

Military Reform and Military Maverick¹
Case studies: Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand

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Abstract

On 21 May 1998 President Soeharto announced his resignation which ended New Order military-backed dictatorship regime in Indonesia. Since then the country has undergone political reform and gradually reduced the Indonesian military's influence in politics. Eight years later, a contrast situation appeared in Thailand, another Southeast Asia's democratic powerhouse. The Thai military launched a bloodless coup on 19 September 2006 against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and put themselves at the government helm. Meanwhile, Myanmar, a country that heavily associated with military rule, held its first election after two decades on 7 November 2010. This election drew mixed responses from international community. The three countries have experienced political reform which included military reform. However, those countries show different results from one to another. This article attempts to examine the discrepancy and draw an inferential factor of the three case studies. It argues that the rise of reform minded officers helps military reform to produce a relatively stable military reform. This paper starts by briefly discussing some required elements for military reform which followed by the case studies section.

Keywords: Military reform, Democratization, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand

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Military reform is one of the prerequisite elements for a successful democratic transition. Under democratization the armed forces must operate based on democratic principles. The militaries in Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand have played an extensive role in their countries' domestic politics. Those armed forces, particularly the army, exploit self-proclaimed nationalist credentials to justify their continued existence in politics via nation-building jargon. *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI, the Indonesia armed forces) and *Tatmadaw* (the Myanmar Armed Forces) have been using their protracted struggle for independence during colonialism as a primary excuse to legitimize their grip in politics, though the former has withdrawn from the political arena following the post-authoritarian *reformasi* (political reform). Being known as a free land due to the absence of colonialism in the country, *Khong Thap Thai* (the Royal Thai Armed Forces) does not have the romantic era of a heroic independence struggle. However, its participation in overthrowing the absolute monarchy in 1932 became a main validation for the Thai military to stay in politics. A study from Muthiah Alagappa in 2001 on civil-military relations in Asian countries projected a positive trend of democratic change in Southeast Asia states except for Myanmar (Alagappa 2001, 475). Alagappa argued internal and international consolidation of Asian states and the decreasing weight of coercion in governance have contributed significantly to the stable civil-military relations in those countries (Alagappa 2001, 475).

A decade later, Alagappa's projection did not materialize entirely as pointed out by a study from Marcus Mietzner in 2011. Mietzner noted the positive trend did not apply in all Southeast Asian countries extensively. Thailand reverted from a relatively strong civilian government back into military-backed semi authoritarianism which has been further undermined by the military coup in 2014. On the other hand, a completely different outcome occurred in Indonesia which emerged as Southeast Asia's strongest democracy. The country was at the brink of institutional crumble and resurgence of military dominance, but it managed to overcome the turmoil. Meanwhile, the military's domination in Myanmar persists (Mietzner 2011A, 18). Despite the reform in 2011, *Tatmadaw* still plays an extensive role in Myanmar's domestic politics.

The military in Thailand has stepped into the spotlight through the military coup in 2006 and 2014. The Thai military had abandoned its puppet master role by joining into the political fray directly. Thaksin Shinawatra's assumption to power in 2001 had created a consolidating democracy image for Thailand. Nevertheless, Thaksin co-opted the military for his political benefits and did not oust it completely from politics. This re-politicization of the military triggered a covert military come back into politics and slowly strengthened its political

influence (Chachavalpongpun 2011, 49-50). The coup in 2014 can be seen as the culmination of Thai military's persistent involvement in politics.

Myanmar is currently undergoing its reform, which was initiated when President Thein Sein came to power in March 2011. Domestically, the country has launched several reforms, such as ratification of crucial legislations and reduction of media restrictions (Aung-Thwin 2014, 205). Nevertheless, the Tatmadaw still has a strong presence in politics, as its ability to execute veto rights in Myanmar's parliament (The Hindu 2014). Robert Taylor described this Myanmar's reform as 'an entertainment, a form of bread and circuses which failed to bring the real change' (R. H. Taylor 2013, 400).

Conversely, the Indonesian military reacted with a mixed response towards the democratization process in the country due to the internal power struggle within the TNI which influenced its stance to democratic demands (Honna 2003, 3). Post-Suharto Indonesia has witnessed the relative disarray of various security sector reforms as the TNI excessively used disintegration and balkanization notions to curtail the efforts (Heiduk 2014, 301). The military, in general, and the army, in particular, were the main actors during the three decades of the late President Soeharto's reign (Kammen and Chandra 1999, 7). President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono managed to restrict the military's institutional autonomy while at the same time protecting the institution's core interests (Mietzner 2011B, 131-138). Additionally, the number of regional leader elections candidates with military background has decreased significantly nowadays compared to the period of Soeharto's administration (Buehler 2013). The trend of civil-military relations in Indonesia's current administration under President Joko Widodo remained largely consistent with the previous administrations that followed after the fall of Soeharto (Laksmana 2015).

This paper aims to explain the discrepancy and draw a commonality between the three case studies. This study argues that the rise of reform minded officers helps military reform to produce a relatively stable military reform. Barry Posen came up with a term of 'military maverick' to describe those military officers who have comparatively distinct and divergent way of thinking and can propose significant changes (Posen 1984, 224). These so-called military mavericks can play a role as platform for a successful democratic ideas infusion to the armed forces. The discussion in this paper starts with a brief conceptual framework on military reform followed by case studies.

Military Reform

Carl von Clausewitz in *On War* defined war is merely the continuation of policy by other means (Clausewitz 1984, 87). Clausewitz's war interpretation emphasizes military actions as products of politics – the intercourse of government and peoples (Clausewitz 1984, 605). Therefore, it emphasizes on the military subordination to the legitimate government. However, the equation does not necessarily keep the military away from politics. Samuel Huntington argued the importance of military professionalism to ensure the military performs properly. The military must focus to channel its resources and energy on its military activities and stay away from day to day politics. According to him, military professionalism can be achieved through implementing objective civilian control. (Huntington 1968, 83).

The involvement of the military in day to day politics certainly deteriorates this professionalism as they are occupied with their non-military jobs. Moreover, the military involvement in day to day politics can lead to the emergence of praetorian soldiers in which military officers are major or predominant political actors (Nordlinger 1977, 2). Praetorianism is likely to develop when civilian institutions experiencing lack of legitimacy. Weak republics that filled by disgruntled civilians and power-seeking politicians lacking popular support view the army as the instrument to gain power and establish effective executive (Perlmutter 1977, 93). This kind of situation eases the military for strengthening its grip in political arena and establishing itself as a dominant political actor.

Voluntary military withdrawal from politics is rare, and even sometimes followed by another coup (Alagappa, 2001, p. 52). Alagappa emphasized the influence of democratic transition to the military withdrawal from politics (Alagappa, 2001, p. 52). The military's commitment to democratic rule as well as obedient to democratically elected political elites are paramount for consolidating democracy (Barany 2012, 3). This section would like to explain elements that made military disengagement from politics by trying to identify possible factors from within and outside the armed forces. It identified rise of reform minded officers, concordance between the civilian and the military, and loss of legitimacy and advancement of civilian authority as some contributing factors of the military withdrawal from politics.

Rise of Reform Minded Officers; there is a common perception that military organization is a rigid institution due to its strict hierarchies. Large bureaucracies are hard to change and designed not to change (Rosen 1991, 2). Nonetheless, the existence of the so called 'military maverick' can help to foster change from within the military itself. Barry Posen came up with the term 'military maverick' to describe brilliant soldiers who are rejected by the system within the military due to their distinct way of thinking with the mainstream view (Posen 1984, 224). The emergence of this new way thinking can be possible due to transfer of

idea through foreign military assistance and officer training abroad (Janowitz 1977, 171). Through this kind of activity military officers could obtain new ways of thinking as well as idea, not only warfare, but also ideal position of the military role in the political stage. The cooperation between these maverick officers with their civilian counterparts can foster some changes to the military.

Concordance between Civilian and Military; a study from Rebecca Schiff argued that domestic military intervention is less likely to occur if concordance between civilian and military is achieved. Her concordance theory claimed domestic military intervention can be avoided if there is an agreement among the military, the political leadership, and the citizens regarding social composition of the officer corps, political decision-making process, recruitment method, and military style. On the other hand, disharmony regarding those factors could force the military to intervene its country political arena. (Schiff 2009, 13).

Loss of Legitimacy and Advancement of Civilian Authority; the inability of military backed or military government to answer various mounting challenges, such as economic crisis and social problems, leads to the loss of legitimacy for the armed forces to stay in the political stage (Alagappa 2001, 54). Huntington argued that politics triggers military intervention and the society's political and institutional structure reflects military involvement to politics (Huntington 1968, 194). This argument shows that factors outside the military play greater role in causing military intervention. Using Finer's paradigm that 'what applies military intervention can be played back to explicate its extrusion', improvement of those outside military factors can thus revert military intervention (Finer 1985). The military submission to civilian authority can be achieved by increasing the quality of the latter (Stepan 1988, 144). The existence of this matured civilian counterpart is crucial to counterbalance the military (Perlmutter 1977).

Indonesia – rise of reformist generals

The Indonesian Armed Forces and Soeharto

Together with Golkar (*Golongan Karya* / Functional Groups), the Indonesian Armed Forces became Soeharto's regime, or the so-called New Order regime, backbone. The military served as his repressive tool against the regime's oppositions. Soeharto used divide and rule and *bagi-bagi*² mechanism in controlling the Indonesian military (Mietzner 2009, 118). As a result, the Indonesian Armed Forces was heavily factionalized with Soeharto sat unchallenged

² Giving shares

at the top of the hierarchy. However, the relation between Soeharto and the military was not always smooth as some frictions appeared sporadically. In the beginning of the New Order era, Soeharto did not get the military allegiance and other political actors directly, though he himself was a former military general. On the other hand, Soeharto struggled to win those groups through negotiations and concessions (Lee 2015, 112).

By the 1980s, Soeharto had become more than the *primus inter pares* in a collegial army leadership as he dominated controlled every aspect of the Indonesian Armed Forces, including handpicked top positions of the army (Jenkins 1997, 13). Soeharto utilized divide and rule strategy to eliminate any potential challengers. This strategy worked against the armed forces and transformed it into Soeharto's repressive tool for his political opponents. Despite the armed forces' submissive stance towards Soeharto, the Indonesian army did some subtle defiance against the authoritarian ruler.

In 1989, Soeharto introduced the so-called *Keterbukaan* concept or openness. The idea did not origin from him, but it was suggested by Paul Wolfowitz, a former United States ambassador for Indonesia. The concept intended to give some degree of liberalization to the political matters. This situation allowed some hidden criticisms against the regime to surface from various political groups, including from the military. In example, a former Army Chief of Staff, General Edi Sudrajat criticized the regime's unilateral decisions in handling public matters and suggested the military should master the ability to accommodate discussions and to hold a rational political debate (Honna 2003, 12). General Benny Moerdani, who was one of Soeharto's trusted military officers, and his followers used this moment to criticize the New Order regime on the issue of social gap (Honna 2003, 13). A few members of parliament from the military faction also showed their dissatisfaction against the regime and desire for Soeharto's resignation (Bertrand 1996, 326).

The *Keterbukaan* saga created a crack on the relations between Soeharto and some factions from the Indonesian Armed Forces. Although Soeharto promoted other groups from the armed forces to support his reign, he slowly moved away from the military and turned to civilian political groups, particularly the Islamic groups. *Keterbukaan* opened up an opportunity for political elites to express their dissatisfaction towards the regime. It also gave a momentum for the Indonesian military, particularly Moerdani's group, to delicately challenge the regime. *Keterbukaan* alarmed Soeharto of the dissatisfaction towards his administration (Priamarizki 2018).

The dynamics in the elite level is also accompanied by the emergence of the idea of military professionalism from within the Indonesian Armed Forces. The thinking to

professionalize the Indonesian Armed Forces has emerged at least since 1993 when Indonesian Army Command School (SESKOAD) published a book contains various thinking of young army officers at that time (SESKOAD 1993). Some young military officers, namely Agus Wirahadikusumah and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, used the opportunity to express their idea on military professionalism. They believed the Indonesian military must be professionalized in order to fit with the current situation, but without neglecting the organization's history and values. The adoption of professionalism is crucial to produce military officers who are a patriot, an expert, a leader, a constructor and a thinker which can be achieved through education (Wirahadikusumah 1993) (Yudhoyono 1993). In the twilight days of Soeharto's regime and the early days of democratization era, both Yudhoyono and Wirahadikusumah together with Agus Widjojo played a paramount role in reforming the military and supporting the democratization agenda.

The Indonesian Military and Reformasi

The fall of Soeharto in 1998 did not only trigger the democratization era in Indonesia, but also gave pressure for the military to withdraw from politics and launch reform programme. President Habibie, a former vice president of Soeharto, pushed some reform agenda for the Indonesian military. Previously, Habibie was seen as Soeharto's henchman which will not deliver significant political reforms, including military reform. These various reforms have expanded many forms of civil liberty which previously limited by the authoritarian regime. In case of military reform, Habibie gave some concessions to the armed forces, such as the privilege to launch self-reform agenda in return for supporting the government's political reform agenda as well as his own political ambition (Mietzner 2006, 12).

Mounted pressures from the public for the military to embrace reform left the Indonesian Armed Forces with no choice but to follow the demand. The Indonesian military Commander-in-Chief at that time, General Wiranto entrusted some reform-minded officers for the task of re-conceptualizing the military's future role. The leading members of this group were Yudhoyono, Wirahadikusumah, and Widjojo. These officers came up with the so-called 'New Paradigm', a guide for the military in the new era. Their three top bold recommendations were to dissolve the military's Social and Political Affairs Branch, to withdraw military officers holding positions in government and the bureaucracy, and to reduce, and ultimately remove, military representatives in the parliament (Crouch 2010, 132-133). Nonetheless, the introduction of 'New Paradigm' was deemed insufficient. Wirahadikusmah perceived it as a kind of old wine in new bottle, though the concept was a good start for reform (Mietzner 2006,

12). The great start of military under Habibie administration was soon dwindled under President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) and President Megawati Soekarnoputri era.

Gus Dur appointment as the fourth president of Indonesia initially showed a promising step towards the creation of civilian supremacy. Soon this optimistic start declined as Wahid exploited the military for his political gains. This situation was worsened as Gus Dur pretty much depended on his short-term intuition, rather than long-term planning, and pragmatic approach which made him willing to deal with almost any group if necessary to keep his political position. His intention to curb Wiranto's influence led him to miss the opportunity to appoint reformer officer Yudhoyono to become the Indonesian Army Chief of Staff (Crouch 2010, 137). Furthermore, Gus Dur blatantly asked for military support and published a presidential decree when the parliament impeached him (Sutarto 2016).

Most of parliament members opted for dismantle Gus Dur from presidential position and replace him with his vice Megawati Soekarnoputri. During Megawati era, the military managed to consolidate itself and prevented further reform. The combination of structural factors, both domestic and international, helped the military to reassert its influence in politics under Megawati's rule (Mietzner 2009, 226). The mounting threat of terrorism and communal conflicts internally and the launch of global war on terror by the US had halted further reform as these issues became the priority of the Indonesian government. Moreover, Megawati surrounded himself with security first generals, such as Gen. Ryamizard Ryacudu as army chief of staff, and Lt. Gen. Bibit Waluyo as army strategic reserve command leader. Those officers constantly voiced the maintenance of national unity and concerned to internal security matter (Crouch 2010, 142).

In 2004, the first direct presidential election was implemented in Indonesia which produced Mr. Yudhoyono as the sixth president of the Republic of Indonesia. Yudhoyono sidelined most of Megawati's conservative military officers and gradually reduced the military role in handling communal conflicts. Yudhoyono pretty much depended on his personalism to handle the military as he put many of classmates and relatives to several military strategic positions, such as Djoko Suyanto as commander-in-chief in 2006 and 2007, graduated from the military academy in 1973, and Erwin Sujono, his brother in law, as commander of Strategic Reserve Command 2006 and 2007. together with Yudhoyono. Yudhoyono era marked the decline of military political role and the use of the military as coercive political tools. The stable civilian governance and leadership under Yudhoyono era contributed significantly for the Indonesian military's loss of influence in politics (Mietzner 2011B, 143).

Myanmar – Thein Shein and his student activists

Myanmar's 2010 General Elections

The military junta has controlled the political stage in Myanmar since its inception to politics in 1962. The Myanmar military or *Tatmadaw* has transformed itself into the strongest political axis in Myanmar politics. Myanmar military regime implemented power sharing system which in return created a strong institutionalisation and cohesiveness. The implementation managed to keep those ruling elites together despite frictions among the leading generals from time to time. Purging of senior military officer often occurred since 1998 and protests against the authoritarian regime did not breach the cohesiveness of the regime (Lee 2015, 162). Compared to the opposition movement, Myanmar military has been a more united and stronger political group (Hlaing 2007, 1).

The two military coups in 1958 and 1962 brought *Tatmadaw* to the centre of Myanmar politics as well as wiped out its civilian competitors (Callahan 2001, 422). The military junta also refused to acknowledge the 1990 General Elections which gave a landslide victory for Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party. Ethnic conflicts and insurgencies have further cemented *Tatmadaw* involvement in politics and concurrently withered civil services and political parties that supposedly channelled the population's aspirations (Callahan 2001, 429). Myanmar is often described as a 'praetorian state' due to its unruly political scene, a fragmented postcolonial society, and a leviathan-type military institution with vested corporate interests and a mighty political force (Egreteau and Jagan 2013, 42).

Following the refusal of the 1990 General Elections, the military established itself as the protagonist of Myanmar politics. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), later named State and Peace Development Council (SPDC) in 1997, became the official name of the country's military government. Despite its strong control, the SLORC/SPDC had long been contemplating an ideal exist strategy for the military without sacrificing the armed forces' interests. The SPDC formulated the 2008 constitution in order to fulfil the objective. The 2008 constitution, which contains 457 clauses in 15 chapters plus five appendices, explicitly ensured there will be safeguards to guarantee continued military control of key aspects of government. According to Robert Taylor, Myanmar's 2008 constitution is an attempt by the military government to solve issues that had emerged in Myanmar's post-colonial history, such as the power and autonomy of the armed forces, the political autonomy for ethnically designated groups, and distribution of power between the executive, legislative and judiciary levels of government (R. H. Taylor 2009, 496). On the one side, the constitution authorizes a multi-party

democracy with regular elections and associated civil and political rights. On the other side, it assures the military involvement in politics by ensuring all the security-related ministries will be held by the military, 25 percent of the seats in parliament for the *Tatmadaw*, and strong representation on the powerful National Defence and Security Council. Moreover, the Myanmar military has full internal autonomy which civilian authorities can not intervene (Pedersen 2014, 25).

The military junta orchestrated general elections in 2010 which were heavily confined by them. The military regime's party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won the elections with a landslide victory and put Thein Sein, a military general and former prime minister 2007-2011, as the eighth President of Myanmar. The SPDC itself was officially disbanded by Tan Shwe on 30 March 2011 following the inauguration of the newly elected government. Given Thein Sein background as part of the SPDC, his administration was seen as the extension of status quo that will not deliver reform at all. In contrast with this pessimistic view, his administration managed to introduce a few significant reforms, though did not completely overhaul the system.

Thein Sein's Unexpected Reform

Many of Myanmar observers showed their doubt that Thein Sein's administration can deliver significant reforms to the country. Thein Sein administration muffled those cynical and pessimistic views by unexpectedly delivering some notable reforms. President Thein Sein pledged his commitment to build a modern and developed democratic nation in a speech on 19 August 2011 (International Crisis Group 2011). This speech was proven pivotal as the president practiced what he preached. He released more than a thousand political prisoners. Thein Sein also had a meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in August 2011 to find a common ground and establish a cooperation between them. Daw Suu said she was encouraged by her one-hour meeting with Thein Sein and labelled it as the first step toward national reconciliation (voanews 2011). Suu Kyi was also allowed to run as a member of parliament. In addition, his administration managed to reach a ceasefire agreement with the Karen National Union (KNU) to end the world's longest-running armed insurgency. Trade unions have been allowed to exist and no restrictions have been implemented for the media to publish real news and criticize the government (Pedersen 2014, 20).

Despite these marvellous reform efforts, some issues still persist, such as strong elements of military rule, particularly with the guarantee of 25 percent parliament seats and three cabinet positions (minister of defense, minister of border affairs, and minister of home

affairs). Moreover, communal conflicts continue in some parts of Myanmar, particularly between Buddhists and Muslims in Rakhine state. However, these unexpected reforms have created a question why Thein Sein presidency was willing to do such overhauls?

This section argues the combination between economic issue and Thein Sein's commitment to reach out to the oppositions made possible for the emergence of significant reforms under his administrations. First, pressing economic issue is one of the main reasons for Thein Sein to open some degree of liberalization in the country in order to gain trust from other countries (Hlaing 2007). He highlighted the creation of the political and economic strength of the country in his inaugural speech. Furthermore, the administration sees national security as a top priority for the country. Political stability and harmony amongst the population are necessary for the economy to blossom. This also explains why Thein Sein included some members of political party other than USDP in key positions in state and regional governments and in parliament's committees and commissions (R. H. Taylor 2012).

Besides that, Thein Sein was willing to reach out to other groups to make them partners to build the country. Unlike Tan Shwe, the previous leader of Myanmar military junta, Thein Sein has a much less autocratic leadership style and relatively free from corruption and violence stories (Pedersen 2014, 22). Thein Sein realized that Myanmar needs to connect with international community through democratization in order to open more channels for economic development. He acted as the bridge between the military and other groups, including insurgents, to start negotiations. The cooperation between the military and the main political opposition party National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Daw Suu is difficult to be realized as the two groups distrust each other. On the one side, the NLD sees the military as an obstacle for democratization. On the other hand, the military labels the NLD as western countries' cooperative. His reputation as a consensus builder and respectable military officer made this task easier for him as he can communicate with every groups conveniently. Thein Sein also surrounded himself with civilian activists, such as Aung Naing Oo, Min Zaw Oo, and U Nyo Ohn Myint, to help him, particularly in solving some armed conflicts (Htut 2016).

Thailand – Thaksin's failure subjective civilian control

Thai Democratization and the Rise of Thaksin

Back in the early 1991, a military coup was launched by the Thai military which intended to cleanse Thai democracy from corruptions. The military promised that soon the power will be handed over back to the civilian. Instead of doing so, the Thai military prolonged its reign and coup leader Gen. Suchinda Kraprayoon put himself as the country's prime

minister. Wave of demonstrations appeared in Bangkok asking for the military to hand over the power to the civilian. On 18 May 1992 Thai military opened fire against the demonstrators after they refused to disperse and resisted. This incident was famous as the Black May incident. The incident caused 44 civilian protesters lost their life and 38 were missing. The bloodshed was finally ended when the monarchy intervened the brouhaha and brought both of the regime leader and the protesters' representative.

The Black May 1992 became a turning point for civil-military relations in Thailand as civilian pressure on the military to continue its withdrawal from politics was growing steadily (Ockey 2001, 188). Many parts of the Thai society tolerated the 1991 coup due to its intention to clean up political system, remove the corrupt politicians, and return to democracy. Nonetheless, this toleration went sour as the military refused to hand over the authority to the civilian immediately. Besides trying to retain power, the military also did not remove the corrupt politicians. The military used communist threat as a justification to continue its domination (Ockey 2001, 206).

The intervention by the monarchy had added more pressures for the military to end the reign and open the opportunity for democratization. Following the Black May 1992, civilian control was increased through constitution amendment. Despite the establishment of civilian control, the military still held some of undemocratic privileges, such as extensive business, illicit activities, and media control. By the late 1990s, the Thai military role in politics was significantly decreased compare to the early 1990s. However, the 1990s showed an unstable democracy period for Thailand with some administration changes. The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis also contributed significantly to the emergence of further political reform. Finally, the Democrat party of Thailand controlled the government and provided stability from 1997 until the 2001 General Elections (Bertrand 2013, 130).

Thaksin Shinawatra through his Thai Rak Thai (Thais Love Thai) party won the 2001 General Elections that made him the 23rd Prime Minister of Thailand. Thaksin formed his party in 1998 to accommodate the interests of urban-based businessman groups that threatened by Democrat party's economic policies. Later on, the party expanded its constituency to rural areas through patronage strategy which was supported by Thaksin's vast wealth. During the campaign, he promised many populist policies, such as inexpensive healthcare, agrarian debt relief, and extra funding for villages (Pongpaichit and Baker 2008). Besides Thaksin's wealth and populist promises, Thai 1997 constitution also helped TRT to win the 2001 General Elections as it favoured fewer and larger parties which made many politicians and small parties joining TRT (Bertrand 2013, 133).

After Thaksin started his term, the three campaign promises became his priority. However, Thaksin started to show anti-democratic behaviours, such as slamming criticism from media. His on war on drugs policy caused the death of more than 2,500 alleged drug dealers. He also handled the Southern issue with violence and brutality. Furthermore, Thaksin attempted to establish his own patronage network within the Thai military. First, he installed many of his relatives and classmates to the top positions of the military without considering seniority or merit. Thaksin also ousted many of senior military officers that were not in line with his political interests. Soon this strategy was backfired to Thaksin as it indirectly disturbed another powerful political entity in Thai politics, the monarchy and its royalists (Chachavalpongpun 2011, 49-50). Together with the side-lined Thai military factions, the royalist campaigned to oust Thaksin from his position.

Return of the Military

The Thai military launched a coup on 19 September 2006 which was demanded by the anti-Thaksin government People's Alliance for Democracy. Together with the monarchy and the King's Privy Council, the Thai military has been a paramount political actor in Thai politics since the end of the absolute monarchy era in 1932 (Chambers 2010, 2). Thaksin's government abuse of power and corruption allegations were not the solely factor to the 2006 political crisis. In fact, the Thai establishment, which constitutes the monarchy, the military, the judges and their defenders, contributed significantly in provoking and worsening the political conflict (Chachavalpongpun 2014a, 4)

Following the 2006 coup, the military regime developed economic policies similar to Thaksin (Chachavalpongpun 2014b, 170). The military appointed General Surayud Chulanont to become the country's caretaker from October 2006 until January 2008. However, Thaksin's popularity was still high and managed to give Samak Sundaravej, a self-proclaimed Thaksin proxy to win the post-coup election in 2007. Samak's era lasted only for about 8 months (January-September 2008) as the judiciary impeached him. Thaksin's brother-in-law Somchai Wongsawat replaced Samak. Nonetheless, Somchai lost his position due to constitutional court's position. The Thai military, the royalists, and Democrat party finally controlled the government and installed Abhisit Vejjajiva in December 2008 which was a military-friendly government.

In 2011 General Elections, Abhisit competed with Thaksin's younger sister Yingluck Shinawatra to become the 28th Prime Minister of Thailand. Thaksin's popularity and Yingluck's softer stance against her oppositions contributed significantly to the acceptance of

her victory in the 2011 General Elections. Nonetheless, this did not last long as political crisis soon emerged starting from 2013 when Yingluck proposed legislation to give amnesty for her brother and his followers. Her action triggered mass demonstrations in Bangkok.

The Thai military led by Commander-in-Chief Gen. Prayuth Chan-ocha launched a coup against Yingluck's administration on 22 May 2014. Prayuth himself was known as one of the fierce anti-Thaksin figures. After the coup, he installed himself as Prime Minister and handpicked members of parliament that will support his government. His military regime immediately puts bans on media and implements the *lese majeste* law to silence his adversaries. Public activities were also heavily confined. The situation marked the start of new military regime in Thailand.

Conclusion

Indonesia and Myanmar case studies show the existence of the so-called military maverick that promoted the idea of military reform and adherence to democratic principles. Indonesia found its military maverick through the rise of Yudhonoyo, Wirahadikusumah, and Widjojo while Myanmar had Thein Sein to start its long-awaited reform. Furthermore, both the military and civilian in Indonesia and Myanmar managed to achieve concordance between them. In the case of Indonesia, the positive progress of civilian government added no reasons for the military to intervene the politics. On the other hand, the case of Thailand does not exhibit the appearance of military maverick that could help fostering and maintaining military reform. Moreover, the Thai military adopts an antagonistic view against Thaksin and his proxies which definitely prevents full reconciliation between them to emerge.

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