has been touch by globalisation. Hence it is natural for poor rural dwellers look up to these provincial leaders for guidance and supports. Looking at such an enormous amount of loyalty and devotion being put by these poor people, the Chao pho decided to use this for their own debut in Thai politics, hoping for gaining more business opportunities. However, in order to further cemented their 'base voters', these Chao pho went to campaigns promising change in the constituent they represented and give 'a little gifts' in terms of materials or money to win their supports. This becomes the foundations of money politics and votes buying that being seen as pervasive in Thai politics up until today. Through such strategy, these provincial leaders make an easy win in the election and band together to take 'a slice of the development projects' in the parliaments.

What makes matters worst is their performance in politics while holding the portfolio as an MP. Once reaching their goal to make into the parliament, they immediately forgot about their duty and promises to the constituencies leaving the poor people hapless. These MPs were busy bidding their new business projects and ventures in parliaments at the expense of their oath to serve the people. Though there are responsible MPs that went back and deliver their promises, but it is a quarter of what they have promise earlier, with the hope that these poor people continue to support their campaign for the next election (Chanthornvong, 2000). The rural people felt more than grateful for what their MPs has given while if there is voice of dissatisfaction, they can't do anything due to cultural observance of the concept of patronage. Furthermore, the Chao pho use the parliaments as a 'bidding place' for new projects that can make them even wealthier. Thai newspaper started to create new words describing this new phenomenon such as the 'buffet parliament' and 'buffet cabinet' that eats the country (kin mueang) (Chris Baker, 2005). For example, the infamous Barnharn Silpa-archa is a Chinese businessman that has no background in any political interest groups, yet manages to rise to political prominence through the Chao pho scheme. He started off by supplying chlorine water to the municipal water supply and went on to monopolise the business. Barnharn first elected to parliament in 1973 and becomes economic baron through his concessions and biddings in the parliament.

Consequently, people are wary of Chao pho due to their rapid rise, control in Thai politics as well as their strong supports from the grassroots which makes them invincible to any attempts to uproot them. In the elections of 1979, 1983, 1986, and 1988; their numbers has increased steadily, creating a fear that they will eventually hijack the democracy itself, as was seen during Chartchai government. People also angry of their enormous corruption activities that went unabated while their influence went unchecked as these Chao pho MPs looks after each other's backs. Things gone even messier when Thai politics sees Chao pho politicians makes their way to the top job for example Chuan Leekpai and Barnharn whom, they themselves is known for their corrupt activities through politics that made them the economic baron. As corruption became normal occurrences and daily workings of the parliament involved only the interest of few individuals, the old elites definitely felt uneasy with this development and work tirelessly to clamp them down, which led a new era of 'Politics of Morals' in Thailand, as such led by former mayor of Bangkok, Chamlong Srimuang through his Phalang Tham Party that seeks to cleanse the corruption in Thai politics. The people rally behind this movement as the see the rule of law and democracy has been hijack by these irresponsible and corrupt politicians.

Thongchai gives a clear illustration of why Thai democracy needs a clean-up. First of all, the elected politicians are corrupt due to the fact that, they entering politics is to protect their interest not for the sake of the publics, and this is quite clear modus operandi in Chao pho scheme (Samudavanija, 2002). Second, he claimed that the inevitable rise of the Chao pho is due to enormous corruption at the grassroots level for example evidence of vote buying that prevails in Thai politics until today. Not only that, Chao pho entry to win the election further enhance with a strong rural patrilineal system in place, whereby these so called godfather will look after their children and such relationship continue to haunt Thai politics for decades to come. Therefore, in the public eyes, there is no use in holding an election if it will end up with the Chao pho affiliated parties winning the election; leading to a coalition government that practice 'buffet cabinet'. This makes people lose trust on democracy and reverts back to look up for 'guidance' from the old elites to intervene and clean up Chao pho once and for all. This gave the birth to 'depoliticisation' of Thai politics in the course of 1990's onwards in the name of moral and ethical principles in

democracy over rule of law. Movements sprang out calling to limit politics to only political maneuvering and political actors so that democracy can be straightened up while ‘filtering’ future MPs in favour of that whom will fight for people’s interest above all else in their efforts to curb the influence of Chao pho.

However, Chaianan suggests that, the politics of moral existed in Thailand is not that simple. Looking at the instigator and the promoter of such movements, most of them are the affluent Bangkok urban dwellers that are known to be less empathetic and sympathetic to the rural cause that the elected provincial politicians brought to the limelight, especially during Chartichai government (Samudavanija, 2002). Chaianan argues, due to globalisation and internal pressures such as the issue of human rights, democracy and liberty that has been promoted in the wake of the turn of the century; all of these are seen more as a threat to the power and the influence the old elites has on Thai politics. Furthermore, they are facing the problems of waning supports from the masses due to past incidents and blunders such as military brutality that led to the deaths of protestors further change people’s perspective that democracy, though with all its perfection; is better than a dictatorial regime. The United States has changed its nature from a close ally and economic partners to that of economic competitor; asking Thailand for more economic liberalisation in a tightly protected economy sectors Thailand. This further add some pressure to the ‘state elites’ to take innovative measures to shore up supports from the public by showing that the old elites remains relevant in this changing times. The United States also did some unexpected move as the former allies release data and footage which acts as evidences of military blunders such as the prolong issue of corruption, abuses of human rights and business links; globalisation has made the old elites slowly losing their grips on their mainstay of power and source of income such as the cross borders illegal trade, control on the media, hands in the state owned enterprise and the lucrative black market (Hewison, 2002).

Therefore, Chaianan claims that the politics of moral is just a diversion to move the public attention from matters of national interest to that which can help the cause of the old elites. Blinded by the physical appearance of Thai politics and overwhelming rumours overtures Thai democracy and make it survive at the mercy of the old elites and their puppets. Chartichai government crumbles in

the hands of coup makers despite its high economic growth within a short period of time. This is just one example on how the old elites telling the democracy not to mess with what ‘supposedly’ belongs to them and never touch their interest. The old elites of Thailand have survived since 1932 and manage to change its colours in order to keep what they have built since the abolishment of the absolute monarchy; incomparable to the disunited and short lived democratic movements. This politics of moral shaped during the course of 70’s and 80’s becomes one of the many weapons the old elites use to delimit the strength of democracy by attacking its image, but not what it has done in order to bring about political change in Thailand.

4.3.5 Black May and Its Aftermath

After deposing Chaitichai government, General Suchinda Kraprayoon appointed Anand Panyarachun as the interim Prime Minister. Anand was tasked to come up with a new constitution and hold an election soon after. Aware of public opinions on the issue of corruption, Anand tries to balance both the old elites demand on restoring their influence in politics that had been destroyed and dismantled during Chaitichai government and the public demands to put an end to money politics (Chris Baker, 2005). Despite the military pressure to extradite Chaitichai officials, Anand continues the former liberal policies to the disgust of the military. Anand cautiously avoided military intervention in his interim government especially the military excessive ‘bureaucratisation’ or in other words, using the state for its own interest. The election held in March 1992 leads to another coalition government that can’t decide upon themselves whom going to lead the government. Suchinda intervenes and later appointed as the Prime minister, leading to an outburst of public protest as the public fear of a military regime in disguise.

Popular protests reach its height on 17 May 1992, when the parliament allowed a transitional cause to go ahead which will allow non-elected person to serve as the Prime Minister. The number of protestors swells despite military efforts to divert attentions with festivals and preventing them from coming to Bangkok. The emotion escalated as police barricade the route towards the government house, leading to an exchange of violence between the frustrated protesters and the security officers. Chaos erupted for the next three days, as Suchinda publicly denounced Chamlong of his campaign and accused Chamlong of initiating public

disorders that lead to his arrest. This further adds the anger of the protesters and clashes happened between the protesters and the security forces, leading to many deaths and casualties. As the situations deteriorate even further, His Majesty intervenes on the night of 20th May 1992 in order to diffuse the situation. In a publicly broadcast audience to His Majesty, the revered head of state advised the two to end their clash as it cost the nation a lot. His Majesty advised them to opt for a peaceful political solution and to end violence right away.

This development leads to the resignation of Suchinda and Chamlong call for all protest to end. Reports resurfaced on the official numbers of deaths, though the number varies from 52 to more than a hundred. There are reports of inhumane measures use by the military to suppress and discourage the protesters such as body immolation or beaten to death (King, 1996). Black May incident holds a big significance in Thai politics , as for the military, for once it seems it has a hand at power after a devastating humiliation due to their divisiveness and reckless action in the 70's and 80's (Chachavalpongpun, 2009). However this time, their brutality is even worse, as the military use of excessive force against the people made them lose all the legitimacy in the eyes of the people. For the public, because of power, they had betrayed their uniform as well as the nation and it will take some time for them to regain the trust from the people. For the progressive politics, this is another victory for Thai democracy though at the cost of plenty of human lives. Their sacrifice for the love of the country and unwillingness to see another dictatorship will never be forgotten. Due to the brave souls and the spirit to defend democracy, Thailand democracy is save from having a 'plural democracy' whereby it is run by the military in disguise. Though the fight to end money politics and buffet cabinet of the Chao pho is far from over, this incident serve as the reminder on how lively Thai politics is and how much potential it wield for the people despite democracy comes to being initially not to serve the interest of the people but that of the certain interest groups in Thai society.

Fast changing development since coup in 1991 shows the people wariness of entrench military presence in Thai politics. Since 1978, coup have been averted and for quite a while people are happy with a 'coup -less' environment in the political scene. Despite unhappy with the behaviours of the politicians that sees the

collaborations between the old elites and the anti-corruption movements, Black May shows the movement swing fast against the military; from a covert sponsor to create public disturbances and help bring about justification for a coup, to a direct clash with once a friendly partners. This irony is quite normal in Thai politics and can be observe plenty of times throughout the lifetime of democracy in Thailand. In simple conclusion, this happens due to the Thai politics and democracy has never been about the people, but only for certain interest groups in Thai society. Therefore, numerous number of time it can be seen such pattern to repeat itself hence further weaken the democracy and its affiliated institutions as opposed to strengthen it.

Since Thanon reintroduce democracy in the late 1960's, Thailand has reaped the opportunity to do some trial and error with democracy. It also allowed the people to directly challenge the old elites and its outdated system by participating in politics as seen in students protests in the course of 70's and 80's. The episode that unveils in the 80's and 90's further enhance Thai democracy in a sense that it force the old elites to realise the old way of doing things no longer works. Never before Thailand has seen such an active participation in politics and the old elites has allowed many compromises to happen. However, the dawn of globalisation and the turn of the century are coming fast, Thai democracy still struggle to find a stable ground despite the roots already being planted and grown. Due to its weak foundation together with its unstable system in place, Thai democracy is in danger of being manipulated by the old elites that can prevent it from making progress. The last decades of the 20th century is an exciting time in Thai politics as it witness the struggle between fledgling Thai democracy against the backdrop of traditional power broker and the possibility of being hijacked totally by not purely democratic ntities.

4.4 Roots of Negative Connotations on Thai Democracy

4.4.1 Aftermath of the Black May & the Dawn of the Reform Era

Post Black May incident, the military was forced to be at the background after in the lime lights of Thai politics for decades. Their image was hurt after losing its legitimacy to lead the people when they first betrayed their uniform. This left a power vacuum for the key interest groups to gain footing in Thai politics while the environment is still lukewarm with democratic ideals and nationalistic

feelings. One of the first interest group showing their interest in politics is the affluent Bangkok based businessmen, whom have keep themselves aloof from Thai politics all these while. The dawn of globalisation and the opportunity it brings make them anxious on how politics will ensure a smooth economic transition to integrate with the world market. On the other hand, political activists and analyst sees the Black May incident as an opportunity for Thailand to end decades of dictatorial regimes and hand it over to the people (Chris Baker, 2005). Pro-democracy activist together with the support of moral politics for the first time since the polarisation of Thai politics shows a solidarity to reform the Thai politics. Their main agenda is to advance politic of moral as well as a shift from a pursuit of ideal democracy towards civil society, in an attempt to educate the masses (especially the rural dwellers whereby the powerbase of Chao pho lies) of the working of democracy that can bring down the Chao pho.

Thai political ambience is somewhat coloured by two different factions. One led by the Democrat, portraying itself as a modern party that embraced globalisation and paved the way to prepare Thailand for the challenges of the 21st century. Its support base comes from the affluent Bangkok middle class and the Southern electorates that has become their stronghold. In addition to that, the appeal of the party comes from their push for demilitarisation of Thai politics, encouraging development of democratic ideals in neighbouring countries and to bring about the reform agenda. On the other hand, agrarian inspired faction continues to yield influence especially in Central and North-eastern region of Thailand. Their political ideals are mainly to channel the national budget towards Bangkok peripheries and see the need to run the state like a business. Such political ambience led to reconfiguration of power whereby the bureaucracy had to compromise with the business politicians due to their enormous influence in Thai politics. This is due to the weakened state of the Trinity alliance of the old elites whereby the military suffered a big setback in their part and the monarchy has side-lined itself from politics, leaving the bureaucracy on its own device. Before, the arrangement of power was so smooth due to everything must goes through them first under the precept of the state and its apparatus (Samudavanija, 1997). A centralised state becomes the prime mover of everything within Thailand yet globalisation changes that in its entirety. State roles has weakens, powers segregated, its border become porous, society has been polarise,

and the people are free to roam the earth; all of these changes how things goes in Thailand. Therefore, the military that have tried so hard to reposition itself in the face of globalisation put a blow in their efforts through the Black May incident. Running the risk of being obsolete, the bureaucracy had to do whatever it can to be part of the new power arrangement in Thai politics thus the collaborations with the Chao pho is another way out (Hewison, 2002). Despite the return to parliamentary democracy in September 1992, there is enough evidence showing the strong influence of Chao pho at the same time a strong pressure from the public space to outdo them.

4.4.2 Debates of Reform: Between the Politic of Moral & Politic of Power

The Black May incident give an opportunity for the Thai people to look back at their democracy and dissect it to find out what is wrong with the system. At that moment, the political context has shifted from producing an effective democracy that can deliver towards the shaping of an effective and enabling political environment that can help bring about a smooth transition and adaptation of globalisation. This means, political maneuvering must adept at managing the national socio economy without much fuss at the political level. However, the situation this time is totally different, as Thai democracy has been ‘hijack’ by a group of people that has little to do with political statecraft and run the country like a business. Chartichai era and the heighten political debates prior to 1992 incident has given the society some pictures on what is the best way forward to reform the Thai political system. One of the school that garners a lot of public support is the liberal school which believe in globalisation will benefit Thailand in respect that it will rapid economic growth, transform Thai society to become more receptive and open, modern society and be part of the hype of regional cooperation (Chris Baker, 2005). One of the prominent academic in this school is Chaianan Samudavanija whom has contributed a lot in giving some idea on the best way to reform the Thai politics. He reiterated that globalisation will change everything, to the point that social and press control no longer effective, knowledge and news easily accessible everywhere and anywhere, people no longer confined to what the state dictates what they can and cannot do; globalisation therefore a big threat to old elites if they can’t catch up with this new development. The businesses will be benefitted the most as they no longer relied on

economic stimulus and small domestic market as well as having more opportunity than ever before. Moreover, these businesses become the significant economic engine as they become market absorber which in return can stimulate the economy. In short, old way of doing things no longer works and globalisation given both an opportunity as well as pressure for Thai politics to accommodate its needs.

Another prominent figure in this school is Thirayuth Boonmee, the affluent student activist turn social critic. Thirayuth argues, democracy can't be strengthened if civil society itself is weak. It is the civil society, according to him, that can help to bring about everlasting change to the political system. A healthy debates arose from the civil society will shape the direction of the democracy itself and later on develop to become the bastion against any threat to its own existence. Therefore, with regards to globalisation, Thirayuth suggest it is the dawn of an era that will see the handover of power and legitimacy to rule from the state to the people (Chris Baker, 2005). Globalisation themes of liberty, human rights, freedom and rule of law will help to put some pressure of overcentralized states to 'behave' as the whole world monitors each other's actions that can be deem as a crime against humanity. The sacredness of human lives and rights becomes the central themes that help to push this agenda. Hence, activities and incentives that can encourage civil society engagement with the public must be encouraged to get the maximum effects. On the other hand, Anek Laomathas provide a spot on argument by agreeing to Thirayuth ideas. He sees the strength of the Chao pho every time there is an election is due to their ability to take advantage of their poor electorates through the culture of local patronage that penetrates deep in their culture. In order to settle the problem of Chao pho once and for all, Thai democracy needs to cut the powerbase of these business politicians and one way forward is through the engagement by the civil society. He argued, these poor peasant needs to be educate and be help so that they don't fall behind with the progress and the opportunity the globalisation brings to the rest of the country. Distribution of wealth that can bring prosperity and a share in universal education and health care should makes it way to these people to enlighten them the real workings of democracy is not done through local patronage but choice. In short, this school approach to reform Thai politics comes in term of reforming the establishment or the idea of 'good governance' to bring about better political system for Thailand.

Another school holds the resemblance of politic of moral yet different in its approach. Centred on local inspired development, the school ideas have long been conceived when the students' tripartite alliance with the worker and the farmer falter before it took off in the 70's. Remnants of that alliance have become the core of the struggle, which seeks to eradicate decades of frustrations, helplessness and hatred towards widening of the rural urban divide (Callahan, 1999). The group took local wisdom and community culture seriously as the basis of development that will bring development at par with local way of life. Local knowledge is therefore respected and complement with the best practices available to achieve the desired outcomes. The moral part come in term of Buddhist teaching of wellbeing can be translated not as having a maximum production and consumption but through moderation, self-restraint and reliant as well as spiritual and material improvements. Furthermore, the rural dwellers felt betrayed with their elected politicians, whereby their promised to bring in change and development no less than an empty promises. On top of that, the destruction of their culture and traditional land holdings or villages further enhance this school practicality that is responsive to the situation that developing during that time. Equipped with plan to bring development and to empower the locals, it was hope that the gap between the rural and the urban areas will be lessen as well as can be self-reliant & reliant thus making it independent from the dirty works of the market capitalism.

As for example, Saneh Chamarik revives the idea of a social and political importance of village economy. Normally, economic analyst will see urban growth will let to rural based economy becomes less significant and redundant. However for Saneh, there will be a time when the rural based economy is more reliable than that of market driven. He agreed that rural communitarian economy can become the natural shock absorber of the whole economy, but that is not just it. Rural economy can actually complement as well as contribute to the whole economy as it is less volatile and Thailand is blessed with abundant of fertile lands, diverse local knowledge expertise and knowledge to exploit together with the widespread use of machinery and equipment in the rural economy to create a modern rural of village based economy (Chris Baker, 2000e). Therefore food and cottage industry should be the main focus of this kind of economy in order to reduce its reliance for economic

stimulus from Bangkok. Another prominent thinker is Chatthip Natsupha. He argues, community culture is another way to look at local based economic activities. The life of community culture revolves around that of peasant's world view and wisdom, mixed farming and self-reliance. This become the basis for producing an effective village economy that is by stretching this core values into something that is economically viable such as cottage industry, village empowerment and leadership and tourism for example. Chatthip argues, community culture approach all these while has little to do with economic activity therefore it fall short of becoming an effective engine of growth in the village economy.

However, this discourse couldn't escape itself from being criticise. Kamchai Laisamit explains, village economy has some detachment from reality due to the idea of idea of local community as moral values is basically does not make any sense. This can relate back with what Chao pho has done to their electorates and comparatively what Thaksin phenomenon has brought to the up north in Thailand. This means, the village community does not actually encourage egalitarian ideals as thought, but to enhance the patronage system itself (Chris Baker, 2000e). Therefore, pattern of injustice and inequality continues to prevail if so the village economy to be realised. Furthermore, Kamchai point out, rather than keeping the village as it is, it should be transform so that the peasant can be a better business minded peasant in a sense they are adept at managing their finance and invest their money and effort to diversify their source of income. Through this way, it can be call as a real village based economy. If not, it is another mask by the conservative trying to penetrate Chao pho powerbase for their advantage. His Majesty fondness in helping the rural areas and his 'New Theory' (later on popularly known as Self Sufficiency Economy) however gave this school some boost in their popularity. Despite the political reform reluctantly carry out by the one in power; this school manages to push for these ideas to be translated in policy making. Local Development Institute was established just to do this. The most visible achievement of this group is when for the first time, people centred development approach makes its appearance in the Eight Plan (1997-2001) though it faced a lot of obstacles along the way, most notably the over centralisation of the state which further add layers of bureaucratic works (Chris Baker, 2005).

In order to overcome that, the loyalist school come into common agreement with the liberal school to bring about change against the backdrop of a corrupt political system and an overstretch state. This gave them an advantage as each has their own supporters both in the urban and rural areas. Through their civic engagements, this can mount some pressure to the bureaucracy while ignoring the fussiness of business controlled parliament and bring about some change to the rural areas. Looking at their success, these two schools see the opportunity to move forward with their plan to reform the democracy itself. Equip with a strong civil society advocates as their backers and a ripe situation that call for democratic reform, the call for people oriented constitution therefore launched. This constitutional movement will see the dawn of reform era through civic engagements of many facets of the society and will led to strengthening of Thai democracy through the 1197 constitution.

4.4.3 Afraid of their own Shadow: Democratic Governments (1992-2001)

During a snap election in September 1992, the Democrat party wins more seats in the parliament against the Chart Thai Party, effectively winning the election and the latter becomes the opposition. The Democrat Party allied itself with four other smaller parties to meet the requirement to set up a coalition government. The leader, Chuan Leekpai is a lawyer himself, has portray a clean and honest image with the promise to bring about political change. However, his venture to reform the politic is not smooth sailing journey; once in office, Chuan try his best not to intimidate other key interest groups in politics. His government more or less dragged the reform agenda without any visible outcome. Attacks on the bureaucracy becomes rare, independent policy making body nowhere to be found, making the rights to formulate policy making makes a return to the senior officials (Chris Baker, 2005). The practice of buffet cabinet continues to prevail and the bureaucracy enjoys its new found freedom away from check and balance of the executive as of that during Chartichai era. Before long, the call for political reform within the state system died down, leaving the debates only happening from the ‘outside of the system’. With the relationship between the bureaucracy and the business-controlled parliament becomes friendly, national assets and resources becomes the target. Projects revolved around lands reclamation and approval for private and public use becomes the priority of this

administration. Problems crop up when lands belonging to the people turned into dams, golf courses, national parks and many more; without full consideration of the people relying on these lands and forest for their livelihood. The height of this crisis is when the MPs were implicated with the Sor Phor Khor 4-01 land project documents in Phuket. This leaked document show enormous amount of corruption that was allowed to happen right under Chuan's nose (Chris Baker, 2000c). Thai newspaper, Thairath launched 6 months long campaign to unravel more corruption related to this government which eventually led to the dissolution of the parliament and the call for another election in 1995.

Barnharn come to power after winning the said election. His administration, as of the predecessor, continues to fulfill the factional demands of the coalition government he led at the expense of national projects, assets and resources (Chris Baker, 2005). The practice of buffet cabinet become overblown during his time in office as he is a notorious Chao pho himself, which explains his biasness towards Chao pho business interest in Thai politics. Little did he know that, Thai economy has started to cracks after decades of corrupt practice on top of waning investor confident as a result of political corruption and abuse of power. Furthermore, Barnharn's 'bandwagoning' of Chao pho further enhance investor's perception that there is no fair business in Thailand due to its renown buffet cabinet practice and corrupt politicians and officials at all level. It can be said, Barnharn recklessly manages the economy as his own business venture. Prominently known with a lot of corruption scandals of his own, Barnharn rises through Chao pho scheme further add more wariness of the public opinion on his image as well as his performance in politics. Barnharn seems to think there are much more to be given out and share amongst his networks of business politicians at the expense of national assets and resources. His interference in financial institutions rather than do good, did more damage to the whole industry. Cycle of finance ministers as well as personal squabble has cost him to loss some of the best expert in the industry that can possibly contain the already chaotic financial industry thanks to imminent bubble burst of the real estate industry. With the fall of Bangkok Bank of Commerce, this is a perfect domino theory model whereby a series of banks gone bankrupt because of unable to repay their debts or reacquired their assets affiliated to the bubble burst of the property industry. Chris

Baker argued, this served a lesson that rural electorate coming from the Chao pho scheme simply don't have the ability to manage a sophisticated, globalised and delicate urban economy of Thailand (Chris Baker, 2000d).

Barnharn administration is another perfect example that explains why the Thais losing their trust on their parliamentary democracy. Democracy itself has gone this far to become its current state but now the system itself being hijacked by the people that democracy tries to avoid. Democracy as a vehicle will bring its host according to the host desired destination and now because of the recklessness of the host, it's heading for a dangerous path ahead. What makes the people even dissatisfied with the politics is that, now the whole country has to pay the price that a certain group of people abusing the power and the system itself. Furthermore, in time of crisis, the Thai people revert back to nationalism as a source of inspiration to rally people against the possible collapse of the economy (Wasi, 2002). Democracy immediately pinpoint as the source of the problems through the portrayal and accusations made by the media. Diversion of public opinion from thinking democracy just as mean to become the whole corrupt system is another reason why the negative perception on Thai democracy therefore enhances. Since 1972, there are lingering uneasiness and distrust by the affluent mid class urban dwellers against democracy and with Chao pho hijacking the system itself further add to their arguments that their democracy is a broken system and in need of reform. After trying to politicise the financial institution that eventually brought worst case scenario over Thai economy, Barharn yields to the demands for him to resign after continuous media onslaught, street protests and business lobby. On his place, Chavalit Yongchaiyudh comes to the limelight with a favourable rating together with the hope to reverse Barnharn's blunders through his Dream Team. But hope soon faded as his team couldn't manage the economy well enough due to his failures to align his cabinet with the dream team he is expecting to see. Situation exacerbated further as he lost his supposedly 'right hand men' that is task to bring back the financial industry back on its knee eventually dragged the economy further into the abyss (Chris Baker, 2000d). At the onset of the 1997 economic crisis, Chavalit seek help from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), citing it is better for the state to lose the economic sovereignty than making it even worse. Unfortunately for him, the international body has different and bigger

agenda than helping Thailand economy in chaos. The overblown deflation of Thai Baht plunge the currency due to IMF careless push for Thailand to declare its sovereign wealth, which give a boost for the financial speculators to attack the currency. With Chavalit government losing the confidence from the people and it is clear the country is entering its worst economic crisis ever in its recent memory, his government has to be dissolve and give way for a snap election that see the return of the Democrat party.

In actuality, corruption in Thai politics and its failures to deliver are not the only reason that led to the 1997 economic crisis. According to Chris Baker, the economic pattern in the 90's has shifted so much that big businesses yield much influence within the society, notably the finance, property and media sector (Chris Baker, 2000d). This business lobby goes beyond what Chao pho can do; they are the affluent big businesses centred upon Bangkok and see their reckoning after learning the success of Chao pho scheme. The hype of globalisation makes them even more interested in Thai politics after staying aloof from it for decades. Therefore, with much assets, capital and influence in their disposal, these big businesses have the power to shape public opinion especially through the use of the media and covert 'sponsorship' that could expand their business interest before the eyes of the public. With business political economy gaining prominence in both Thai urban economy and politics, business practices went uncontrollable such as the borrowings without collateral and the expansion of offshore banks and inflows of offshore investments into Thailand. Without the supervision and regulation from the state, this factor alone spawns an economic crisis to Thailand's shore. When the crisis is clear and chaos ensued, without state protection and assistance prior to that made domestic businesses battered badly and many can't survive this onslaught. Their attempts to create economic nationalism in time of crisis failed to take off due to lacking the incentive to do so. Therefore, the crisis not totally driven by the politics itself but there are other forces outside political realms that responsible for the 1997 Tom Yum Kung Crisis.

4.4.4 Onslaught on Democracy: Tom Yum Kung Crisis and Scandalisation of Politics

Pre 1997 economic crisis, Thailand experience the so called golden age of its economic triumph, act as a rising 'newly industrialised country' (NIC) and

was thought once as the next tiger in Asia (Chris Baker, 2000d). With double digit economic growth, it can be translated as a strong economic growth over the past decades. Booming infrastructure projects and rising wages, the Thais is enthusiastic of what the future can bring them if this pattern continues. This open the door for speculative market to happen as it seems stability is there while Thailand just needs the right person to maintain this. However, after a few years, the economy shows the sign that it is overheated, scandals erupted out of the political arena, investors' confidence plunge almost overnight changing their investments destinations to neighbouring countries. The first clear indicator of the cause of the crisis is the real asset industry whereby the sector garnered a lot of interest and to take advantage of this situation, the investments option therefore diversified and investment money inflow was made easier, creating a massive flood of accounted investments as well as from offshore accounts. When it is clear the hype is over in 1994, steady inflow of these investments money still coming. Before long, by the next year, the supply surpassed the demand and things quickly gone overwhelming as parties involved in this industry (customers, investors, developers etc.) can't make to the ends meet².

Some explanations were given by officials and academics to explain this crisis. Larry Summers for example lashed out against Asia micro economic

² Real property bubbles burst becomes imminent and this affects its immediate affiliated industry; the financial sector. With property owners refuse to pay their debts and foreign investors restructure their loan and some quickly withdrawn their investments; the financial institutions has limited space to breath, eventually led to the crumble of these institutions one by one. Moreover, the politicians trying to get rid of the big business lobby in this sector and trying to politicise those institutions further making the matter worse. Without capable people in charge to save the financial sector and no possible solutions in the hindsight, democratic government lead by Chavalit seek help from IMF. Looking at this development as an opportunity to devalue and disregard Thai Baht, international financial speculators launched a series of currency speculations attack and things went to their way went eventually in July 1997 the government announced to de-pegged the Thai Baht from US Dollars and float in the market, sparking much worse situation for the whole economy (Chris Baker 2000). Panic ensued and enormous outflow of investments can be seen soon after. Financial firms hit badly as their liquidity dissolve in matter of days while foreign loans liabilities goes skyrockets. This situation affects the real economy as layoffs becomes a common practice, daily transaction halted, inflation soars, loans went unabated and businesses went bankrupts.

management that he claimed as patron-client based (Chris Baker, 2000b). He warned, the close relationship between politicians and business does no good as it reflects profits made on the basis of 'rent seeking' rather than by productivity. Therefore, Washington through IMF sees these situations as an opportunity to straighten out Asia's market cronyism towards a more reliable market liberalism approach. A series of economic crisis management package therefore proposed just to advance this idea. However, IMF approach seems a little bit too aggressive and they are unaware of the real situation that's happening to Thai economy. IMF simply suggest the same economic stimulus and policy that was introduced in Latin America to be applied in Asian economies and this mismatch of strategy do more harm than good. Lacking of sensitivity of local situation and pan Southeast Asian nationalism is another matter than IMF overlook showing lack of integrity on IMF's part as well as its arrogance and misconception of Asian economies as it is seen through the lens by the west. IMF thought of introducing measures that includes ways to curb overheat economy, cut the spending and to revive the investor confidence will make Thai economy back on its track in no time. Little did they know that, the problem with Tom Yum Kung crisis aren't as simple as stated above, but solutions must be provided to solve the issue of mismanagement of capital account and short term loans. This is what Prawase Wasi called as the western imperialism greed to open up Asian market in disguise of values of capitalism over Asian values of society and morale.

Another explanation comes from Ammar Siamwalla which gives a better understanding of the nature of the crisis. He argues, the firms borrowed too much and the bank debt transaction was made easy without any collateral (Chris Baker, 2000b). What makes matter worse is the investment coming through offshore banks and Bangkok International Finance Centre (BIFC) which manage shadow balance sheets and entities to finance those debts. Furthermore, in time of crisis, these banks' debts could be withdrawn easily without any responsibility attached to it. With regards to the so called Asian model of market cronyism, Amar brush it off as non-existence and but the blame more on the misallocation of capital during the boom, which he claimed as the real reason for economic disaster in the hands of the politicians, bureaucracy and business lobby. He explains that, the insistence of Bank of Thailand to de-pegged Thai Baht due to Washington pressure proves to be fatal to

the whole economy. He gave an example of Malaysia's way of diffusing the panic through fiscal measures that works almost instantly as opposed to monetary policy that overblown this crisis further (Kittkulsingh, 1999). Not only that, he also criticised the dirty hands of the politicians that trigger the crisis itself. Their intervention in key economic sector such as the finance industry let to the technocrats leaving the sector and being replaced with people with minimal experience in place as they tries to escape from political squabbles of business politicians. On top of that, he gave a metaphor of 'milking the cow' kind of MPs, whereby the service of an MP is to milk the cow and bring the cream to their own constituencies (Chris Baker, 2000b). This corrupt politicians and lack of regards for rule of law further deepens the economic crisis as the one in power rather than united to held off the crisis, further advance individual interests above all else within the sphere of Thai political economy.

With Chavalit out of the picture and the return of Chuan Leekpai second government, Tarrin Nimmanhaeminda was tasked to bring back Thai economy back on its track (Chris Baker, 2000a). The United States sees Chuan as their hope to fulfil their dream to see an open and liberalise Asia markets. Tarrin himself portray a traits of supporting the liberalisation idea and work back and forth with the IMF to realise this. But the international body comes into fire by both sides of the US parliament, citing the reason such as IMF ambitious projects would trigger a global scale economic crisis and international backers interest wane in their push to open up Asian markets³. Japan shares the same sentiment as the rest of its Asian neighbours decided to take initiative for the introduction of Miyazawa scheme after the United States turned down Japan's plan to initiate Asian Monetary Fund (Chris Baker, 2000a). This new development helps to bring about new hopes after prolongs negotiations with IMF but without any distinct outcome. Upon the initiative announcement, Tarrin becomes the first foreign minister envoys to discuss the details

³ In domestic scene, Thai businesses air their worries that IMF is actually not doing its job properly. Rather the international body touch minor details that can prolongs the crisis itself than providing solutions to the problems in real economy. As the negotiations near its seventh Letter of Intent (LOI) with no solution in the hindsight, the democratic government becomes desperate to kick-start the economy.

to access Miyazawa scheme⁴. Without any complicated arrangements and prolong negotiations as the IMF, Miyazawa scheme shows its effects within months with 0.6% contribution to the Thai GDP by the year 1999. The export based industries return to normal operations and helps to pull the economy from reeling in the aftermath of the credit crunch. Other sector started to pick up pace, although in slower rate, such as the manufacturing industry. The Miyazawa Scheme works well because it goes head on with the real economy as opposed to IMF strategy of fiscal reforms. A total chaos industry, Thailand's financial sector will need more time to get back on its feet therefore other sector must be revitalised as the economy must keep going.

With the economy back on track, Chuan government faces another problem on their table, this time politically. As the press and media related control had been relaxed that saw the industry expand, it had become an effective tool to 'discipline' misbehave politicians by exposing their blunders and scandals on live television. Such live footage of embarrassing revelations of scandals shapes viewer's perspectives and this is another reason why Thai democracy was seen negatively over the past decades. Activists exposed the scandals through tedious research and networks, the media picks it up and the opposition use it as a capital to discredit the government, this political circus in the supposed 'respected hall of the parliament' further tarnish the image of the democracy (Chris Baker, 2000c). Chuan second government has no less in its accumulations of scandals, as it did in his first term in office. The issue of illegal loggings resurfaces, this time in Salween forest, which supposedly the National Park gazettes during his first term. The issue sparks public interest as new pointers show the extent of the scandal and the roles of senior ranking uniform personnel involved in the scandals. The result of the scandals came with a mere sacking of the officers involved and no action taken on the illegal loggers himself. Illegal logging reportedly continues to happen in other national forest across the country.

Thai agricultural sector also hit by the corruption scandal. Deem once as the backbone of the nation, corruption lingers as the distributions of seeds

⁴ Following the discussion, both sides agreed to the arrangements of dual approach stimulus, one for the fiscal policy and another for social related program that can help alleviate social distress.

found to be overpriced by ten times. An investigation found out that the corruption had big hands playing but those responsible just got discipline without any other strong punishments for their crime. Attempts to link the scandals with politicians halted right before the case open. In rice support program, the poor farmer found the trick to falsify the account book. This becomes an instant hit before it was discovered and becomes national scandal. Chuan promised to restore the rule of law, it did happen but the fund no longer can't be recovered. No one was held responsible for the responsible for the incident. All of these in one perspective can be seen as a method by the society to pressure for political reform; a tug of war between the politics status quo and the politic reform agenda. Through scandalisation, they manage to make Barnharn agreed to the movement request for the establishment of an independent Constitution Drafting Authority (CDA) (Chris Baker, 2005). This body garners much attention of the public to participate what the future arrangements of Thai politics should be as part of the reform agenda. The use of both the media portrayal and national panic in time of crisis successfully bolster the support from the public to create one of the most democratic constitutions Thailand has ever seen. Therefore, the scandalisation of politic and the call for depoliticisation of bureaucracy becomes the common theme of the day. Civil society together with the power of media manage to challenge and remind those in power that they are not above the law. As politicians, the deliverance of the service to the public by the past 4 governments in 1990's alone has done more damage than good to Thai democracy. Chuan government for example, despite portraying hope, failed to deliver its promises and return to the corrupt games again. What makes matter worst is, the scandal makes money out of the national budget and resources. Thailand at the turn of the century politically in deep mess and politicians makes matter worse by making the institution for personal bargaining than to serve the nation.

4.4.5 What Motivates the Negative Connotations towards the Thai Politics?

As can be seen above, the negative connotations on Thai politics exist since the very beginning. First, it can be argued that Thai democracy was conceived not by the people and for the people. Rather, Thai democracy comes into being by selected educated elites and continues to serve the elite's interests. Second, it

further develops when the politic is controlled by the military. For example, Phibun in his attempts to 'civilised' the new nation-state of Thailand, engineered a social and ideological transformations by making assertive of what it mean to be Thai. Based on 'good moral grounds' and a selective cultural identities, Phibun lead the way for embedding the distrust towards democracy by making democracy as a demagogue to Thai way of life. This pattern continued and strengthened by subsequent dictator Sarit by enhancing his image as the father of the land that safeguards Thailand from any possible 'disruptions'. However, with the explosion of educated Thais coming back to the motherland, new ideas and political thoughts seeping in that manage to gather momentum and help to bring about civil activism. However, before long, the old elites manage to subdue these ideologies and political leanings by accusing them collaborating with the feared Communist insurgents. These narratives further expand to include that of politic of moral that coloured Thai politics until today. The rise of Chao pho since the development era and their presence in the politics further makes matter worse as they wrestle with each other to get governments' contracts, deals and procurement that can further enriched themselves. Hence, the Thais naturally felt disappointed with the performance of Thai politics complemented with the already embedded distrust towards democracy overtime. In short, ideology plays an important part in the shaping up of such narratives as well as the performance of Thai politics that continue to disappoint many Thai.

4.5 Summary

The last decades of the 20th century sees a different setting in the political atmosphere of Thailand. Decades of arrangement and negotiations as well as the adaptations bring about the rise of Chao pho and its entanglement with bureaucracy to advance each other interest. The lengthy explanations provided before give a clear picture on how democracy was hijacked by Chao pho and the last strong men in the old elites, the bureaucracy colluded with corruption and abuse of power that will hit back at Thailand badly. The lesson from 1997 Asian Economic crisis stemmed from the very facet of the Thai democracy allowing the wrong people in power and the absence of an effective civil society to prevent them to keep the power. Above all

else, Thai politics itself is institutionally broken, with no proper check and balance existed in the system due to series of coups and numerous scrapping of the constitution. With the military staying low for the whole decade it gives a perfect time for the public to discuss openly and seriously about their political aspiration and arguments that bring about the 1997 constitution. Great thinkers and political activists sprang out to give the society an idea on the working of democracy.

The onset of 1997 economic crisis becomes a big lesson for Thailand that initiate a process of weakening of the influence of Chao pho. The economic crisis also served as an opportunity for new players to come to the scene such as the popular Thai Rak Thai party under Thaksin which their rise as a result of the political, social and economic distress post 1997 crisis. Despite the scandalisation of Thai politics and demeaning of Thai democracy, 1997 constitution give the Thais a sense of hope for a new era, whereby a new modern Thailand that embrace globalisation and stride forward to stand among the advance country. Looking ahead is another exciting episode in Thai politics that will change how power is being played. The rise of Thaksin and his TRT party eventually led to a major recalibration of power and in some sense is a major political reform that Thai politics has ever seen. The old elites never realize, their concession to save their interests that bring about the birth of 1997 People's Constitution will become their biggest nightmare. The next chapter will go on to prove how severe the negative connotations toward Thai politics are, with a brief retrospective introduction that entails how Thaksin contribute to the persistent negative connotations that persist today. Later on, to prove the author's point, a case study based on the literatures and ideology of the recent protest group i.e. People's Democratic Reform Committee PDRC) is chosen. The next chapter will show how grim it is such connotations towards the future of Thai politics as a whole

CHAPTER 5

PERSISTENT NEGATIVE CONNOTATION ON THAI DEMOCRACY

5.1 Persistent Negative Connotation on Thai Democracy

5.1.1 Dawn of a New Era: Thaksin Phenomenon and its Aftermath

The political atmosphere at the turn of the century marked an important moment in Thai history. The country just barely gets out of the biggest economic crisis Thailand has ever gone through in recent memory. Democratically elected government of Chuan managed to bring the economy back on its track, yet the whole country still reels from the impact of the crisis itself. Frustrations comes pouring from many corners of the society, which in one part bring about the so called ‘the 1997 People’s Constitution’, whereby hopes lies on the future of not just Thai politics but extended to its socio economic terms. From the grunts of failed businesses to the complaints of the middle class and the silent sufferings of the unemployed workers; the Thai society expecting big change to come to the rescue through 1997 constitution and the next election (Satitniramai, 2007). Despite the scandalisation of politics by the media and academics, Thai people in general still hope for political solutions that can turn this crisis around. Looking at the current situation, Thai Rak Thai Party (TRT) lead by Thaksin used this as a model for their electoral platform which eventually brings them to the Government House. With promises to restore stability and prosperity, TRT look out to save big businesses from another crisis, to transform bureaucracy into an effective state mechanism that will ease in doing business as well as to catapult Thailand to be on par with the OECD countries (Chris Baker, 2005). Their promises seem bizarre, yet due to no other party can provide clearest path ahead than TRT, the party went ahead from its opponents and wins a lot of support from the society. This popularity marked the start of a new phenomenon centred upon one man, ‘Thaksin Phenomenon’ that lasts until today.

Once in office, Thaksin brought a lot of ‘firsts’ to the way the government is handle. He showed an example how dynamic a democratically elected

government can be just to fit in the narratives of surviving until the next election. For example, TRT is the first party to have its own in team policy making body (Satitniramai, 2007). This team served to set the goal of achieving their electoral promises by aligning government policies with that of the party. By doing so, the government can reach out to wider groups of people and communities rather than let the core agencies making the policies which in turns making the government less attached to the people. Through this approach, TRT can cement its position by delivering what it has promised during election campaigns. For example, TRT brought in student activists to be part of the team as they realise, these activists had experience with the grassroots communities (Chris Baker, 2011). By recognising their contributions and supporting their missions, TRT manage to change once inorganise movements into a backbone to their progressive populist policies such as the debt relief, Revolving Village Funds, universal health care amongst others. TRT therefore quite adept at making such arrangements which in return will boost their popularity even further, with the main actor is Thaksin.

Not only that, in his attempts to take direct control over the direction of the whole country, he created his own policy team called TRT Economic Formulation Committee that challenge the traditional core agencies whom responsible for policy making in the past. By doing so, this will help to accelerate reform agenda and make sure that the bureaucracy is following what the government wants. As a result, nationwide development can be carried out with less bureaucratic practice involved as well as allowing the bureaucracy itself underwent major transformation that will change its independent status towards integrating it to become an effective and efficient vehicle for the government (Hewison, 2010). Through a new body of Office of the Public Sector Commission (OPSC) that answer directly to the Prime Minister; major changes has been made such as increasing the number of ministries from 14 to 20 that fits national development agenda, initiatives to cut service time by 30% - 50% and to downsize the institution itself by pushing for performance based work ethic in place of seniority-based way of doing thing as such in the past. Moreover, in the far flung province, the government install co provincial governors that have more power and mandates than the one appointed by the bureaucracy (specifically Ministry of Home Affairs) that acted as the 'eyes and ears of the Prime

Minister' to ensure development agenda is accordingly conducted. This is what Suehiro claimed as Thaksin's attempts to 'behave' the bureaucracy towards having a 'Prime Minister led system of governance' that was allowed to happen due to the provision of strengthened executive powers enshrined in the 1997 Constitution (Akira, 2007).

One last blow to the bureaucracy is when Thaksin decided to boost Central Funds which normally use for emergency cases and at certain point to allow the Prime Minister to have some fund for smaller scale projects. By channeling the budget towards Central Funds, this gives him financial advantage in fulfilling TRT election promises (Satitniramai, 2007). This in return significantly reduced the budget allocated to the ministries, forcing them to cut their expenses. Normally, the Prime Minister has less involvement and leverage in determining national budget as it has to pass the Parliament scrutiny. If the needs arise, the Prime Minister has to liaise with many ministries just to get things done. However, for Central fund, such need is not needed as the fund can be approved just through simple majority votes from the cabinet ministers. Therefore, through Central Fund, Thaksin were able to introduce revolving village funds, open up banks for the people, and bring about community based development as well as to focus on improving national competitiveness. In short, TRT government is quite adept in maneuvering executive powers to their advantage which allowed him to have enormous powers to restructure not only bureaucracy but also other parts of institutions that once deemed as crucial to the old elites. Even though the issue of bureaucratic reform is long overdue, during Thaksin it has gone extra miles to the point that it has been reduced to a mere government vehicle to carry out national development agenda, though with a clean image of efficiency and accountability. As a result, dissatisfactions brewing across the society, which once supported him and brought him to power. Reasons such as his increasing egoism, betraying his promises to urban dwellers and especially his increasingly authoritarian nature; Thaksin faces resistance even from once his closest friends (Chris Baker, 2011). His direct challenge against the old elites such as his intervention in attempting to install his allies in key post in the military and the bureaucracy, as well as the technocracy gained him immediate enemies which in the future, band with each other just to bring him down from the height of power. Therefore, urban centres

especially in Bangkok slowly filled with sentiments against Thaksin, as people increasingly wary of the rise of a new dictator, though this time it is not coming from the military but through democracy itself.

5.1.2 One Man Show: The Fall of Thaksin and His Legacy

Equipped with popularity and the changes he brought about to Thailand, Thaksin must have felt he has everything in his disposal. However, it seems the current status is not yet enough, Thaksin ventures out to reach out to the people in his bid to return to office for second time in 2005 election cycle. With his propaganda machines and state apparatus in his hands, he uses whatever it takes to show himself mingle with the poorest of the people, the minority groups, the unfortunates amongst the many groups of people that he met and shown through national television as well as the extensive use of the media. It seems he determines to continue in power by winning more elections. By changing his strategy that leans more towards the grassroots, he wins the election with a landslide victory. It is a historic day not only for Thailand but also Thai history, as there has never been a Prime Minister who manages to finish one term yet alone to be re-elected (Chris Baker, 2005). This phenomenon celebrated by the people whom affected by TRT policies as a new era of democratic Thailand, a new Thailand that has forgot about the past and stride forward with confidence (Duncan McCargo, 2005). However, little did people know, the past is yet to haunt him as the seat of power itself, Bangkok is start to feel the heat of resistance against him and his popularity. His enemies started to line up in a show of force to show their dissatisfaction towards him. A prominent critic in this movement against him is his former close friend, Sondhi Limthongkul, which their relationship turns sour over personal attributes. A media mogul himself, he uses the wave of resistance triggered from Thaksin's mishandling of family-run business Shincorp's sales to Singapore's Temasek group, which sparked public outcry for the lack of transparency. He aligned himself with big businesses whom felt betrayed by Thaksin's earlier promise to save domestic economy against foreign competition, the middle class whom felt betrayed by populist policy for the poor at the expense of the urban dwellers, the social activists whom felt were used by the party for the party benefit and the old bastion of oligarchs and the old elites, which suffered from Thaksin's intervention in their sphere of interests (Nostitz, 2009).

Inspired from Pramuan Ruajanaseri's works entitled 'Royal Powers', Sondhi use comparative excuse that Thaksin is acting above the law and the King. Sondhi through rallies and the use of media shaped the people's perception that overwhelming Thaksin popularity is an act of treason in itself. Not only that, Sondhi repeated calls for protests and public demonstration in Sanam Luang to send a signal to Thaksin that the people were unhappy with him and his policies. Slowly the protest get organise into a systemic protest group, named People Alliance for Democracy (PAD), or collectively call as the Yellow Shirts, the colour associated with the monarchy. The protest gained a lot of media coverage in their support to show to the whole nation that the government is having a crisis in meeting the demand of the people. With increasing number of protesters by day and the pressure within the parliament itself, Thaksin dissolved the parliament and called for a snap election on April 2nd. Sondhi continues to criticise Thaksin and repeatedly call for the palace to invoke the Article 7 which will allowed His Majesty to appoint a new Prime Minister in time of crisis. This strategy seems to work, as the protests grew in number, political parties boycotted the election and His Majesty indirectly intervene by asking the judiciary to 'do its job' in solving this political stalemate (Chris Baker, 2011). As a result, the outcome of April 2nd election effectively annulled and the caretaker government need to come up with another timetable for orderly transfer of power through election, slated by October 2006. A tug of war between the government and the Yellow Shirts happens until the military decided to launch a coup against the legitimate government of TRT on the basis of corruption, abuse of power and treason. It is quite implicit that some royalist plays a hand behind the scene despite their denial.

The legacy of Thaksin in Thai politics is enormous. Never before Thai politics has been recalibrated this far and this much. Indirectly, these changes to strengthen democracy arouse sentiment of fears to the old traditional powers (Duncan McCargo, 2005). As a populist figure himself, his popularity and the success of his program gives him more legitimacy to change Thai socio economic and political spectrums as he stand by the people's wishes. Together with the power brought about by the 1997 constitution, Thaksin has at his disposal everything that he needs to bring about change in Thailand once and for all (Satitniramai, 2007). One of the most

notable legacies that he left is the mobilisation of mass politics of which he engineered. At first, it happens purely out of the conditions that Thailand was in back in 2001 that make people seeking for a saviour of which they found attachments with TRT. However, when it comes to 2005 election, it can be said that Thaksin brought democratic evolution with the birth of mass politics reaching its peak and never has been seen before. Within 4 years, through various social programs for the grassroots, the TRT government manages to catapult the poor rural dwellers to become up and coming middle class with knowledge far better than that of the affluent middle class in urban centres. The debates and discourses of politics are healthily discussed without the fear of repression so that people can freely choose whom they think deserve to lead Thailand.

Moreover, through 1997 constitution, the Thais can directly vote for the electorates that can bring about change to their life as they can vote down to the village head (Chris Baker, 2000c). In the past, parliamentary vote delimits the extent of benefits to their community and often these parliamentary electorates left them frustrated after cycle of promises. Yet Thaksin and TRT make use of this to go directly to the people and ensure the people receive the benefit of government's initiatives so that their livelihood can be improve and in return allowing them to have some ample time to do something else and one of it could be following the development of politics in the country (Duncan McCargo, 2005). Such a mass participation in politics has never been seen before in Thailand. Thai government does not necessarily in need of traditional powers and approaches to reach out and wins the people's heart as well as trust. Therefore, the old bastion of powers feels threaten as they were increasingly push to the corner by Thaksin regime, forcing them to innovate in order to fit in the new system that Thaksin has laid down. Capitalising of the build-up of resistance over Thaksin policies and popularity, the old elite emerge from hiatus by making use of this unsatisfied groups to do the job for them. Hence, Thaksin also left a legacy in strengthening negative perception due to his direct confrontations with the old oligarchs and his popularity of which kills him slowly and later on eats up the democracy itself.

The coup makers quickly organise themselves to be in defend of the country and the revered monarchy institution, stating Thaksin popularity as a threat to

the institution itself. Facing lash backs from western media over its covert shield of the monarchy, the junta changes into Council of National Security headed by a conservative General, Surayud Chulanont. The junta immediately scrap the 1997 constitution and quickly works on a new constitution that seek to stop Shinawatra clans from coming back to power, which they had failed to do so up until today. However, the seed is already planted, after prolong tug of war with bloody violence and dramatic events from 2006 to 2011, the country enters a brief democratic return lead by non-other but the youngest sister of Thaksin herself, Yingluck Shinawatra. The seeds of persistent negative perception no longer left as an imagined concept, but become a movement with its on strength and ideology. The next part will analyse how the movements up the ante of its games from attacking individuals they don't like in politics to the removal of democracy as a whole due to lack of trust towards democracy, which the pioneer of this ideology explains as being saturated by elements of Thaksin regime.

5.2 Case Study on Persistent Negative Connotation on Thai Democracy: PDRC

5.2.1 People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC)

Since the restoration of democracy in 2011, after years of political turmoil, Thais seems relieved to see peace that they have long for. Even though it is quite bitter for the fact that the party affiliated to the supposed ex authoritarian leader, Thaksin Shinawatra won the last election; people are calm to accept the result of the election. However, the government led by the first ever women Prime Minister, Yingluck Shinawatra is not all rosy as many have hoped for. Soon enough, her administration will be rocked with scandals and rumours of which Thai politics is known for. Start with her management of Flood in 2011 to the issue of Preah Vihear, sound of protests against her government getting stronger by day. Without knowing, the old elites and networks of oligarch are planning for the right time to strike and the best instrument to protect their interest. After giving her some breathing space, the old elites found a perfect opportunity to get rid of the influence of the man they hate as well as to abrogate the whole system of power. On the inside of the system itself, they

have their own people just to carry out the perfect plan to bring the outcomes that is favourable to them. During this time, negative connotations of Thai politics no longer served as empty narratives, but already have a *soul* and strength to be invoke among the masses, as can be learn from the political struggle since the fall of Thaksin. This chapter is the limelight that shed light to evidence that helps to explain the existence of persistent negative perception on Thai politics as we known today; through the lens of People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC). The Committee spearheaded the anti-government movement of not only to uproot the influence of Thaksin as they claimed; but to seek to suspend the democracy altogether with their vague ideology of People's Council.

Starting out only as a cell among many groups that protests against government decision to introduce and later on vote on the ill-advised amnesty bill, which seek to pardon criminal charges brought to politicians as a result of political turmoil started in 2006. The main idea behind this Amnesty Bill is that, it served as the groundwork for reconciliation that Pheu Thai government tries to broker. However, the government was caught in sensation, miscalculate that the Thais, political factions and interest groups is ready to move forward and will support their goodwill. The government immediately in a shaky position thanks to manipulation of the Amnesty Bill into something else that totally different. As a result, protests grew in number and criticisms come from all corners of the society. In the eyes of the anti-bill protestors, the bill will do nothing to let the country move forward, let alone to bring back those who becomes the victims and lost their life (BangkokPost, 2014m) while others see it as an attempt by Pheu Thai government to absolve charges against Thaksin that will allow him to come back. In simple words, to white wash the people whom held responsible for political clashes is something the Thai people can't accept at the current moment, therefore resulted in mass confusion and blaming game quickly gain prominence. The government insistence to move forward and vote the controversial Bill on 11 November sparked nationwide outcry. Immediately, in the eyes of those whom against the bill and their sympathisers, the government had betrayed them. The political players that are at odd with Thaksin affiliated party sprang up from hiatus, leading many protesters with the biggest rally sites situated near to Government House, Finance Ministry and Democracy Monument.

Suthep Thaugsuban declaration stand out during this critical moment to become the central figure amongst many protest groups bands together asking to kill the bill altogether. Later on, the narrative change to oust the government, of which they claimed as deeply rooted with ‘Thaksin influence’. Suthep imagined,

“... the poisonous tree is the ‘Thaksin Regime’ that’s need to be removed. Amnesty bill is he poisonous fruit of the poisonous tree...”

(Bangkok Post, 16 November 2016).

It is clear from his declaration that, as the leader of the protest groups, the anti-government protesters does not believe in the capacity of the elected government as each and one that comes from the election must have affiliation to Thaksin all these while. By taking advantage of people sentiments toward Thaksin and the anger towards Yingluck’s government, Suthep were able to mobilised an ideology that is totally non democratic in nature. With the formal formation of an umbrella anti-government movement called People’s Committee for Thailand’s Absolute Democracy under the Constitutional Monarchy (or better known as People’s Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC), Suthep as the key leader able to link up the distrusts towards parliamentary system with the supposed authoritarian cum popular elected ex-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (BangkokPost, 2013f). In short, PDRC were able to mobilise people with its ideology despite its non-democratic flavours. PDRC as a case study to dissect the core of negative perception towards Thai democracy will give us the real evidence on how far the perception can be stretch.

5.2.2 PDRC’s Manifesto

As the movement gets more organise by day, there is an urgent need for the protest leaders to come up with a vision on what PDRC wants to achieve through its protests. The first sign of PDRC’s vision for the movement can be traced back through PDRC’s main tactic throughout their 7 months struggle, the civil disobedience strategy (BangkokPost, 2013b). This marked a major change in their aim from killing the bill towards ousting the government altogether. Therefore, Suthep called for nationwide strike; whereby to halt the government from operating, of which according to the movement, the government has no right to continue their

mandate. This announcement also marked the start of PDRC sometimes violent clashes with security forces, media and government officials in their efforts to topple the government by wreaking havoc. Few days later, Suthep comes forward with more reasons to keep the protest going, stating reasons such as the government is under the influence of Thaksin by linking up the government attempt to introduce the amnesty bill that can freed him from charges (BangkokPost, 16 November 2016). The movement also announces they will lodge a complaint against 310 MPs that supported the ill-fated bill to National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC). Suthep claims that, the protest will not yield until the government is out of the picture, which according to him, full with 'Thaksin's sidekick' such as Department of Special Investigation (DSI), Senate Speaker, Parliament President and Pheu Thai government as a whole. Therefore, it is important to 'uproot' Thaksin Regime from continue 'plaguing' the country.

It is not until Tuesday night in late November 2013, Suthep did hinted at suspending democracy to allow nationwide reform to take place (BangkokPost, 2013j). Although said in passing, this announcement comes not as a shock to many; as people at the height of their anger towards the government and widespread rumours about the government makes the people less interested in democratic principles, therefore, an alternative to it seen to be promising to many protesters. Suthep hinted at unelected government to run the country as opposed to an elected one, as they claimed to stop the cycle of infiltration to power by Thaksin proxies. The government will be called as People's Council that will be made up of different sectors and professions in the society. Prime Minister will be picked from the 'good people' to carry out yet unclear reform plan. Because of vague hints given by him, Suthep was pressured by scholars to be clear in his plans and vision for PDRC and which path, according to rule of law, that he is going to use to legitimise his claims for the introduction of People's Council.

Suthep comes up with an explanation that, it is stipulated in Section 3 of the constitution therefore People Assembly can be established as he claimed (BangkokPost, 2013g). He argued, the section stipulated the national sovereign power belongs to the people hence the people have the ultimate power to decide for themselves, not limited to decisions made by the government. Not only that, every

individual has the duty to uphold the nation, religion and the king, a strikingly similar approach that being put forward by the Yellow Shirts (Nostitz, 2009). Henceforth, in this current state, with the government has betrayed its mandate, he believe, people to seize power is therefore allowed. The next day, to realise his claims, Suthep announce the establishment of the an umbrella organisation for the whole protest named People's Committee for Thailand's Absolute Democracy under the Constitutional Monarchy, or better known as People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) (BangkokPost, 2013f). With the establishment of a steering committee to realise the mission of toppling the government; the protest movement evolve to become a force to achieve their ultimate goal of establishing People's Council-led reforms.

The main idea behind the People's Council system that envisioned by PDRC is to create a political vacuum by any means necessary, so that the People's Council can be established to replace the parliament. Suthep argues, through Section 3 and 70, People as the sovereign power means

“Our words will become law, once we become the sovereign... we will appoint Prime Minister of the people and submit the name to His Majesty, to be countersigned by me. After that, we will set up the People's Council, which will lead the reform before the country can proceed with fresh election”

(Bangkok Post, 1 April 2014).

Accordingly, the envisioned council will be made up of 400 members, of which 300 members comes from wide section of the society while 100 others will be handpicked by PDRC as the steering Committee. The Council then continues with its works to reform the country revolving around 5 main themes such as Politics, corruption, power decentralisation, social equality and justice process. Suthep expects the reform process will be completed within a year. Despite the legislative power held by the People's Council, the executive power will remain in the hands of royal appointed interim Prime Minister which will oversee the reform process. After the reform process finish in timely manner, election therefore restored and the People's Council will be suspended soon after. Suthep argues, the need for the

establishment of People's Council is due to the political landscape of which he claims has been hijacked repeatedly by the so called 'Thaksin Regime'. Furthermore, the government of Yingluck has lost the legitimacy to run in the eyes of the people, after repeatedly betraying them with regards to amnesty bill, attempts to change the constitution, as well as corruptions cases such as the rice pledging scheme and as far as her management of Preah Vihear issue that hurts the country's pride in international arena. Therefore, the government needs to take responsibility by resigning en masse so that political vacuum can be taken into advantage for the establishment of the People's Council. Only when Thaksin Regime gone from the picture, PDRC and its People's Council concept can assume that a fair and clean election can be done.

However, not all agrees with the People's Council as envisioned by Suthep. Scholars soon enough lambasted the plan and calls it as 'fascist ideology' (BangkokPost, 2013e). Kasian Tejapira argues, what Suthep wants to introduce will bring Thailand deeper into political crisis, not to solve it. He even sceptical about PDRC's manifesto is belonging to the people at all as Suthep claims. Kasian explains, to have political reform is normal in any political landscape. As for democratic countries, it must be done through democratic elections and within democratic means and principles. Outside of that context, reform will only bring the country a step closer to authoritarian or dictatorial past while effectively reduce democracy as a mere mask for political manoeuvring. He advised, it is normal for democracy to mature in a timely manner. On the other hand, Worachit Pakeerut argues, PDRC have totally misunderstood the Section 3. The section mean that, His Majesty to act as a sovereign through parliament, not through People's Council, effectively making their suggestion as illegal and can be translated as a coup of sort. More scholars come up to object PDRC manifesto such as Sukham Nuansakul and Thanet Abhornsvan (BangkokPost, 2014o). Both of them argues, PDRC shouldn't see the current political crisis having similar political climate as the 70's, whereby institutions and rule of law is weak. In today political climate, to have an unelected leader is something that will be frowned upon. Executive and legislative power should come from ballot box and to strip them from power should also be done through ballot box, or at least through constitutional means. Consequently, it is unimaginable

such a proposal receive much reception from the public, an evidence of negative perception on Thai politics seeping deep into Thai society.

5.2.3 Ideology That Works

For simple minded person, it doesn't matter about the arguments that PDRC vision for Thailand is democratic or not. For the fact that this ideology works, the rest doesn't even matters. However, in this study, the author took extra miles to study further the extent of ideology that PDRC tried to push. How far can its 'proxies' or puppets go and to sustain its campaign until the end? This question brings us to two intertwined issues of negative perception of Thai politics that can be found through PDRC's narratives. First, on the surface, everything seems clear; the main theme of the protest is due to firstly the incompetent and corrupt government. On the other hand, for the fact that it was led by the blood sister of the man they hate, it gives them more 'capital' to attack democracy as somewhat hijacked by Thaksin's elements and becomes the so called grand plan of 'Thaksin Regime' as such 'Thaksinisation' ideas of the past. PDRC is quite adept at making linkages by arousing people distrusts and playing with their anxiety just from the 'allergic' word of Shinawatra. PDRC goes extra length by extending the ideology to hate Thaksin to be extended to the whole democracy, effectively making much damage to the image of democracy itself. Standing as the voice of the people itself (similar connotations to the Yellow Shirts), PDRC boasts itself of having almost a hundred networks coming from different backgrounds that supports their cause. Those networks such as medical professionals, labour student union, economic players, political parties, military, student unions, religious leaders amongst many that pledge their support for PDRC's struggle and manifesto. Not only that, infamous rich families made their debuts and show a strong presence in PDRC rallies, which is something had never been seen before (Marshall, 2013). Their main reason to follow PDRC simply because of PDRC affiliations to now defunct People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) or simply known as Yellow Shirts. PDRC resembles the former in their rhetoric of the 3 issues critical to their ideology i.e. the people, religion and monarchy as well as unrequited love for the monarchy that basically attracts former Yellow Shirts to join their cause (Nostitz, 2009).

These arguments brought us to the second issues that explain PDRC's ideology strength i.e. the issue underneath the surface, which many have overlooked and paid no attention to. The fact that PDRC win the support of those networks, if one looks carefully, these networks is actually made up of key interest groups within Thai politic itself. There must be some reasons why these networks accept such a strange and undemocratic proposals 'blindly'. Voranai Vijanika gives a conclusive argument of why PDRC ideology easily accepted even to the big shots in the society. He claims, this goes back to the time when Thaksin still in power, Thaksin heads on approach in challenging the power and interest of the old elites opens up a big gap in ideology between the two (Vijanika, 2014b). With Thaksin pushing forward with his policies that bring favours to the far flung regions and drain the power and resources of the 'Bangkok Regime', this change how things had been played in Thai politics. Almost overnight, Thaksin was made a hero for once a neglected cause that lingers around the powerless poor regions in Thailand, at the same time see a decline in popularity amongst the urban dwellers. The old bastion of power had enough of him, cropping up rumours and scandals in the hope to sway people from their 'hero' by arguing his popularity undermine those of the revered monarch and his increasingly authoritarian nature, which they claim as 'a barrier to progress and the usurper of national identity' (Vijanika, 2014b). Thus, by reviving these old sentiments back to the surface, PDRC managed to join forces with remnants of those that were hurt by Thaksin to support their cause. These networks don't care if the plan works or not, as long as their interests in Thai politics keep intact, they will do what they can to keep the protest going. Therefore, it is important for them to support PDRC in any means necessary, despite they themselves keep aloof from contributing the hard labour by protesting on the streets. This pattern of ideology is what Voranai said as 'vengeance plan' masked as a reform plan. He himself felt sceptical, if the protesters and their networks understand what they are fighting at all.

Suthep himself knows exactly, this protests will go nowhere without an attractive ideology that can arouse people's sentiments towards Thai politics. At the same time, protests leaders understand, ideology alone is not enough to keep the momentum going. Hence, strategy must be device to achieve what they fight for. In general, through mobilisation of ideology and strategy to achieve their goal, the

protesters can peak to 250,000, declining gradually to a mere 10,000 by April 2014⁵. Initially, PDRC received a lot of supports from wide section of the society, only to be pressured to scale down and to come up with immediate results after a mere 6 months of street protest. Their pressure tactics to force the government to quit only done little dent. In the end, PDRC acknowledge the fact that this protest won't do much despite the attractiveness of the ideology (Vijanika, 2014a). Consequently, PDRC works on multiple tactics and strategy to bring the government down.

5.2.4 PDRC's Tactic Trends and Development

In recent years, since the fall of Thaksin, Thai politics had become polarise than ever. The landscape had shift from better to worse since 2006. Due to the ability of certain groups between the two camps, People sentiments towards Thai Politics it seems hard to comprehend. The rise of the Yellow Shirt and the Red Shirt with their opposing ideologies, views and approaches in getting what they want had driven majority of Thais to have misinformation and misinterpretation about Thai politics. So confusing it is, nothing can be literally make the two camps to agree with each other, just to create a mutually workable political system that the two sides can agree with. The struggle from 2006 seems to be an unfinished business and PDRC ability to scour people's sentiments against Thaksin Regime stem from this reason. The author found out, through the study of PDRC's narratives since the beginning of the movement till May coup; PDRC have come up with several tactics that shows it has long term plan to kick the government out and carry out their proposed reform. For example, the civil disobedience strategy started immediately after the formation of PDRC on 30th of November 2013 (BangkokPost, 2013b). Starting from a small cell of protesters in Samsen railway station exploded to a bigger rally sites near to the seat of power in Rattanakosin just to bring the government down. At the dawn of New Year 2014, Suthep announce to shut Bangkok down in what he calls as to seize the capital from the government (BangkokPost, 2013i). This campaign sees the peak of the protest as the urban dwellers join the charade as well as their staunch supporters from the south. During this campaign, PDRC reign supreme on the streets, with major

⁵ data collected from news clippings from November 2013 to May 2014

rallies held every few days and almost daily marches to key government agencies trying to stop them from functioning.

PDRC also denounce and block the election, whereby there are clashes leading to the election on in early February. For example, the chaotic party-list MP registration that forced the Election Commission to almost give up in pushing forward with the registration on certain days (BangkokPost, 2013a), disruption to early voting period (BangkokPost, 2014l) and ultimately blocked the election itself (XinhuaNewsAgency, 2014b), though the turn out found to be quite high (BangkokPost, 2014x). During this time, PDRC ideology gain prominence with protest leaders and invited speakers aired negative sentiments towards Thai politics to draw legitimacy to their campaign. Motto such as '*Restart Thailand*' and '*Ok Pai Yingluck*' becomes the common phrase that colours the protest. However, there are reports of PDRC harassing the media from doing their job and forced to report in favour of PDRC stories (BangkokPost, 2013d, BangkokPost, 2013c). However, Bangkok shut down campaign do much damage to the economy and the livelihood of the city dwellers rather than hurting the government, which pressure PDRC to change plan and keep their act straight. For that reason, Suthep close all rally sites by the end of February and combine all into a single rally site centred upon Lumpini Park.

Apart from that, despite where their protest site going to be, there are some tactics that were used throughout the protest lifetime. Besieging government ministries and agencies as well as television stations becomes their main approach to shake the government (BangkokPost, 2014h). As an example, Ministry of Interior were siege for almost 6 months, before the coalition of Kamnans and village representative comes to free the Ministry from prolong siege by PDRC's splinter group (BangkokPost, 2014k). PDRC also is quick to make new networks and take up their cause such as the issue of rice pledging scheme and labour. The issue start to pick up in January as stalled payment enters its 3rd month (BangkokPost, 2014n) and Suthep quickly 'help' to raise money to be used for the Farmers to prolong their own protest against the government (BangkokPost, 2014g). Although PDRC successfully makes it case for National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) to accept the case of dereliction of duty that could impeach the Prime Minister, yet the rice farmers aren't that stupid to allow their cause to be hijack by PDRC. The farmers quickly lambasted

PDRC not to politicise the issue as it involved their livelihood (BangkokPost, 2014c). At some point, the farmers get fed up with PDRC as what they did in the name of the farmers do no good but making things worse when PDRC stalled government attempts to sell the rice stockpiles to provide payment for the farmers (BangkokPost, 2014d).

On top of that, PDRC continuously submitted cases against the Prime Minister and her administration for various reasons, in the hope that, one of these cases could topple her from power as well as effectively give them more capital to smear the image of the government. Charges such as murder for various occasions such as instructing violent crackdown against protesters (BangkokPost, 2014v, BangkokPost, 2014f, BangkokPost, 2014w) and wasting taxpayers money for pushing forward with the inconclusive February election result (BangkokPost, 2014s). It doesn't matter how absurd the legal charges are, PDRC just trying their luck through legal means to pressure her out of office. In term of tactic development, PDRC seems to be quite adept at manipulating the heated political arguments and debates at that time to their advantage. For example, in the early days of PDRC, its leaders repeatedly echo Yingluck's incapability to lead the nation by linking her management of 2011 flood and the Preah Vihear case. These two events, though people have varying opinions on it, it has become the 'fertiliser' for the already breeding negative connotation against Pheu Thai government. Then comes the Amnesty bill that sparked the protests and subsequent Pheu Thai attempts to abrogate the constitution to allow senate to be elected, which in the eyes of anti-government protesters and their sympathisers, as an attempt by the government boost their own power at the expense of the state. No matter, how much Pheu Thai tries to explain their intention; for hardliner protesters, PDRC ideology is preferable even though it might mean Thailand will lose its hard earned democracy.

Furthermore, the issue of rice pledging scheme and the unlawful transition of Secretary General of National Security Council (NSC), Thawil Pliensri served another achievement for PDRC in their efforts to topple the government and to establish People's Council. Though consequential in nature, it shows one thing for sure about PDRC struggles; from its peak in December 2013/January 2014, the movement is struggling to keep the momentum thus explains its inconsistency in what

to achieve. PDRC failed to take into account how long it will take just to achieve their dream and through what channel it can be achieved. PDRC seems to know, the civil disobedience and street protest strategy that they lead will not last long and the momentum could run out of its steam soon enough. Consequently, PDRC have come up with steps on how to achieve political vacuum that enables the formation of People's Council. The 4 steps to oust the government can be summarised as the following; first to impeach Yingluck through alleged corruption (which later change to dereliction of duty), second, to remove all Pheu Thai minister through scandals that can implicate them out of office, third to nullify the February poll as the government failed to produce result within 30 days after election and lastly to ban 308 MPs who tried to amend the constitution in December (XinhuaNewsAgency, 2014a).

This strategy comes out very closely to the development that will happen until the coup in May. This shows, PDRC really did have a plan and it will do whatever it takes just to achieve what it wants. As the momentum of the street protest dwindles, especially after moving to Lumpini, PDRC seems to pay more attention to this strategy. Their activities limited to the compound of Lumpini Park and few marches during the day to limit disturbances to the economy and the livelihood of the city dwellers and commuters. Since then, PDRC activities have wind down as Suthep says, rulings from National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) and the Constitutional Court (CC) will determine the outcome of their struggles. Suthep by this time, becomes emboldened as it seems, other 'hands' is doing the job for him to remove Prime Minister and it is only a matter of time PDRC will achieve its goal. This particular change in tactic followed the recent observations that his revolution dwindles in supports and rallying cause, together with pressure from his allies to produce results (BangkokPost, 2014t). PDRC by now, despite facing problems on how to continue the protests, had influential backers and these backers use their 'insiders' to facilitate the job for PDRC.

In the meantime, there are parties related to PDRC who want to intervene and try to solve political impasse. Abhisit Vejjajiva as the leader of the Democrat party repeatedly tries to initiate talks between the two camps and at one point comes up with reform plan almost similar to what is suggested by PDRC but along the lines of what Pheu Thai can tolerate with (BangkokPost, 2014y). Suthep

brushed this offer and called his former boss as ‘bossy middlemen’ which tries to seek political solution and disregard people’s demands just to get something that can work between the two sides. Another one comes from Minister of Justice, Chaikasem Nitisiri, which in his personal capacity as judge, give personal opinion that Section 7 that allowed His Majesty to intervene in appointing a Prime Minister should the crisis prolongs as a way out, but must be in legal way as much as possible. This cause alarm amongst the society, as the people still see no need for invocation of it as the caretaker government is still functioning well. PDRC have no comments on this regard but one splinter group claims that Chaikasem arguments is actually to pressure independent agencies from bringing the government to stand trial (BangkokPost, 2014q). This argument crops up following the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) and Constitutional Court (CC) announcement to try Prime Minister and her admin for various charges⁶ and an attempt by a coalition of independent agencies to hold political reform and act as mediator between the two camps. 7 Independent agencies involved are the Election Commission, Office of Ombudsman, National anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), National Economic and Social Advisory Council and the Attorney General office comes together announcing a road map for political reform involving 4 main issues with 6 points roadmap (BangkokPost, 2014f). The 4 main issues are to look at the possibility of holding reform before or after election as well as implicitly imply any other alternative; looking back at the possibility of PDRC plan. Second issue centred upon what to be reform and its success rate, follow with the question of should the caretaker government continue their mandate or a new one should be set up, echoing PDRC sentiments there. Lastly, the issue of violence is stipulated and how to end it immediately. The 6 points roadmap seek to let the public informed on all stages of the reform, to listen to the demands of both sides while synthesising both proposals to create a neutral base of the arguments. Secret meetings with the two parties should be held from time to time until both sides agreed to hold meeting formally. After agreeing on the stated reform, a joint press conference therefore expected to announce the outcomes.

⁶ Especially concerning the inappropriate transfer of the head of National Security Council and the alleged corruption case in the rice pledging scheme.

As usual, both parties brushed off the initiatives, stating different reasons such as ‘going above capacity’ (BangkokPost, 2014r) and lacking of ‘clarity and integrity’ of the reform plan (BangkokPost, 2014a). Immediately, these independent agencies received lash backs, stating their attempts as to plot, conspire and acting to overthrow the government through peaceful, undemocratic and interfering manner, beyond what they are tasked to do (BangkokPost, 2014a). It was seen as a coup attempt without the use of the military, more effectively without any kind of casualties. The current political stalemate is actually boosting independent agencies confidence to do their ‘part’ in solving it. With the election effectively annulled, absence of the House of Representatives, a new senate and Prime Minister and her administration losing the legitimacy; the legislative and the executive power is basically powerless leaving the judicature to dictate the fate of the Thai politics. After a prolong defend in front of Constitutional Court judges and hundreds of pages of evidence, the court decided to go ahead and announce the verdict on Thawil case. In the afternoon of 07th May 2014, for the first time in Thai history, an elected Prime Minister ousted from office through ‘judicial coup’ (BangkokPost, 2014z). She was found to be abusing her power for illegal transfer of Mr. Thawil to a redundant post of Advisor at the Prime Minister’s Office in September 2011. A lot of mysteries revolving this verdict, such as the speed of the case seem to be accelerated, as the case was lodge just merely one month ago by 28 Democrat MPs. The situation escalated immediately, as fear for clashes between the Red Shirt and PDRC’s followers is expected, though no such thing happens. As if her luck ran out, the next day, National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) impeached Yingluck on the charge of dereliction of duty while chairing the National Rice Commission in relation to the corruption cases in the rice pledging scheme.

What is next for PDRC? They knew, the caretaker government is overstretch as each minister holds few portfolios and in a very weak state. The only pillars of authority left are the senate and the Supreme Court. Therefore, PDRC pressured the senate to take the initiative to invoke Section 7 (BangkokPost, 2014i) by naming a Prime Minister out of a list of ‘good people’. When the senate refuses to do so, Suthep becomes desperate and set the deadline to seize the power by 26th May for whatever the outcomes would be. PDRC and its affiliations start to take over

symbolically the seat of power by making the Santi Maitree of the Government House as its command centre (BangkokPost, 2014e). Their plan is to cajole and pressure the remaining cabinet to resign to make way for a new Prime Minister to be named and appointed. PDRC start to take things on their hands again, as Suthep publicly announced, the prolong protest need a timeline to get into what they aimed for while the protest itself hasn't produce much outcomes to their likings. On top of that, many protesters are afraid to answer Suthep calls following escalations in sporadic attacks targeting the protesters and possible clashes with the Red Shirts. PDRC desperation is actually nonsense, as the senate is actually following exactly what they want. The senate Speaker, Surachai Liangboonlertchai announces that, the process to announce interim Prime Minister is well underway, at 80% finished (BangkokPost, 2014p). This according to him, it is the most constitutional way to settles the issue of transfer of power. However, as what many fears, escalation of violence sprang up almost in daily basis when PDRC step up its effort to bring the whole government down to make way for the proposed interim Prime Minister.

With the escalation of the violence, it prompts the military to act and to combat these incidents from overblown. In the wee hours of 20th May, Commander of the Armed Force, General Prayuth Chan O Cha announced a blanket martial law throughout the nation and establish a new peace keeping body replacing the Centre for Administration of Peace and Order (CAPO); the all-powerful Peace and Order Maintaining Command (POMC) (BangkokPost, 2014j). For the next two days, he presides over as mediator for the two camps, a scene which is barely being seen in the past 7 months of political turmoil. Even though succeeding in making the two sides to meet and discuss the way out together, the mediation failed to achieve any conclusive outcome. Tired of the squabbles in front of his eyes, Prayuth announced he will become the interim Prime Minister and launched a coup, only after 2 days of 'soul searching'(BangkokPost, 2014b). On 24th May 2014, PDRC effectively disbanded, merely two days short from their deadline in achieving their goal of establishing the People's Council. It is unknown what Suthep and PDRC's representatives said or argued at the army club that brought an abrupt end to their struggle. Though if their situation change a little bit, PDRC may have achieve to get what they want, looking back at the supports they get and invisible hands that seems

to facilitate this. It is argued, if both parties be a little bit more flexible, the outcomes might come slightly different. Post-coup, PDRC and its manifesto of People's Council buried along with its demise.

5.3 Summary: Negative Connotation as a Mean to Bring Down Democracy

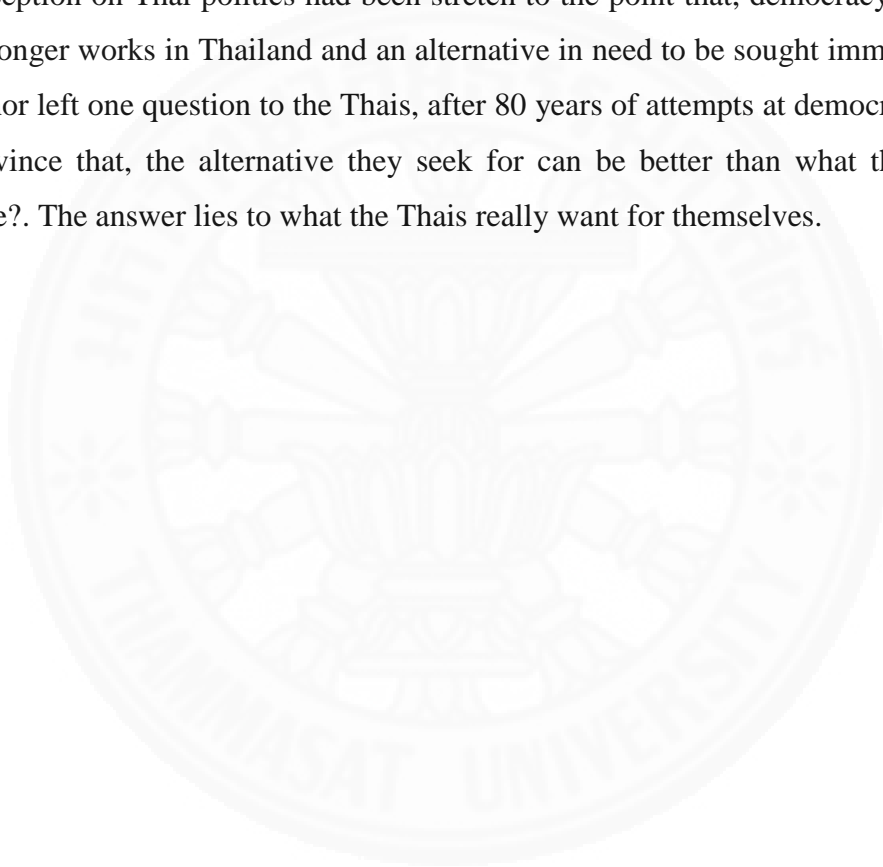
From extensive elaboration provided above, PDRC as a case study had provided to this research a vital evidence that answer the author's hypotheses. First, over the course of 80 years of Thai democracy, the research has shown the development of negative connotations over time and culturally embedded to the livelihood and mentality of many Thais. Forward to the dawn of the new millennium, the 'democratic engines' gaining momentum, despite the electoral government doesn't produce much to the likings of an 'ideal' democracy. The 1997 'People's Constitution' served as a testament on how far democratic ideals can be introduced into the system and remains one of the most democratic constitution ever produce in Thailand. However, throughout this study, it can be seen that democratic ideal can't be lead 'roam' free without it being curtail later on. As democratic ideals and benefits starting to take root and flourished in the 90's and early 2000s, conservatives felt threatened of their long established status quo in this changing power structures brought by the 1997 Constitution. The movements use a simple recipe to destroy the budding democracy by going against the democracy itself; the same recipes that they use to bring the elected governments under their hands all these while. The only exception is, this time; they attack democracy itself by arguing its repeated failures to extend its benefit to cross sections of Thai society. Hidden from the public awareness, this follows the losing of coherent of the existence of a network of interests groups in politics that are struggling to keep and protect their status quo in the face of ever-changing economic & social facets of the polarized the society. In the absence of alternatives, the military has become the prime defender of the status quo. Hence, the development in the late 90s and early 2000s helps to explain the second hypothesis that looks into how far such connotations has been stretch and can be translated to understand the recent political impasse.

PDRC therefore has shown us not only the existence of such narrative but also give an example on the extent of negative connotation of Thai politics and how it affects Thailand's pursuit of a mature democracy. Although it seems, PDRC's Manifesto lacking of legitimacy and validity, yet as argued by Verayuth, the key players and supporters of PDRC plays a crucial roles in filling up the seats in various sections of the military Junta's National Council of Peace and Order (Kanchoochat, 2016). The heavy existence of PDRC's affiliated individuals from the medical professions, academics, business associations' shows the movement itself is not a total failures despite of its quick demise post-coup. Not only that, the military 'invites' some of PDRC members to be part of the Five Rivers Reform plan laid down by the Junta such as Sombat Thamrongthanyawong, whom once led the now defunct National Reform Council (InternationalCrisisGroup, 2015). With PDRC and conservative strong presence in the military led reform plan, this served as another evident that the pre supposed 37 Reform Agendas will have some resemblances that fit the narrative to 'fix' and bring about a 'full functioning democracy' (TheNation, 2015). In simple words, PDRC's ideals continues to live, not it pure form; but in essence that driven part of Five Rivers Reform Plan.

Through the study of PDRC as a movement and the persistent of its ideology; it can be sure that, persistent negative perception in Thai politics and its strength both as literature and ideology slowly eats democracy that many lives have fought for to establish. The author argued this negative perception is in need to be understood, dissected and studied, so that counter narratives and arguments can be provided to argue in its behalf. Thai democracy must be released from the chain of its own dilemma, which most of it is social construct⁷ that doesn't even reflect the true nature of what constitute as 'Thai democracy'. Democracy in this country has become a victim of its own existence, thanks to the way it was molded as well as its utility as a tool for certain groups. What are left are legacies that aren't many Thais proud of, therefore PDRC Manifesto gets into its way. Could it be said that, the Thais are tired

⁷ Mainly revolved around how the Thais think. Thais perspective often in many cases are 'unique', the same case can be apply on Thai politics. Therefore, the author argues, Thai politics needs to break free from this 'perspective' in order to move forward

at their attempts at democracy? The author doesn't share the same opinion. It is a pyramid system, whereby the top 'secretive' hands evaluate, manage and filter democracy as a concept to be given to the people or the base of the pyramid to use. If the concept as a gift from the top empowers the base and challenge the top, the later will find alternative to keep the base remember their place and seek to 'retake' the gift for a new wrapping and tinkering before delivering it back to the base of the pyramid. This is what Thailand politics looks like right now. The literature of negative perception on Thai politics had been stretch to the point that, democracy is perceived no longer works in Thailand and an alternative in need to be sought immediately. The author left one question to the Thais, after 80 years of attempts at democracy; are they convince that, the alternative they seek for can be better than what they currently have?. The answer lies to what the Thais really want for themselves.



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the past eight decades, the spirit of democracy still lived in Thailand and these facts haven't been given much attention in the academic world. Scholars agreed there are a lot of problems with Thai politics to the point that, some of their academic conclusions often fell into negative assumptions and predictions. The author believes the other way round. After 80 years, rather than the flame of democratic ideals extinguish by problems that it creates, the fight for democracy getting stronger than ever as can be seen in the last 20 decades or so. This shows another aspect of Thai democracy that a lot of scholars overlook and what has caused this trend. It is agreeable to accept some aspects of Thai politics have change such as the key players, the budding institutions, the trials and errors it underwent, changes in society structure, rule of the game and many more. Thus Thai 'hybrid democracy' indeed is interesting. At the same time, the author also believe Thai politics as scripted and orchestrated by the one who yield the real power, which explicitly imply images and information to change people's perception of democracy to fit their interest. This especially becomes obvious in the 21st century, when the political game is recalibrate by Thaksin, forcing the other side to innovate. An example to that is the underground works to demonise and tarnish democratic principle in Thailand that has existed for quite sometimes and comes to the limelight especially in their efforts to topple Thaksin after years in planning. This is just some explanation of the phenomenon of negative and lack of trust by the Thais on Thai politics and democracy as a whole, which is the pillar of this study. Yet, despite all this efforts to steer democracy and change it course from reaching its final destination; based from the observations of 8 decades attempts at democracy showed Thailand will return to have a proper democracy through people's power at some juncture of its political struggle.

As evident from the extensive elaborations provided in this works, there are few things that are quite clear. Thailand's attempts at democracy actually don't go in vain as evident from historical perspective. Thailand's road to democracy; albeit a precarious one, provide an insight to a different kind of democracy. It is democracy of elitist approach as evident from its conception from very beginning to this day. It

continues to struggle simply because the gripped of a network of interest groups remains despite a surging wave of people realising their rights and what democracy can bring to them. Move further along, the democratic transition from hybrid democracy into a real one, as can be seen from 1980s onwards, path the way for Thailand to have a new hope in their political struggle. A mixture of global events such as the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis and local scandalisation of politics provide an arena for a new change. Thaksin phenomenon as an example proves that democratic ideal does work in Thailand. Yet, due to the persistent of negative connotations and perceptions towards Thai politics that had been sown for the past 80 years make it easy for the interest groups to 'reverse' this new development that slowly shaken their interest.

Consequently, it is through the study of whole period of 80 years of Thai politics that helps the author to analyse, examine, study and prove that; the existence of negative connotations of Thai politics has become that persistent and in need to be understand. Through understanding such narratives, the author found that, quite sadly, due to their critical examinations of Thai politics, scholars actually ignite the flame of negative connotations towards Thai politics. Through what they learn in their particular expertise, scholars are the one that assumed that Thai democracy is broken and dying. Scholars focus more on the arguments of establishments and forget the fact that democracy not only involved establishments but the people, which had more direct effects from the political decisions and squabble. Thais hope for the return of the junta and their willingness to make them stay is because of what the scholars feed. Their works were picked up and sensationalised by the media. That's how the matter gets complicated. In reality, the Thai people know exactly what the problem with Thai politics is. After repeated false promises and numerous corruptions, the people actually losing the hope on their electorate representatives but not on the electoral system itself. After repeatedly being hijacked and numerous attempts to rectify that, the Thais come to realise that they are losing the mechanism to make it better. Hence, the military come into the picture as the only 'equilibrium' and the 'real unifier' of the whole country.

To this end, the author hopes that this work will bring about an understanding of the existence of negative connotation towards Thai politics and its

impact to Thai democracy. By applying historical approach of analysing secondary data, the development of such narrative can be observed and assessed. Furthermore, by bridging it with the primary data to study the severity of such narrative, it helps the readers to understand how much damage such narrative can do to Thai politics. In a sense, by studying such narratives, is the author hope that this can be an alternative way to view Thai politics. What is next for Thai politics is uncertain and yet to be known. Future developments in the arena might either prove further the author's analysis or falsify it altogether. What's important is, the study had pioneer a key to understanding Thai politics in a new setting and perspective all the way. Apart from that, it is worth considering on ways to reverse these narratives so that Thai democracy and politics can break free from such attachments and labels as well as to gives the Thais a real hope.

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