

An Analysis of the Causes of Frequent Military Coups in Thailand at the Turn of the Century

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Abstract

since the first military coup in 1932, there have been 20 military coups in Thailand, 18 constitutions have been promulgated, 27 general elections have been held, 25 prime ministers have been appointed, and about 50 cabinet members have been formed. It can be said that the modern history of Thailand is a history of military coup. Based on the analysis of military coups in Thailand, this paper explores the reasons for the high incidence of military coups in Thailand from the perspective of military personnel, international tide and politics. As Thailand is a typical country with a high incidence of military coups, it is of great significance to study the causes and characteristics of military coups for other countries committed to political system reform.

Keywords

Thailand; military coup; reasons.

1. Introduction

Thailand is a country with many "military coups". Since June 24, 1932, a successful coup led by the "khana ratsadorn; people's party" ended the absolute monarchy in Thailand for hundreds of years, and gave birth to Thailand's first constitution.

After the establishment of the constitutional monarchy in Thailand, Suchinda came to power in a successful military coup in 1992 Under the pressure of public opinion, general kraprayoon was forced to step down and exile to other countries. In Thailand, there were 20 military coups without military coups in more than 10 years, the frequency of which was almost one in three years, that is to say, Schinda in 1992 After general kraprayoon stepped down and before the military coups in 2006 and 2014, there were 19 military coups in Thailand in 76 years, with an average frequency of 3.5 years, which is extremely rare. However, these military coups rarely have large-scale bloody conflicts. Moreover, after the success of the military coup, Thailand's political circles are able to quickly establish a new government to tide over the political crisis and bring the political situation and society back to peace in a very short time. In this case, why are there frequent coups in Thailand? The main reasons are as follows:

2. The Background of the Military and the Motive of the Coup

Due to the widespread inequality between the rich and the poor in the third world countries, it is difficult for the general public to have access to education above secondary school. Because of their economic support, the upper class also received higher education. Comparatively speaking, they chose to do business or serve as government civil servants. Although engaging in military service is a way to improve one's status, the upper class already has a higher social status and does not need to be promoted in this way. However, the majority of the lower classes have no education or no education above secondary school,

which makes them unable to enter the military academies. And a small number of middle class because of their educated relationship, they have the opportunity to improve their social status by joining the army.

Because officers are mostly from the middle class, they are not as conservative as the upper class in their political positions. In military academies, in addition to teaching students about the use of weapons and the theory of war, they also teach about politics or economy. This is also the reason why they sometimes choose coups to change the current situation after serving as officers.

2.1. The Administration Measures of the Literati Government Affect the Interests of the Army

If the literati government reduces the national defense budget for the sake of economic development, it will usually be opposed by the military and even replaced by a coup. In general, with the decrease of national defense budget, the most important thing is the salaries of officers. When the interests of officers are threatened, they will compete with the literati government in the same way, and the army has the resources of force, which makes it difficult for other units of the government to compete. In addition, because the military is a professional force manager, they can't stand the government's indifference to national defense, which also increases the motivation of the military coup. So after every military government comes to power, the first thing to do is to increase the national defense budget.

After a successful coup, the military will mostly criticize the incompetence of the previous government to maintain the legitimacy of its rule, while its own coup is to make the country no longer corrupt. But usually the biggest damage to the constitution is not the former literati government, but the soldiers of the coup.

2.2. The Military Affairs are Interfered by the Literati Government, or other Organizations Threaten the Existence of the Army

The reduction of military budget will increase the motivation of military coup, but if the literati government intervenes in military affairs, it will be more dissatisfied with the military. Because soldiers are not allowed to interfere in their own profession, such as the overthrow of the Pharaoh's presence by Egyptian soldiers in 1952. In 1948, the Egyptian pharaoh refused to accept the advice of the staff officers and attacked Israel rashly, which led to the defeat of the Egyptian army due to poor preparation and old weapons and other factors. In addition, since the 1950s, some dishonorable things of Pharaoh and his officials have come to the surface, which makes Egypt's free army have the motive of coup.

If there is another armed group in China, it will also be dissatisfied by the military. The military cannot accept the existence of another tacit or recognized force organization in the country, because it challenges the military's monopoly of force. For example, the coup in Algeria in 1965 forced Algeria to launch a coup because President Ben Bella wanted to turn the guerrillas against France into militia.

2.3. The Lower Class's Demands for Democratization or More Power will also Give the Military a Coup Motive

With the progress of the times, the lower class also requires the government to open more political power, such as election and organization of political parties. However, the lower class's demand for democratization will inevitably cause the power of the upper class to shrink, in which it is the servicemen who are directly impacted. In the decision-making process of government policy, if there is one more object to consult, it will certainly threaten the power of the original ruling group. This situation is particularly common in the process of democratization in third world countries from 1970 to 1990. In order to meet the needs of the

masses for public construction and social welfare, the literati government is bound to crowd out the national defense budget. This is also the reason why the soldiers of the third world will overthrow the election results in various ways after the national election process.

3. The Influence of the Third Wave of Democratization in the World

The third wave of democratization began in southern Europe and Latin America in the 1970s, and spread to Eastern Europe, East Asia and Southeast Asia. According to Samuel P. Huntington's analysis of the causes of the third wave of democratization, he believes that the causes of democratization can be divided into five types. The first is cyclic pattern, in which literati government and soldiers take turns to govern; the second is second try Pattern, that is to say, people who have had experience of democracy before but failed because of lack of democratic foundation or too drastic reform policy implemented by the ruling party, but later people engaged in the action of introducing democracy again, which increased the probability of success; the third type is interrupted Democracy, that is to say, the country has established and maintained a democratic government for a period of time in the past, but because of the instability of political situation or the phenomenon of polarization, democracy is interrupted; the fourth type is the direct transition, that is, the stable trend of authoritarian government towards democracy, the best example is Taiwan. The fifth is the decolonization pattern, which means that the former colonial countries imposed democracy on their colonies, but they did not return to the authoritarian regime after being independent by the colonial countries, most of which are in Oceania.

As for the reason of democratization, it can be roughly attributed to the decline of the legitimacy of authoritarian government and the challenge of authoritarian government after people have access to education. The reason for the decline of the legitimacy of authoritarian government may be that China has had the experience of democratization, which has infected the atmosphere of democracy in the society. Even if the previous experience of democracy is not successful, the idea that a legitimate government must be based on democratic norms still exists. Or the authoritarian government can't fulfill the promise it made before it came to power, which makes people have doubts about its governance. In addition, the economic failure of authoritarian government will also reduce its legitimacy. For example, the oil crisis from 1973 to 1974 not only caused people to doubt the ability of democratic government, but also weakened the efforts of the authoritarian governments of the third world countries to support their legitimate rule by economic settlement. Some countries relying on oil imports, such as the Philippines, Spain, Portugal and Greece, were severely hit.

In the face of the tide of democratization, no matter the authoritarian government with one party, one person or military coup, it will suppress the participation of the people and the competition of other political forces in various ways. In the process from authoritarianism to democracy, there are four models. The first is transformation, that is, when the ruling elite takes the lead in realizing democracy, there is reform; the second is replacement, that is, the opposition forces lead to realize democracy, and make the authoritarian government collapse to produce replacement; the third is transformation, which is to take joint action for the government and the opposition groups to realize democracy.

Although many countries begin to move towards democracy in the third wave of democratization, each wave of democratization has its own return, and the maintenance of democracy has become the key to whether authoritarian countries can be transformed into democratic countries in the process of democratization. The compromise and trade settlement between the democratic government and the original authoritarian regime has become a very important process. Although the military government gave up the regime, it did not give up the violent organs of the state, which also made the democratic government

need to be extra small in negotiations with it. If the policy was too radical or seriously affected the rights of the original authoritarian ruling group, it could force the military to overthrow the Democratic government by coup.

The consolidation of democracy can be discussed from three aspects: regime type, military power and transformation process. In the Communist country, because most of the officers belong to the Communist Party, as long as the influence of these former communist officers can be reduced in the transformation, garrison can avoid the occurrence of coups in the future. However, under the military dominated authoritarian regime, because the process of democratization has restricted the military's power, or threatened the dominant ruling forces, they choose to overthrow the democratic government or change the government's policies in various ways.

4. The Impact of Thailand's Political Ecology

The cabinet system originated in Britain. The prime minister or prime minister is formed by the largest party or coalition of political parties in Congress, or by the coalition of political parties composed of multiple parties to win the majority of seats in Congress. The second largest party or coalition of political parties in Congress forms a shadow cabinet to supervise the ruling party. If the policy proposed by the ruling party in the Congress is opposed by most of the members of the parliament, it means that most of the members of the Parliament are not entitled to the cabinet. At this time, the prime minister can take the cabinet's general resignation, or dissolve the Congress and hold the general election again.

Thailand's parliament is slightly different from the standard Westminster model. The same thing is that Thailand and Britain both have a king as head of state, but the difference is also in the power of the two kings. The king of England is only a symbolic empty head of state. Although the king of Thailand has no real political power after 1932, he still plays the role of arbiter in the military coup. In addition, frequent coups have also made the constitution constantly revised. It can be inferred that Thailand's constitution is difficult to have its own loftiness and immutability.

According to Thai scholar Chai Anan, Thailand's constitution can be roughly divided into three types. The first is "democratic constitution", which has not been implemented for a long time. The second is "semi democratic constitution" and the third is "non democratic constitution". The "democratic constitution" imitates the British style cabinet system, which allows political parties to participate and democracy. The "semi democratic constitution" means that the cabinet prime minister is not necessarily elected, and the members appointed by the cabinet prime minister have the legislative power. The "non democratic constitution" means that there is no elected Parliament, just the rubber stamp of the administrative department. Most of the time after 1932, Thailand was a military controlled non democratic Parliament. Whenever the new coup leader succeeded in the coup, the garrison would sublate the old constitution and formulate a new interim constitution.

The organization of Thailand's parliament also changes from time to time. After the military coup, the appointment of members of Parliament will be changed to official rather than elected. At this time, there are many members of Parliament who also have the status of soldiers. However, if an elected cabinet comes to power, it will probably crack down on military forces. At this time, the number of members of the cabinet, as well as the number of seats in Congress, will decline. In 1974, Prime Minister Sanya thammasak also amended the constitution to stipulate that soldiers must resign before they can serve as cabinet officials. But then, in 1976, it was defeated by a military coup that supported the tanin government. Apart from the period from 1992 to 2007, which lasted for 15 years, democracy in Thailand has not lasted for a long time.

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