



Challenges to Southeast Asia's Democratization Processes: A case study on Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand

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Declaration

This statement is a declaration that this thesis is my own work. All sources used have been acknowledged.

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Abstract

Democratization in Southeast Asia has long been of scholarly interests, particularly following the *Third Wave*, which saw the democratization of the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia, as well as the political liberalization of Malaysia, Singapore, and Cambodia. However, excitements over democracy were soon overshadowed by creeping doubts over their survivability. By the 2000s, democratization has either decelerated or regressed in some of the region's most strategic countries, most notably Thailand and the Philippines. As ASEAN is on the verge of liberalization, this poses negative implications to the organization as well.

This paper seeks to identify common variables that threaten democratic institutions in Southeast Asia. Scholars of Southeast Asia have proposed numerous variables that threaten the region's young democracies, ranging from the system of government to geographic attributes. This paper will not attempt to identify a new variable. Rather, it will assess the three dominant approaches in the study of democratic survival in the region – socioeconomic, structural, and ethnic and cultural – in order to identify what common challenges threaten Southeast Asia's democratic institutions. In order to do so, this paper will also adopt a unique approach to the topic by primarily focusing on the period between 2000 and 2010, which has seen the beginning of the gradual decline of democratic progression in many parts of Southeast Asia. Rather than conduct a region-wide study, it will primarily focus on three of the region's biggest democracies: Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. By adopting this nuanced approach to the study of democratic survival in Southeast Asia, this paper has uncovered that the biggest factors that contribute to the gradual deceleration or regression of the democratization process were unstable elite relations and a power struggle between members of the elite, at large, and the middle class. The variety of variables that shape this power balance determine the life length and stability of democratic institutions.

This paper's primary contribution to the literature is its unique approach to the study of democratic survival. By focusing on the period between 2000 and 2010, it has managed to find evidence for the structuralist and cultural arguments that actors, political culture, and ethnic conflict shape the democratization process. But it has also managed to disprove the dominant socioeconomic approach that argue that

socioeconomic factors pose significant risks to the democratization process in the region. With this primary contribution, this paper also hopes to add on to further discussions on the impact of structural actors of the region's young democracies on the future of ASEAN as a whole.

Democracy under siege

Within the study of political science in the post-Cold War era, significant scholarly and media attention has been directed toward the rise of democracies and the collapse of authoritarian regimes. In Southeast Asia¹, the rise of democracies and the liberalization of political systems in strategic countries has, in recent decades, influenced how countries in the region behave, interact, and, according to some scholars, provide the empowerment necessary for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to become a more effective inter-governmental organization.² Once home to some of the most resilient and repressive governments in the developing world, the region has now seen the proliferation of some of the most effective democratic movements in the 20th century. The 1986 downfall of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines began the so-called “Third wave of democracy” in Asia, inspiring freedom and democracy movements all over the region.³ Not long after Marcos’ fall, Thailand and Indonesia witnessed significant changes to their political systems, as authoritarian regimes fell and were replaced with governments that are far more open to opposition and institutional reform. Even Malaysia and Singapore, home to some of the strongest and most entrenched governments in the region, faced a gradual, but significant period of political liberalization.

However, the region’s excitement with democracy was short-lived, as by the late-2000s, democratization in the region stalled and, in some of the region’s more strategic countries, the trend has reversed. From the re-implementation of the 2012 Internal Security Act in Malaysia to the 2014 military overthrow of Thai Prime Minister Niwatthamrong Boonsongpaisan, some parts of the region are witnessing a drastic rollback of democratic progress. Only the Philippines and Indonesia have stayed

¹ For the sake of familiarity, this paper will adopt the United Nations’ categorization of Southeast Asia. The countries listed are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. See here: “United Nations Statistic Division - Standard Country and Area Codes Classification”, last revised 31 October 2013, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>

² See Acharya, Amitav. “Southeast Asia’s Democratic Moment”. *Asian Survey*, 39:3 (1999): 418-432; Villacorta, Wilfrido V. “Inter-regional Cooperation in Democracy Building: Prospects for Enhanced ASEAN-EU Engagement”. *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* (2009).

³ Huntington, Samuel. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991)

relatively on track. However, even in these two countries, democratic institutions are under threat from public distrust, rampant corruption, and ongoing political dominance of figures from past authoritarian regimes. The question that now looms large within scholarly debates is what explains the sudden deceleration or regression of democratization in Southeast Asia?

Scholarly discussions over Southeast Asia's rollback from democracy mounted following the 2006 overthrow of Thaksin Shinawatra. Nonetheless, the topic of democratic survival has continued to attract significant interest from scholars of comparative politics in Southeast Asia since the downfall of Marcos, as the question that arises from a period of democratic transition is *how* to ensure that democracy remains as 'the only game in town'.⁴ The literature on democratic survival in Southeast Asia is large and rich with various hypotheses suggesting socioeconomic, political, and cultural reasons behind the attacks (or preservation) of democratic institutions in the young democracies and hybrid regimes. Countless variables, ranging from systems of government to geographic attributes, have been suggested by scholars to explain the outcomes of the region's democratization processes. However, three main approaches, which cover a variety of endogenous variables, have emerged within scholarly debate.

The first approach focuses on socioeconomic variables, such as income inequality and lower levels of modernization, as causes for democratic regime survival or regression. A dominant approach in the study of democratic survival, its proponents, many of whom are political modernists, argue that economic factors, play an important role in shaping the behaviour of actors within society, which in turn act to remove or preserve democratic institutions.⁵ The second approach looks at the role of actors, such as the military and parliament, in shaping the structural foundations of democracy. These actors act as either an obstruction or driver to the democratization process⁶. Proponents

⁴ Linz, Juan J. & Stepan, Alfred. "Toward Consolidated Democracies". *Journal of Democracy* 7:2 (1996): 15

⁵ See Lipset, Seymour Martin. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy". *The American Political Science Review* 53:1 (1959): 69-105; Przeworski, Adam and Limongi, Fernando. "Modernization: Theories and Facts". *World Politics* 49:2 (1997): 155-183; Marsh, Ian et al. *Democracy, governance, and economic performance: East and Southeast Asia*. (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1999).

⁶ See Slater, Dan. "Democracies and Dictatorships Do Not Float Freely: Structural Sources of Political Regimes in Southeast Asia". in *Southeast Asia in Political Science: Theory, Region, and Qualitative*

of this approach are concerned with the supporting institutions that have shaped the performance, cohesion, and prospects for survival of democracies, as they believe that democratization surround organizational collision. A third approach is the cultural and ethnic approach, which is concerned with public and state perceptions of democracy. Proponents of this approach point to the role of culture, values, and ethnicity as obstacles to the liberal principles of democracy.⁷

Studies of democratic survival in Southeast Asia reflect the greater scholarly concern over democracy's erratic history in Southeast Asia and the by-products of democratic institutions in liberalizing Southeast Asia as a whole. This raises ongoing scholarly contentions regarding the importance of democracy for peace, collaboration, cooperation, regionalism, and foreign policy behaviour more generally.⁸ ASEAN has remained a unique regional organization. Despite historically being known as a "club of dictators", ASEAN has been very effective in preserving regional peace and stability amongst its member-states.⁹ However, the post-Cold War has posed unique challenges to the relationship amongst member-states. The collapse of communism as a serious threat to regime survival has weakened the political legitimacy of some leaders; increased international attention on human rights issues has divided ASEAN countries over Myanmar's human rights abuses; and trans-border issues, such as refugees and haze, have put the organization's core value of "non-interference" into question. The gradual political liberalization of the region's countries have resulted in a greater willingness to slowly look beyond the "ASEAN Way" in order to collaborate and solve interstate issues. However, as the region's democratization processes slow down or regress, would this willingness to collaborate on internal issues remain the

Analysis, ed. Slater, Dan et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Crouch, Harold. & Morley, James. "The Dynamics of Political Change". in *Driven by Growth: political Change in the Asia-Pacific Region*. ed by Morley, James. (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993); Winters, Jeffrey. "Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia". *Indonesia* 96 (2013): 11-33

⁷ See Pye, Lucian et al. *Asian Power and Politics* (Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Neher, Clark D. "Asian Style Democracy". *Asian Survey* 34:11 (1994): 949-961; Dalton, Russell & Ong, Nhu-Ngoc T. "Authority Orientations and Democratic Attitudes: A Test of the "Asian Values" Hypothesis". *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 6:2 (2005): 1-21.

⁸ Acharya, Amitav. "Democratising Southeast Asia: Economic Crisis and Political Change". *Asia Research Centre* (1998): 10-14

⁹ Phil Robertson. "ASEAN's road to nowhere? Subverting standards within the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration". *Strategic Review*, 1 May 2013, accessed 18 October 2014. <http://www.sr-indonesia.com/web-exclusives/view/asean-s-road-to-nowhere-subverting-standards-within-the-asean-human-rights-declaration>

same? With this overarching question in mind, there is a strong need to conduct a comparative analysis to identify similarities in the region's democratization processes.

The purpose of this paper is to revisit these three approaches through a comparative analysis that covers three key countries in Southeast Asia – Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand – and assess how recent and significant domestic developments affect, validate, or detract from the key propositions in each of the three cases. In the process, the thesis will identify what common socioeconomic, structural, and cultural and ethnic variables are responsible for protecting or weakening the democratization process. The main research question is “given the developments of the past decade, what are the key variables that challenge the survivability of democratic institutions in Southeast Asia?” While there have been numerous attempts by scholars to conduct comparative research on the democratization processes in Southeast Asia, an empirical investigation of variables from all three approaches concerning their relevance to democratic survival is rare. Moreover, researches that attempt to identify shared factors and variables within Southeast Asia's polities have received much criticism from scholars who outline the region's complex political diversity. However, it is this paper's argument that such research deserves further consideration for its interdisciplinary nature and focus, along with its distinctive findings concerning the impact of each set of variables on the other.

This paper has found that there are four key commonalities that hamper the democratization process: weak political parties, the political influence of the military, ethnic conflict, and the authoritarian influence of the “Asian values” on state institutions. The first two are structural variables while the latter two are cultural and ethnic variables. The influence of unstable elite relations and a power struggle between members of the elite, at large, and the middle class have shaped the progress of democratization in the region. This paper has also found that, as argued by a number of scholars in the past, the two dominant socioeconomic variables of income inequality and lower levels of modernization are not common variables that threaten democratic institutions in Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, socioeconomic factors *may* ensure that democratization will not entirely regress.

This paper is not downplaying the complexity of the region's complicated democratization processes. Indeed, there are numerous other variables that may contribute to the mixed outcome of the democratization process. After all, there is not one single pathway in the democratization process and there will be no similar outcome. However, the impacts of the aforementioned variables on the region's young democracies have created an impact that will not only define the future of each country's political systems, but also its behaviour with other countries in the region.

Defining democracy

Before this paper continues on its intended discussion, it is firstly important to discuss how it seeks to approach the concept of "democracy" in Southeast Asia. While "democracy" has become a globally recognized concept, its definition remains one of the most debated topics in political science. However, there has been no clear consensus within academia over what characteristics a democracy entails. In the mid-20th century, there are three major approaches that have emerged from debates over the meaning of democracy. These approaches focus on democracy as a source of authority for the government, the purposes a democratic government serves, and the procedures for establishing and constituting a government.¹⁰ The first two focus on a normative definition of democracy and are concerned with the sources of power within a state (e.g. separation of power, no monopolistic influences over state officials) and the effectiveness of "democratic" institutions in achieving idealistic goals (e.g. handle corruption and income inequality).¹¹ The third approach is a procedural definition of democracy, which focuses on the institutions and means that a government is selected into power. There were great debates over these three approaches, but from the 1970s onwards, the procedural definition of the concept eventually "won", as it provided a more empirical, institutional, and measurable definition of the term.¹² This paper will focus on a procedural definition of democracy for this reason.

¹⁰ Huntington, Samuel. *Third Wave of Democratization*, 6

¹¹ This paper provides good explanations on the normative definitions of democracy: Maoz, Zeev & Russett, Bruce. "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946-1986" in *The American Political Science Review* 87:3 (1993): 624-638

¹² Huntington, Samuel. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 6

Austrian-American political scientist Joseph Schumpeter was amongst the first and most prominent proponents of the procedural definition. Schumpeter defines democracy as an ‘institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote’.¹³ This minimalist definition of “democracy” has not only shaped the way scholars conceptualized democracy in coming decades, but it has shaped the way policymakers and members of civil society organizations defined and conceptualized democracy. The underlying features that sets a democratic form of government apart from others is the way in which the leaders of a country are selected. Unlike other forms of governments (e.g. military juntas, communist/fascist regimes), where the leaders are selected by appointment or through violence, leaders of democratic regimes are selected through competitive elections. Dahl expands on Schumpeter’s definition to argue that a democracy must also have a contestation and participation dimension, which ensures the existence of civil and political freedoms and the existence of effective opposition groups.¹⁴ A contestation dimension is particularly important in a contemporary democracy, as it creates a greater separation of power that takes power away from serving governments to opposition groups and other bodies in the state or within society.

This paper will adopt a combination of the procedural definitions provided by Schumpeter and Dahl. Thus, this paper will define a “democracy” as a form of government that ensures the freedom of all adult citizens to politically participate or contest in free and fair elections, as well as protect their rights to free speech and assembly. Thus, a state is undemocratic if it does not allow sections of its citizenry to vote, if opposition groups face harassment and/or are not allowed to participate in elections, and if there are any attempts by the government to illegally prolong power (e.g. vote manipulation, cancelling elections). Indeed, a procedural definition of democracy is minimalist. Critics of the procedural approach, such as McElhenny, argue that it reduces the notion of democracy and abandons the ‘the pre-determined goals of classical democratic doctrines, the nineteenth century models based on community

¹³ Schumpeter, Joseph. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942. Reprint, Radford: Wilder Publications, 2012) 269

¹⁴ Dahl, Robert. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971) 1-9

consensus on a common good'.¹⁵ In a paper focusing on democratic survival in Southeast Asia, it may seem that a normative approach of “democracy” may be better, as it can focus on whether the objectives of democratic movements, such as the eradication of corruption and removal of authoritarian elites from power, have been successful. However, there is too much difficulty in using the approach in this way. For example, how could one effectively measure the continuous success of prominent normative democratic ideals, such as informed and rational deliberation and equal participation and power of all groups?

Therefore, the procedural definition is as Huntington maintains as ‘necessarily minimal’.¹⁶ By using this approach, this paper will primarily focus on the protection of two democratic institutions: free and fair elections and free speech. Due to the limitations of the research topic and word count, this paper will not divulge into discussions on the purposes of a democratic government or put together a checklist of objectives put forward by the region’s democratic movements to assess the effectiveness of governments during the democratic transition period. Rather, it is concerned with the survivability of the two aforementioned democratic institutions. Variables from all three of the approaches mentioned in the previous sections of this chapter have played an important role in contributing to the democratization process in Southeast Asia. However, as this chapter will explain in the next few chapters, these same variables may contribute to the actions that weaken the democratization process.

There are two additional definitions that must be distinguished in this paper, which are “democratic transition” and “democratic consolidation”, both of which are fundamental components of the democratization process that precedes a consolidated democracy. For the purpose of this paper, it will adopt the definitions of Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, prominent scholars of democracy studies. Linz and Stepan define “democratic transition” as the first process of democratization when actors try to reach an agreement about the free and fair political procedure of electing governments, when this government has the *de facto* authority to generate new policies, and when the legislative, executive, and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not

¹⁵ McElhenny, Shaun. "Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Normative Analysis". (PhD diss., New York University, 2004).

¹⁶ Huntington. *Third Wave of Democratization*. 8

have to share power with the other bodies *de jure*.¹⁷ A period of “democratic consolidation” is contrasted as a time when key institutions of democracies (e.g. free and episodic elections, freedom of speech) are practiced, but there continues to be behavioural and actoral factors that prevents democracy from being ‘the only game in town’.¹⁸ These two definitions are in sync with the Schumpeter-Dahl definition that this paper seeks to adopt, as it focuses on state acceptance and recognition of key democratic institutions. Thus, this paper will adopt the Linz-Stepan definition of democratic transition and consolidation.

Democratization in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia’s political topography is diverse and complicated. Any attempt to identify common variables that explain episodes of political change in the region would be fraught with this difficulty. The Bertelsmann Transformation Index identifies three sets of government types in Southeast Asia. They are closed authoritarian governments (Brunei, Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar) moderate electoral authoritarianism (Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore), and defective democracies (Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Timor-Leste).¹⁹ During the Third Wave, Southeast Asia saw radical political transformations in four countries: the Philippines (1986), Thailand (1992), Cambodia (1993), and Indonesia (1998). However, of these four countries, only the political systems of the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia have significantly liberalized following the period of authoritarian rule. Cambodia’s democratic transition was fraught with problems and gross human rights violations, amid attempts by Hun Sen’s ruling party to maintain power.²⁰ Thus, Cambodia’s political system has never managed to achieve significant democratic achievements.

On the other hand, during periods of their democratic consolidation, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand have faced considerable progress in the promotion of civil and political rights. They have empowered civil society organizations (CSOs),

¹⁷ Linz & Stepan. "Toward Consolidated Democracies". 14-20

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 15

¹⁹ "Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index 2014", *Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index*, accessed 1 October 2014. <http://www.bti-project.org/index/>

²⁰ Sopheap Chak. "Democracy in Cambodia: Progress, Challenges, and Pathway". in *A Future for Democracy*, ed. Hofmeister, Wilhelm (Singapore: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2011) 53-54

enhanced participatory politics, and seen the emergence of pro-reform figures to key political positions. Due to these democratic advancements, Freedom House has, at some point during their period of democratic consolidation, ranked them as “free”.²¹ The democratization movements of these three countries have significant implications for the entire region. Acharya observes that the emergence of CSOs in these three countries have led to greater challenges to the “ASEAN model of elite-centric regional socialization” and greater demands for openness in Southeast Asian regionalism.²² Additionally, within the past two decades, these three countries have been at the forefront of pushing forward pro-rights initiatives, such as the 2012 ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, which has liberalized the ways in which ASEAN has functioned.

However, between 2000 and 2010, the progress in which democratization has taken place have either gradually or significantly slowed down. In the Philippines and Thailand, the weakening of parliament, the prevalence of money politics, and gross violations of human rights in conflict regions have resulted in their demotion into “partly free” democracies by Freedom House in 2006. In Indonesia, the power of oligarchic actors continue to loom large over the decision-making process. This paper seeks to look at this particular period in order to identify the variables that have led to the regression, halting, or deceleration of the democratization process.

Methodology

The following chapters seek to critically examine the continued applicability of the three approaches via these case studies: Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. This thesis will adopt a qualitative and comparative-historical analysis to assess the internal validity of the arguments and to identify whether there are any shared patterns that strengthen or weaken the democratization process in the three countries. As mentioned previously, the three countries have been chosen based on similar experiences of

²¹ Freedom House. "Freedom in the World 2003". *Freedom House*, accessed 18 September 2014, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2003#.VE-37BbOsTI>; Freedom House. "Freedom in the World 2010". *Freedom House*, accessed 18 September 2014, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2010#.VE-4JBbOsTI>

²² Acharya, Amitav. "Democratisation and the prospects for participatory regionalism in Southeast Asia". *Third World Quarterly* 24:2 (2010): 375-376, doi: 10.1080/0143659032000074646

radical political liberalizations that have slowed down within the past decade. This shared trait of political transition will allow this paper to conduct a “controlled comparison”, which may point out key patterns that could further support this paper’s arguments. To narrow down the research scope, this paper will focus on the period between 2000 and 2010. This is a departure from traditional approaches to the study of democratic survival in the region, which has traditionally focused on the period of democratic transition. By looking at the troubled period from 2000 and 2010 and identifying key moments, this paper seeks to identify what factors have led to the deceleration, regression, or halting of the democratization process.

The research will be carried out through a review and analysis of literatures that are associated with the three countries and timeframes from scholars who have written about democratic transitions and consolidations, Southeast Asian political culture, and socioeconomic development. Much of this literature will serve as secondary resources that are based on intensive researches on the three countries’ political systems. There will also be uses of surveys that have been compiled by the Asian Barometer, which conducts extensive researches on public opinion of democracy and politics in Asia. These surveys will be used to provide evidence for arguments relating to public support of democracy or authoritarianism.

Thesis Structure

The paper is divided into four chapters, with this introductory chapter being the first one. Apart from presenting the nitty gritty of the research methodology, this chapter has also provided a working definition of “democracy” that will be applied throughout the paper. The second chapter is a literature review of prominent research approaches to the topic of democratic survival. This chapter will look at the three approaches to the study of democratization in Southeast Asia – socioeconomic, structural, and cultural and ethnic – in order to critique the pre-existing literature on the topic. This chapter has two primary objectives. Firstly, it aims to ensure that this paper has achieved theoretical control by considering all important variables for the topic of democratic survival in Southeast Asia. Secondly, it seeks to identify room for expansion on the knowledge of these key variables.

Chapter 3 will be divided into two sections. The first section will provide a historical narrative of events from 2000 and 2010 that exhibit elements of variables that strengthen or weaken young democracies in each of the three case studies. The second section will provide an analysis on each of the three country case studies in order to identify the challenges to the democratization process in each of the three countries. The fourth chapter will provide a comparative analysis of the three countries and identify the shared variables that explain the outcome of their ongoing democratization processes. The last section of the paper will be the conclusion, which will summarize all findings and reflect on the wider implications its findings would have in the broader context of the literature of democratic survival in Southeast Asia.

Limitations of Paper

The difficulty of attempting to answer such a large and broad question lies in the highly complex diversity that shapes Southeast Asia's politics. Scholars have proposed countless variables to describe the outcome and process of each democratization process in the region. However, due to this paper's word limit, it will not be able to identify and assess the entire spectrum of these variables. Rather, this paper will assess the most prominent and common variables that have been suggested by scholars on the topic. Additionally, this paper will not be able to research the impacts of each variables in great detail. These are topics that can be addressed in future research projects.

Challenges to Democratic Survival in Southeast Asia

Given the volatile nature of Southeast Asia's young democracies in recent years, scholars from all fields of studies within Southeast Asian political science have attempted to offer unique variables and approaches that try to explain the sudden regression or deceleration of the democratization process. This chapter seeks to look at six variables in the literature, which have been placed into three primary groups: socioeconomic, structural, and cultural and ethnic. These variables – lower levels of modernization, income inequality, weak political parties, political influence of the military, Asian values, and ethnic and cultural fragmentation – have been chosen because they have generated some of the most dominant debates within the study of democracy studies, particularly within the study of Southeast Asian democracy, which has been seen as an anomaly by scholars for its unique ability to juggle authoritarianism and modest or good standards of living. By understanding the root causes of the arguments for and against these variables, we will gain a better understanding of how democracy in Southeast Asia has been perceived to operate from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Socioeconomic Variables

The socioeconomic approach is the dominant approach amongst scholars of democracy studies, having been prominent since Aristotle. It is concerned with the impact of economic performance and stability on societal behaviour towards the regime.²³ There are two key socioeconomic variables that threaten democratic institutions, which this paper will investigate: *lower levels of modernization*²⁴ and

²³ Diskin, Abraham et al. "Why Democracies Collapse: The Reasons for Democratic Failure and Success". *International Political Science Review* 26:3 (2005): 293-294. doi:10.1177/0192512105053787

²⁴ The "modernization theory" refers to a theory that explains the process of modernization within societies. When applied to studies of democracy, it refers to the causal nexus between socioeconomic development and democracy. Within the study of democratic survival, it is concerned with how social factors that result from economic development (e.g. improved living standards and education) effect the democratization process. "Lower levels of modernization" refer to a society with a poor and developing economy. Przeworski and Limongi provide a good discussion on the nexus between the modernization theory and democracy and democratic survival: Przeworski & Limongi. "Modernization: Theories and Facts".

income inequality. Income inequality and lower levels of modernization are not mutually exclusive. As Acemoglu et al. argue, income inequality is a by-product of modernization.²⁵ However, income inequality should be considered an independent variable in its own right, as average levels of modernization are not pre-requisites of widening income gaps, as seen in Thailand.²⁶ Additionally, income inequality poses unique social and political risks to society, such as the deepening of social cleavages, as this section will later explain.

Lower levels of modernization

Within the study of democracy, scholars have long argued that good economic performance and stability provide legitimacy to the regime. Lipset argues that continuous economic development would provide the regime sufficient legitimacy, which is necessary for regime survival. Basing his work on cross-national and cross-sectional data, he builds up this argument by suggesting that economic development creates a series of fundamental social changes – primarily advances in urbanization, education, and industrialization – that may produce and enhance democratic institutions.²⁷ This assumption, while highly debated amongst scholars, has numerous academic proponents. Przeworski et al. have come to similar conclusions as Lipset by arguing that ‘once a country has a democratic regime, its level of economic development has a very strong effect on the probability that democracy will survive’.²⁸ However, they also added that affluence (or at least a GDP per capita of \$6,055, also known as the “Argentina threshold”) contributes to the likelihood of stability in young

²⁵ Acemoglu, Daron et al. "Democracy, Redistribution and Inequality" (working paper, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2013), <http://www.nber.org/papers/w19746>

²⁶ The GINI Index has measured their income inequality levels to be at 43 and 37.8, respectively (0 representing perfect equality and 100 perfect inequality). They rank as the 52nd and 70th most unequal countries in the world. See: "GINI Index", *World Bank*, accessed 10 October 2014. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI>

²⁷ Lipset, Seymour Martin. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy", 75-85

²⁸ Przeworski, Adam et al. "What makes democracies endure?". *Journal of Democracy* 7:1 (1996): 40-41

democracies.²⁹ This is because increased wealth greatly lowers the distributional conflicts within society ‘through various sociological mechanisms’.³⁰

There is difficulty in testing Przeworski et al.’s criteria in Southeast Asia’s young democracies. Democratic institutions in Indonesia and the Philippines, which fail to reach the Argentina threshold, seem to face continuing threats from powerful actors from past authoritarian governments. However, democratic institutions in Singapore and Malaysia, which pass the Argentina threshold, equally face numerous pressures. While, some scholars of Southeast Asian politics are likely to disagree with their criteria, many would likely agree on their overall assessment that economic performance is likely to ensure, or at least significantly contribute to, regime stability. For instance, Alagappa argues that the durability of one-party systems and resilient authoritarian regimes, plus the added economic success of such regimes in East and Southeast Asia seem to refute the central assumptions of the dominant development approach.³¹ Indeed, good economic performance has provided legitimacy to regimes, regardless of regime type. For instance, Case has observed that the ability of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) to operate a stable “semi-democratic” regime without the use of force lies in the economic and infrastructural development it has provided the Malaysian people, granting them considerable political legitimacy amongst the mass population.³² Similarly, the authoritarian Suharto government rested its legitimacy on ‘the twin pillars of economic development and political stability, both of which have helped ensure the survival of the nation’.³³ The Suharto government was only forced out of power following the 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis, which devastated the Indonesian economy.

²⁹ Przeworski et al. have reached this conclusion in a 1996 paper after analysing all democracies from 1876 until 1996. They conclude that democracies with a per capita income of under \$2,000 has an expected life of nine years. Countries with per capita incomes between \$2,001 and \$6,000 have an expected life of 20 years. They found that wealthy democracies, or those above \$6,055, have never failed, even in times of economic crisis. See: *Ibid*, 41-42

³⁰ Przeworski, Adam et al. *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Material Well-being in the World, 1950-1990*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 101

³¹ Alagappa, Muthiah. *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 5

³² Case, William. “Malaysia: Aspects and Audiences of Legitimacy” in *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority*. ed. Alagappa, Muthiah. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995) 70-72

³³ Rock, Michael T. "The Politics of Development Policy and Development Policy Reform in New Order Indonesia" (Working Paper, William Davidson Institute, 2003)
<http://wdi.umich.edu/files/publications/workingpapers/wp632.pdf>

Scholars on Southeast Asian politics have traditionally observed that ensuring stable economic performance was paramount for all authoritarian regimes in the region, as failure to do so would mean losing legitimacy. However, there is also concern amongst scholars that young democracies face similar challenges. Croissant and Bunte observe that ‘the bourgeoisie and the middle classes have supported their own political inclusion, but at the same time, have favoured political stability, economic development, and secure property rights...’.³⁴ Statistical evidence from the Asian Barometer seems to support Croissant and Bunte’s argument. For instance, in Thailand, 49% of respondents argue that economic development is either much more or somewhat more important than democracy.³⁵ Indeed, the statistical evidences seem to suggest that many Southeast Asians seem to favour economic stability over democracy, and many scholars of Southeast Asian politics seem to agree that lower levels of modernization would harm the legitimacy of democratic institutions. However, there are scholars who criticize the application of the modernization theory on Southeast Asia’s young democracies. For instance, in an analysis of a number of East and Southeast Asian countries, Thompson concludes that the preservation of democratic institutions have little to do with modernization, but rather by a weak state that is incapable of providing effective governance and cater to the economic interests of the middle class.³⁶ Similarly, Lee and Buckley argues that the level of modernization may not play as large a role as other variables on the democratization process. He also adds that lower levels of modernization in the Philippines and Timor-Leste have not prevented the continued survival of democratic institutions.³⁷

While Thompson’s argument has some validity, as structural factors are very important variables, Lee and Buckley’s assessment is not entirely accurate. As some

³⁴ Croissant, Aurel & Bunte, Marco. "Democracy in Southeast Asia - An Assessment of Practices, Problems, and Prospects". in *A Future for Democracy*, ed. Hofmeister, Wilhelm (Singapore: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2011) 20

³⁵ Albritton, Robert B. "Support for Democracy in Thailand". (Working Paper, Asian Barometer, 2002). <http://www.asianbarometer.org/newenglish/publications/workingpapers/no.3.pdf>

³⁶ Thompson, Mark R. "Modernization theory's last redoubt". in *East Asia's New Democracies: Deepening, reversal, non-liberal alternatives*, ed. Chu, Yin-wah and Wong, Siu-Iun. (New York: Routledge, 2010) 89-96

³⁷ Lee, Yoke-Lian and Buckley, Roger. "Conflicts in Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Modernization, Nationalism, and State-Building". in *Politics of Conflict: A Survey*, ed. Fouskas, Vassilis (London: Routledge, 2007), 104-110

scholars argue, past experiences at democratization have been reversed or completely destroyed by lower levels of modernization. For instance, Robinson observed that political and economic instability during the liberal democracy period and the successive Guided Democracy period in Indonesia shifted public support towards authoritarianism, which was perceived more stable.³⁸ Similarly, Funatso and Kagoya observed that public support for democracy in 1976 Thailand was quick to switch back to support for military rule when the new democratic government failed to effectively deal with poor economic growth and deal with growing Marxist threats. Thus, the public ‘tacitly expected that the military would regain control, restoring political stability and protecting their economic interests’.³⁹ There seems to be some agreement amongst many scholars that while members of society found key democratic institutions, such as freedom of speech and political mobilization, to be appealing, many favoured a state that was capable of ensuring law and order.⁴⁰ Thus, poor economic performance or an unstable economy continue to be an important contributing variable in studies of democracy

Income Inequality

There is a strong consensus amongst scholars that extreme forms of socioeconomic inequality create social issues that undermine democracy.⁴¹ Acemolgu and Robinson have observed that extreme forms of inequality create the foundation for conditions that provoke popular pressure for self-redistribution, as well as the elite resistance to them.⁴² However, such an issue remains a puzzle within academia. Scholars argue that a democratic regime is more likely to narrow the gap between the rich and poor, as the

³⁸ Robinson, Richard. “The middle class and the bourgeoisie in Indonesia”. in *The New Rich in Asia: Mobile phones, McDonald’s and the middle-class revolution*, ed. Goodman, David & Robinson, Richard (London: Routledge, 2013) 82-83

³⁹ Funatsu, Tsuruyo & Kagoya, Kazuhiro. “The Middle Classes in Thailand: The Rise of the Urban Intellectual Elite and their Social Consciousness”. *The Developing Economies*, XLI:2 (2003): 246

⁴⁰ See Croissant and Bunte *op cit.*; Lee & Roger, “Conflicts in Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Modernization, Nationalism, and State-Building”; Robinson, “The middle class and the bourgeoisie in Indonesia”; Thompson “Modernization Theory’s Last Redoubt”; Yong, Mun Cheong. “Political structures”, in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, ed. Tarling, Nicholas. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁴¹ See Perotti, Roberto. "Growth, income distribution, and democracy: what the data say". *Journal of Economic Growth* 1:2 (1996): 149-187; Boix, Carles & Posner, Daniel N. "Social Capital: Explaining its origins and effects on government performance". *British Journal of Political Science* 1:4 (1998): 686-693

⁴² Acemolgu et al. “Democracy, Redistribution, and Inequality”.

median voter will use their democratic power to redistribute resources away from the rich.⁴³ Additionally, democratic governments are accountable to a country's entire population, rather than to a powerful and rich minority.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, income disparity continues to be an issue in even developed democracies, such as the United States.⁴⁵ The problem is more endemic in nascent democracies, such as Thailand and the Philippines, as past authoritarian regimes have often concentrated economic development within particular areas.

The social and political implications of income inequality on democracy are numerous, such as less social cohesion and increasing crime rates. But within scholarly discussions of income inequality in Southeast Asia, there seems to be a lot of attention given to its role in deepening the political divide between urban and rural populations. In a 1970 paper, Stigler argues that democracy only primarily aims to transfer political power to the middle class, rather than the masses. In an analysis of public revenue distribution in the United States, Stigler concludes that democracies provide greater political and economic autonomies and benefits to the middle class, which may not necessarily benefit the lower class. These benefits include lower taxes, increased spending for urban infrastructure, and restricting minimum wage. Such policies benefit the middle class, but have negative implications on the lower class. Stigler concludes that the political power to shift redistribution to benefit the lower class truly lies with the middle class. However, the widening income gap in the United States and the ongoing division within the middle class over support for redistribution policies continue to hamper the political relationship between the classes.⁴⁶

Some Southeast Asian scholars possess similar observations as Stigler. In a comparative research on Asia, Bunnell et al. have noted that the concentration of wealth in urban areas have created an urban-rural divide, which has deepened social cleavages in young democracies. They observe that the divide is largely caused by ideological reasons, as rural dwellers are seen by their urban counterparts as 'subject

⁴³ Meltzer, Allan H. & Richard, Scott F. "A Rational Theory of the Size of Government" *The Journal of Political Economy* 89:5 (1981): 914-927; Boix & Posner. "Social Capital: Explaining its origins and effects on government performance".

⁴⁴ Boix and Posner, *Ibid*, 690-692

⁴⁵ Acemolgu and Robinson, "Democracy, Redistribution, and Inequality".

⁴⁶ Stigler, George J. "Director's Law of Public Income Redistribution". *Journal of Law and Economics* 13:1 (1970): 1-4. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/724835.pdf?&acceptTC=true&jpdConfirm=true>

of scorn, ridicule, and debasement’, which in turn make them ‘ready-at-hand for political mobilization’.⁴⁷ Thus, political entrepreneurs in young democracies, such as Thailand’s Thaksin Shinawatra, have managed to take advantage of this divide to mobilize support, by promising to redistribute resources to the poor, while attempting to strengthen their own political power through material means.⁴⁸ In a general observation on the political implications of inequality, Lupu and Pontusson argue that the chances of social cleavages heighten in more ethnically heterogeneous societies, leading to the emergence of ethnic-based parties that may possess demagogue characteristics.⁴⁹ This, in turn, may heighten the possibility of ethnic conflict. Indeed, experiences from Southeast Asia seem to suggest that the region’s young democracies continue to struggle within the effects of deepening social cleavages.

Scholars have long asserted that economic woes, such as income inequality and a malfunctioning economy, have the potential to pose devastating political consequences for democratic survival. Thus, the effectiveness of political actors are tested as they are tasked to ensure that the social and political effects of economic woes do not threaten democracy’s key institutions. This leads to the discussion on the next two variables.

Structural Variables

Within the study of democratization in Southeast Asia, there has been considerable attention given to the structural foundations of young democracies. Proponents of the structural variables are interested in how the political system and democratic transition process are structured by actors, such as the military, political parties, and members of past authoritarian elites. As Slater argues, the basis of the structural approach primarily rests on scholarly interests in unravelling why authoritarianism in the region

⁴⁷ Bunnell, Tim et al. *Cleavage, Connection, and Conflict in Rural, Urban, and Contemporary Asia* (Singapore: Springer, 2013), 174-177.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 177

⁴⁹ “Demagogue characteristics” is defined by an effective rhetoric for a political agenda. In this case, demagogues may take advantage of historical animosity amongst ethnicities or income inequality to blame a particular ethnic group for economic woes. Lupu, Noam & Pontusson, Jonas. "The Structure of Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution". *American Political Science Review* 105:2 (2011): 317-319. doi:10.1017/S0003055411000128

endures, whereas others are prone to collapse.⁵⁰ By focusing on key actors, this approach ‘steers a middle path between the apolitical determinism of the “social pre-requisites” literature and the asocial and ahistorical contingency of the “transitology” literature’.⁵¹ Scholars of the region have rarely ignored the structural foundations of authoritarian durability in the study of democratization dynamics. As such, there is a rich variety of literature focusing on the role of political parties, militaries, and even class structures and their impact on the democratization process. However, two structural variables that threaten democratic institutions seem to emerge as the dominant ones in the study of democratization in Southeast Asia: the dominance of *weak political parties* and the continuing *political influence of the military*. While the political implications of both variables are different, the cause of its manifestation are similar, as will be explained later on in this section.

Following Fukuyama’s declaration of victory for liberal democracies, numerous scholarly papers have emerged warning of the so-called “fallacy of electoralism”. Scholars responded to Fukuyama’s declaration by adding adjectives to the democratic systems of the Third wave, such as “illiberal”, “defective”, and “ambiguous”, among others.⁵² Huntington argues that young democracies may face a “democracy paradox”, in which elections facilitate the emergence of groups that appeal to religious or ethnic loyalties and are likely to be ‘anti-democratic’.⁵³ Such an issue is relevant to Southeast Asia, considering its ethnic diversity, and has encouraged more research on the effects of the “democracy paradox” in Southeast Asia. However, while Huntington's work was influential, it failed to address why “Third Wave” democracies would behave in this way. In a prominent 1997 paper, Zakaria attempted to address this question by

⁵⁰ Slater, "Democracies and Dictatorships Do Not Float Freely: Structural Sources of Political Regimes in Southeast Asia", 9.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 31. The “social pre-requisites literature” refers to the body of literature that looks at the role of modernization and socioeconomic development on democracy. Prominent literature: Lipset, Przeworski et al. (will be referenced with other papers above). On the other hand, proponents of transitology argue that there are no set of pre-conditions that are necessary for democracy to take root. Rather, the primary causal variable for democratic survival during transition is elite bargaining. Guillermo O'Donnell is a prominent pioneer of the transitology literature. O'Donnell, Guillermo. *Transitions from authoritarian rule: Tentative conclusions about uncertain democracies* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013)

⁵² Zakaria, Fareed. "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy". *Foreign Affairs* 76:6 (1997) 22-43. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/53577/fareed-zakaria/the-rise-of-illiberal-democracy>; Merkel, Wolfgang. "Embedded and Defective Democracies". *Democratization* 11:5 (2004): 33-58. DOI:10.1080=13510340412331304598; Diamond, Larry. "Elections without Democracy: Thinking about Hybrid Regimes". *Journal of Democracy* 13:2 (2002): 21-35.

⁵³ Huntington, Samuel. "Democracy for the Long Haul". *Journal of Democracy* 7:2 (1996): 6-7

arguing that in order for a young democracy to consolidate, it must undergo considerable political liberalization prior to the period of democratization. Otherwise, it will lead to an “illiberal democracy”. In such a system, a government that is elected through popular and (sometimes) competitive elections, may suspend or limit the civil and political liberties of its people, while creating a power base with a particular group (e.g. largest ethnic group, rural poor). Zakaria’s assumption stems from the idea that newly-elected democratic leaders will be pressured to modernize the economy and liberalize a political system amidst the political threats of opponents, thus weakening all forms of opposition to rule without possible expulsion from power.⁵⁴

Huntington’s and Zakaria’s concerns were confirmed by Diamond in a 2008 article, when Diamond reported that democracy in many parts of the world, including Southeast Asia, has become a “superficial phenomenon” that regularly witnesses acts of bad governance, such as a corrupt legal system, abusive security forces, and the political dominance of local oligarchs. Elections, Diamond concludes, are then just ‘contests between corrupt, clientelistic parties’.⁵⁵ There has been significant empirical research conducted on Southeast Asia that seem to reinforce that the concerns raised by Huntington, Zakaria, and Diamond are not unfounded. Many observers argue that while young democracies provide greater political and civil liberties to its people, it continues to be hampered by corruption, the political dominance of oligarchs, and public disillusionment over the democratic government’s ability to fulfil promises.⁵⁶ Schedler has observed that the region’s electoral autocracies have practiced ‘the containment of liberal participation while tolerating electoral contestation, which has resulted in a desultory mix of freedoms and controls’.⁵⁷ Thus, some scholars observe that for many Southeast Asians, democracy equates to ‘little more than elections’.⁵⁸ Some scholars have referred to the role of structural actors as to blame for these problems.

⁵⁴ Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy”, 35-36

⁵⁵ Diamond, Larry. "The Democratic Rollback". *Foreign Affairs*, 2008, accessed 13 October 2014. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/63218/larry-diamond/the-democratic-rollback>

⁵⁶ Kurlantzick, “Southeast Asia's Regression From Democracy and Its Implications”, 16-17

⁵⁷ Schedler, Andreas. "Elections without Democracy: The Menu of Manipulation". *Journal of Democracy* 13:2 (2002): 43

⁵⁸ Kurlantzick, “Southeast Asia's Regression From Democracy and Its Implications”, 13

Weak Political Parties

Much of the literature that focuses on the influence of the “authoritarian past” on the democratization process tends to argue that the role and influence of political parties during the period of authoritarian rule play a very important part in shaping the democratization process, as it determines the strength of opposition parties and the party loyalty. A number of scholars argue that strong, well-institutionalized, and well-rooted political parties are necessary requirements for the consolidation of a democracy, as it facilitates stable and well-institutionalized party systems that are moderately polarized and are capable of promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of democratic institutions. Thereby, they contribute to the legitimacy and functioning of the democratic system at large.⁵⁹ However, in Southeast Asia, only Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Laos contain strong political parties. The rest of the region struggles to possess strong political parties, due to weak and highly fragmented opposition parties and the prevalence of money politics.

Party cohesiveness is a fundamental component of regime survival. Crouch and Morley observe how strong networks and patronage ties within the People’s Action Party (PAP) and New Order elite in Singapore and Indonesia, respectively, have been fundamental reasons for the preservation of the authoritarian regime’s power. They argue that ‘a long-established cohesive elite can often obstruct political change even when other factors are pushing the direction of change’.⁶⁰ On the other hand, ‘the less cohesive an elite, the less it is able to resist pressures toward liberalization and democratization’.⁶¹ The latter is a pre-condition for a democratic transition, as a less cohesive elite would be prone to external attacks from other elites, the public, or foreign powers. However, the failure of party cohesiveness also signals the failure of the government to manage elite relationships and quash dissent.

⁵⁹ Blondel, Jean et al. “Economic development v. political democracy” in *Democracy, Governance, and Economic Performance: East and Southeast Asia* (New York: United Nations University Press, 1999); Bosco, Anna et al. *Party Change in Southern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2006); Diamond, Larry & Gunther, Richard. *Political Parties and Democracy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

⁶⁰ Crouch & Morley "The Dynamics of Political Change", 277

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 278

The result of weak party structures can pose a serious threat to democratic stability and credibility. Firstly, weak political parties are often transient and fail to develop close links with voters. Croissant and Volker argue that this poses a threat to the public credibility of the party system, as parties “disappear like soap bubbles” and fail to accommodate the demands of electorates.⁶² Party inchoateness also creates a vacuum that would allow populists and oligarchs to come into power and dominate the political arena. In a study on Indonesia, Winters observes that the collapse of the Suharto regime saw the rise of oligarchs, many of whom materially benefited under Suharto, vying to either protect or increase political and financial power. Oligarchs and members of the past authoritarian elite recognize new challenges posed by democratization to their political power and use the advantage of material wealth to protect themselves from these new challenges.⁶³ Observers have noted that oligarchs and other powerful “informal” actors have utilized party connections and their vast financial resources to bypass laws and decrease political or financial competition from non-oligarchs. For instance, Hamilton-Hart observes how in Thailand and the Philippines, members of oligarchic or well-connected families were able to bypass normal entry channels and secure high-ranking positions within the bureaucracy.⁶⁴ Such examples lead to the second danger of weak political parties, which is the ineffectiveness of governance.

A number of scholars argue that high levels of corruption is a prominent cause of bad governance.⁶⁵ Corruption prevents public institutions from performing their functions, creates lack of trust in authorities, and hampers efforts at economic and infrastructural development. However, corruption remains an endemic political and economic problem in most Southeast Asian countries and even countries with strong political parties, such as Malaysia and Vietnam, continue to face considerable problems from corruption. However, democracies with weaker political parties are shown to struggle

⁶² Croissant and Bunte, “Democracy in Southeast Asia - An Assessment of Practices, Problems, and Prospects”, 23

⁶³ Winters. “Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia”, 15-20

⁶⁴ Hamilton-Hart, Natasha. *Hard Interests, Soft Illusions: Southeast Asia and American Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012) 178-179

⁶⁵ Kaminski, Antoni & Kaminski, Bartłomiej. "Governance and Corruption in Transition: The Challenge of Subverting Corruption". (Working Paper, United Nations Economic Commission Europe, 2001). <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/ead/sem/sem2001/papers/Kaminski.pdf>; Moore, Mick. "Political Underdevelopment: What causes 'bad governance'". *Public Management Review* 3:3 (2001): 385-418. doi:10.1080/14616670110050020

more in combatting corruption, as well as other political issues, such as nepotism and graft. Aceron notes that weak political parties, particularly those in opposition, have less power to review and contest government action and policies. Consequently, this prevents the emergence of coherent structures and institutions of accountability and review.⁶⁶ Additionally, as weak political parties are often patrimonialistic and based around patron-client relations, politicians are sometimes encouraged to pursue forms of “money politics” in order to secure political positions and votes.⁶⁷ These actions create a political culture in which corruption is tolerated. Thus, influencing the behaviour of state and government officials.

By failing to provide effective governance, the government, as Kurlantzick argues, generates disillusionment amidst the middle class, in particular – a collectivist that has typically driven the democratization movement with high hopes that democracy and greater political liberalism will effectively deal with aspects of the authoritarian past, such as corruption, nepotism, and abusive security forces.⁶⁸ Some Southeast Asia scholars have warned that this will encourage citizens to take matters into their own hands. While this may strengthen the role of CSOs within society, it may also lead to extra-constitutional or extra-judicial acts. For instance, dissatisfaction with major corruption scandals led to massive public protests that led to the 2001 removal of Joseph Estrada through extra-constitutional means in the Philippines. This act greatly undermined the electoral process through which he was elected into power.⁶⁹

Political influence of the military

The political influence of the military throughout most of Southeast Asia continues to remain a threat to democratic institutions. Huntington was a prominent pioneer in the

⁶⁶ Aceron, Joy. "It's the (Non-) System, Stupid!: Explaining "Mal-development" of Parties in the Philippines" in *Reforming the Philippine Political Party System ideas and initiatives, debates and dynamics*, ed. Aceron, Joy. (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2009) 5-6

⁶⁷ Quimpo, Nathan. "The Philippines: Political Parties and Corruption". *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2007): 282-286

⁶⁸ Kurlantzick, Joshua. "Southeast Asia's Regression From Democracy and Its Implications". (Working paper, Council of Foreign Relations, 2014). <http://www.cfr.org/democratization/southeast-asias-regression-democracy>.

⁶⁹ Mydans, Seth. "Expecting Praise, Filipinos are Criticized for Ouster". *New York Times*, 2 February 2001, accessed 13 October 2014. <http://web.archive.org/web/20091027085722/http://geocities.com/benign0/agr-disagr/12-3-nyt.html>

study of civil-military relations within young democracies. He argues that a key precursor to a consolidated democracy is “objective civilian control” of the military and the complete removal of the military from politics.⁷⁰ The failure to do so could warrant a complicated civil-military relationship during the period of democratic consolidation, as civilians would grow to dislike the political and economic privileges that military officers have. With the exception of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei, the role of the military as a professional armed force in Southeast Asia has been expanded to include political and economic duties as well. For instance, under the leadership of Suharto, Marcos, and the successive military governments in pre-1992 Thailand, the military was given special political and economic roles in order to strengthen the power base of the autocrat. This included providing officers with leadership over lucrative state-owned enterprises. Scholars argue that by possessing additional roles, the military adopted a strong political identity that may not only undermine civilian democratic rule, but also create divisions between the professional and political factions of the military.⁷¹ These two factors pose a direct threat to democratic institutions. Thus, scholars argue that it is imperative that young democracies should *gradually* remove military actors from politics, so that they do not harm the very delicate civil-military relationship.

The two aforementioned variables can be interconnected. Some experiences in Southeast Asia suggest that the relationship between political party actors and the military play a very important role in the consolidation process. But, as Huntington argues, the threat to democracy does not necessarily arise out of the military’s political role, but rather from the civilian actions towards it.⁷² Wollack argues that the lack of unifying principles and well-institutionalized rules and procedures, as well as an unwillingness to undertake greater citizen outreach and consultation have eroded public support and discouraged many from participating in political party activities. This has further isolated political parties from the people.⁷³ Instead, much political

⁷⁰ Huntington, Samuel. "Reforming Civil-Military Relations". *Journal of Democracy* 6:4 (1995): 9-17

⁷¹ Beeson, Mark. "Civil-Military Relations in Indonesia and the Philippines: Will the Thai Coup Prove Contagious?" *Armed Forces and Society* (2007): 1-17. doi:10.1177/0095327X07303607; Chambers, Paul & Croissant, Aurel. *Democracy under Stress: Civil-Military Relations in South and Southeast Asia* (Bangkok: Institute of Security and International Studies, 2010).

⁷² Huntington, "Reforming Civil-Military Relations", 16-17.

⁷³ Wollack, Kenneth., "Political Parties in Developing and Developed Countries" (speech, Beijing, 17 December 2002), *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace & China Reform Forum*, https://www.ndi.org/files/1801_carnegiechinaspeech_121702.pdf

campaigning in many parts of Southeast Asia focuses on candidates over political parties. Weak party systems have led to the rise of new and populist figures within the political arena, who have used their significant material wealth to come to power, appeal to the rural poor, and upset the established elite, including the military. In some of the region's young democracies, this has posed considerable problems to civil-military relations and have led to frequent attempts by factions of the military to interfere in politics.

The authoritarian behaviour that structural actors in young democracies possess relate to an argument by Linz and Stepan in 1996, who argue that in order for democracy to consolidate, there must also be "behavioural consolidation". Linz and Stepan argue that for this to occur, 'no significant national, social, economic, political, or institutional actors spend significant resources attempting to achieve their objectives by creating a nondemocratic regime or by seceding from the state'.⁷⁴ Such actors include the military and oligarchic figures. There must be acceptance from these actors that legitimate political power lies within the state. This relates to the next set of variables.

Cultural and Ethnic Variables

The cultural and ethnic approach to the study of democracy in Southeast Asia focuses on the role of political culture, ideologies, religion, and values in shaping public and state perceptions of democracy. There are two dominant variables within this approach: *Asian values* and *ethnic and cultural fragmentation*. Both variables have received considerable attention within the literature, as scholars attempt to identify what factors drive factions within society to either support or reject democratic values. Proponents of this approach argue that Southeast Asian democracies face unique struggles, as cultural differences and different cultural perceptions over the role of the state within society create the implementation of democratic institutions – with political liberal values – complicated and prone to clash with conservative or traditional views.

⁷⁴ Linz & Stepan, "Toward Consolidated Democracies", 16.

Asian Values

The first variable is *Asian values*, a controversial concept that was popularized in the 1980s and 1990s by Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad. During the 1980s and 1990s, scholars and policymakers alike were intrigued by the significant pace of economic growth in East and Southeast Asia, which saw the emergence of some of the most prosperous countries in the developing world, despite being governed by authoritarian or semi-authoritarian governments. This argument involves the notion that there are elements of Asian political and social culture, which would not go hand-in-hand with Western political liberalism. Rohwer provides a good summary of what he believes outlines the origins of the “Asian values”:⁷⁵

‘The need for self-sufficiency has been the greatest single spur to the creation, and retention, of what have come to be called “Asian Values”: the family rather than the individual as the paramount unit of society; a preference for order over freedom and the common good over individual fulfilment; hence, considerable deference to authority; frugality; and a belief in the virtues of education and hard work’.

A critically important, but perhaps contentious, component of Rohwer’s quote is his reference to a willingness to defer to authority and a preference for order. Numerous scholars have pointed out how Asian political culture is defined by a respect for authority and order, over individualistic values, such as human rights. Pye and Pye argue that certain social values may produce an allegiance with authority, which makes it incompatible with democratic norms.⁷⁶ Dalton and Ong point out how Southeast Asian societies tend to be paternalistic, community-oriented, duty-based, and more inclined to support consensus over majority-voting as it is perceived to protect

⁷⁵ Rohwer, Jim. *Why America Will Prosper as Asia's Economies Boom* (New York: Touchstone, 1995) 336

⁷⁶ Pye, Lucian et al. *Asian Power and Politics*, 56-60

harmony.⁷⁷ Similarly, Scalapino argues that the great emphasis on communalism and consensus would mean that there is little tolerance for opposition groups.⁷⁸

The concept is highly debated within academia as its critics argue that it is methodologically dubious and dependent on the crudest of generalizations. Sen is a key critic of the Asian values and argues that ‘to see Asian history in terms of a narrow category of authoritarian values does little justice to the rich varieties of thought in Asian intellectual traditions. Dubious history does nothing to vindicate dubious politics’.⁷⁹ In a prominent 1994 rebuttal to Lee Kuan Yew’s “Culture is Destiny” interview with Fareed Zakaria, future South Korean President Kim Dae-jung attacked the notion that East and Southeast Asian societies are more susceptible to authoritarianism, arguing that the inevitable consequence of industrialization is that societies are moving towards “self-centred individualism”.⁸⁰ Dalton and Ong made a similar argument, stating that social modernization in the region has brought in great generational shifts away from authority orientations.⁸¹ Kim, Dalton, and Ong’s statements are reminiscent of the modernization theory, which indicates that an expanding middle class would demand greater political and economic autonomy. While, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, scholars have observed that many Southeast Asians would prefer economic stability over democracy, a series of Asian Barometer surveys have shown that Southeast Asians are increasingly supportive of democracy. For instance, the Asian Barometer reports that 86.4% of the population in Indonesia, 83.7% in Thailand, and 85% in Singapore support government implementations of democratic institutions, such as freedom of speech and free and fair elections.⁸² Such statistical evidence put to question the validity of the Asian

⁷⁷ Dalton, Russel. & Ong, Nhu-Ngoc. "Authority Orientations and Democratic Attitudes: A Test of the 'Asian Values' Hypothesis". *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 6:2 (2005): 211-212

⁷⁸ Scalapino, Robert. 1989. *The Politics of Development: Perspectives on Twentieth Century Asia*. (Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press) 123-124

⁷⁹ Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000) 248

⁸⁰ Kim, Dae-jung. "Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values". *Foreign Affairs* (1994)

⁸¹ Dalton & Ong, “Authority Orientations and Democratic Attitudes: A Test of the ‘Asian Values’ Hypothesis”, 213

⁸² Welsh, Bridget. "Congruence and Variation in Sources of Regime Support in Asia" (working paper, Asian Barometer, 2012) <http://www.asianbarometer.org/newenglish/publications/workingpapers/no.64.pdf>; Mujani, Saiful. "The State of Indonesia Democratic Governance: A Popular Assessment". (working paper, Asian Barometer, 2007) <http://www.asianbarometer.org/newenglish/publications/ConferencePapers/2008conference/sec.3.3.pdf>

values argument, as it seems that democratic institutions are gaining more support from a more modernized and globalized society.

The “Asian values” argument lost much of its weight following the 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis, as many blamed the corrupt and paternalistic nature of the Asian values political culture that contributed to the crisis.⁸³ Additionally, numerous sets of statistical and empirical evidence have indicated that Asian values are no longer supported by the very societies that were said to embrace them. Indeed, the Asian values, with its emphasis on communitarianism and paternalistic-rule, is largely a justification for patron-client relations, subservience to governmental authority, and a means to justify government actions to preserve political stability. However, this is not to say that the Asian values argument should be completely discarded. Indeed, there is no empirical evidence that Southeast Asians are generally more hardworking or subservient to authority. However, the acceptance of communitarianism and paternalistic rule within government circles have left a long-lasting impact that shapes the behaviours and structures of how state institutions, the military, and political parties operate. Acceptance of such a political culture may partly explain the prevalence of personalistic parties that surround certain individuals in the period of democratization, such as UMNO in Malaysia and Golkar in Indonesia. A communitarian political culture also results in some unwanted consequences. For instance, the emergence of ethnic-based parties in Southeast Asia, which surround communitarian values and based on ethnic ties, play an important role in shaping inter-ethnic relations. This relates to the second variable below.

Ethnic and Cultural Fragmentation

Traditionally, many scholars have believed that ethnic and cultural fragmentation pose detrimental threats to democratic survival. A relatively homogenous society was often assumed to be an important pre-condition to a democratic society. For instance, John Stuart Mill argues that democracy was incompatible with ethnically fragmented societies, as ‘free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different

⁸³ Fukuyama, Francis. "Asian Values in the Wake of the Asian Crisis". in *Democracy, Market Economics and Development: An Asian Perspective*, ed. Iqbal, Farrukh & You, Jong-II (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 2001) 154-155

nationalities’.⁸⁴ Scholars since Mill’s time continue to uphold this assumption and during the post-colonial era, many have pointed to the failure of democratic institutions as having caused ethnic fragmentation.⁸⁵ Dahl argues that while democracy in ethnically fragmented countries was possible, ‘pluralism often laces a dangerous strain on the tolerance and mutual security required for a system of public contestation’, and thus, ‘a competitive political system is less likely in countries with a considerable measure of subcultural pluralism’.⁸⁶ In a prominent 1982 paper, Powell seemed to confirm this argument, after conducting a comprehensive cross-national study of 29 democracies. He concluded that there was a strong correlation between ethnic fractionalization and political instability, with the most multi-ethnic countries possessing higher levels of political instability.⁸⁷ Since then, empirical and statistical researches on the correlation between ethnic fragmentation and democracy have continuously found that countries that are more multi-ethnic are less likely to have robust democracies.⁸⁸

Some scholars of Southeast Asian politics have also observed that ethnic heterogeneity increases the likelihood of democratic regression. Rabushka and Shepsle observe that political entrepreneurs would campaign based on ethnic lines, as they find that “outbidding” on ethnic issues (i.e. campaigning based on extremist rhetoric and policy positions) would increase their chances of winning votes.⁸⁹ Cederman et al. also observe that ethnic nationalism and communal violence in the region have particularly escalated in some young democracies, such as Indonesia, as political figures orchestrate attacks or demagogic rhetoric to gain votes.⁹⁰ Additionally, as previously mentioned in this chapter, political entrepreneurs have taken advantage of income

⁸⁴ Mill, John Stuart. *Considerations on Representative Government* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958), 230.

⁸⁵ Almond, Gabriel. “Comparative Political Systems”, *Journal of Politics* 18 (1956), 391-409

⁸⁶ Dahl, *Polyarchy: participation and Opposition*, 109-112

⁸⁷ Powell, G. Bingham. *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability, and Violence* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1982), 43-47

⁸⁸ Lane, Jan-Erik. & Ersson, Svante. *Comparative Political Economy* (London: Pinter, 1993) 137-139; Hadenius, Axel. *Democracy and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 115-118; Reilly, Benjamin. “Democratic, Ethnic Fragmentation, and Internal Conflict: Confused Theories, Faulty Data, and the ‘Crucial Case’ of the Papua New Guinea”. *International Security* 25:3 (2000): 162-185

⁸⁹ Rabushka, Alvin. & Shepsle, Kenneth. *Politics in Plural Societies: A theory of Democratic Instability* (Columbus, Merrill, 1972) 349-360

⁹⁰ Cederman, L.E., Min, B., and Wimmer, A. “Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict. A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Dataset”, *American Sociological Review*, 74:2 (2009), 316-337.

inequality and ethnic or religious differences for political gains. The power of deciding the equality of ethnicities lies with the people in a democracy, rather than the state under an authoritarian government. Enhanced civil and political liberties in democracies, which includes freedom of expression, have created greater ethnic, religious, and cultural tensions. This may have serious political and security implications, which can threaten the democratic regime. This will be investigated further in the three case studies of the next chapter.

Proponents of the two aforementioned variables argue that in order for democracies to consolidate and prevent regression, there has to be acceptance from the state and society. State institutions, including those without formal political power, must be willing to accept their limited influence over the decision-making process. Additionally, ethnic groups must be willing to cooperate in order to prevent problematic ethnic ties that could lead to conflict and the emergence of demagogic figures. The transition from authoritarianism to a democracy is not one that is smooth. As the cultural, ethnic, and structural variables have explained, young democracies face numerous obstacles that are inherited from past authoritarian regimes that harm new democratic institutions, such as freedom of expression. Nonetheless, empirical and statistical evidence from Southeast Asia have shown that while cultural and ethnic issues over democratic institutions remain, there is wide public support for democracy.

Chapter Conclusion

The study of democratic survival in Southeast Asia is one that is multi-faceted and influenced by a series of political, socioeconomic, and cultural factors. The ability of a young democratic government to maintain legitimacy from its people is dependent on a series of factors that determine its ability to maintain economic and political stability, as well as ensure stable levels of governance. Indeed, there is no single variable that has contributed to the struggles that the region's young democracies have faced. However, few of the above variables seem to be applicable to the entire region. The next chapter will look at the young democracies of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand from 2000 until 2010 to identify if there are any common variables that have threatened the democratic institutions of Southeast Asia.

Threats to Democratic Survival in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand

There is no single pathway to democratization. The analysis of the experiences of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand in this chapter will demonstrate how different variables have uniquely shaped the democratization process. As mentioned in Chapter 1, these three countries have been chosen because at one point in their respective recent histories, the process of its political liberalization has gone so well that they have been identified as an important example of how a burgeoning democracy can grow within a region that has long been dominated by authoritarian regimes. However, the position of each of the three countries along a spectrum of democratic consolidation is different today. At one end, Indonesian democracy continues to progress (albeit with its own weaknesses) and CSOs have become an increasingly prominent feature of the political arena. At the other hand, Thai democracy has regressed following a series of military coups against democratically-elected governments. In the middle sits the Philippines and its democracy shows some signs of progression, but continues to be inundated by corruption, armed conflict, and the dominance of political dynasties.

This chapter seeks to explain the differences through a nuanced examination of the variables that have challenged democratic institutions in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. In each case study, the chapter will review the period between 2000 and 2010 and then provide an analysis about what it has identified as the variables that effected the survivability of each country's democratic institutions. But firstly, each case study will briefly look at the period prior to the year 2000, in order to identify common historical factors have led up to the year 2000. By doing so, we will have a greater understanding of the factors that have preserved regime survival in the past and the factors that have borne out after the fall of the authoritarian regime.

Indonesia

Indonesia is the youngest democracy in ASEAN, but it is frequently regarded as the most successful. In a short time, Indonesia's political system has transformed from

being one of the most repressive in Southeast Asia to become the “freest and most transparent” country in the region.⁹¹ Nonetheless, its democracy remains fragile. The influence of New Order oligarchs over the decision-making process remain problematic; the military continues to have substantial political influence; and religious and ethnic tensions test the abilities of young democracies to protect minorities. Additionally, there is growing dissatisfaction amongst members of the public, including the middle class, as the government has failed to address the country’s chronic corruption problems, and other socioeconomic issues. This has created a nostalgia amongst elements of the Indonesian population for perceived Suharto-era stability, rendering democracy’s future in the country uncertain. But the experiences of the post-Suharto years have proven that while authoritarian elements of the Suharto-era remain, a strong and vocal middle class – through CSOs, think tanks, and the media – have prevented a reversal of Indonesia’s democratization process.

The Suharto-era and the Road to Democracy

Suharto rose to the presidency following a coup d’état that saw the removal of his predecessor, Sukarno. Coming to power during a politically and economically tumultuous time, Suharto was quick to consolidate his power and bring back considerable political stability by installing loyalists in strategic political positions, repressing civil and political liberties, and weakening the power of parliament. Suharto saw his government as the embodiment of *Pancasila*⁹² and any attempt to criticize him or his rule was punishable by imprisonment or exile.⁹³ To further consolidate his power, he also aligned himself with the powerful military establishment, which he provided greater political and economic roles.⁹⁴ Suharto also encouraged business dealings between military generals and ethnic Chinese-Indonesian businesspeople,

⁹¹ Economic Intelligence Unit. "Democracy Index 2012: Democracy index 2012: Democracy is at a standstill". *The Economist*. Accessed 10 September 2014. <http://www.eiu.com/>

⁹² “Pancasila” refers to the official philosophical ideology of the Indonesian state. Formulated by President Sukarno in 1945, the ideology is a fusion of socialist, nationalist, and monotheist ideals.

⁹³ Vatikiotis, Michael. *Indonesian Politics Under Suharto: The Rise and Fall of the New Order* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1998) 33

⁹⁴ This doctrine was known as *dwifungsi*, which provided the military with additional political and economic roles. Military officers would occupy strategic positions in government, including as provincial heads, judiciary, state-owned enterprises, and in Suharto’s cabinet.

who transformed into oligarchs and became an important power base for his rule.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, when facing challenges to regime survival, both at the New Order's outset and the end, his ruling members also scapegoated the ethnic Chinese with devastating consequences.

Despite his repressive rule, Suharto was fairly popular amongst many members of Indonesian society, including the traditionally critical members of the middle class, for modernizing the Indonesian economy and bringing in a period of political and economic stability.⁹⁶ However, immense corruption and embezzlement of the Suharto family created discontent amongst some oligarchs and prominent military generals, who have lost greater access to power and lucrative rent-seeking opportunities. In an attempt to diversify his power base from the military and the oligarchs, Suharto attempted to court the country's majority Muslim population by forming closer ties to major Islamic organizations, which he encouraged to discuss and identify social and political issues that faced Indonesian Muslims.⁹⁷ By allowing some level of scrutiny from the public, Suharto opened the way for his government's eventual demise. Elements of the middle class began demanding political and economic reform and by 1996, Megawati Sukarnoputri, chairwoman of the Indonesian Democratic Party and daughter of former President Sukarno, became the new face of opposition against the Suharto regime.⁹⁸ In 1997, Indonesia was hit by the Asian Financial Crisis, which bankrupted many companies and led to high food and fuel prices. Following large public protests and riots that divided the country's military and strengthened the opposition, Suharto resigned and was replaced by Bachruddin Jusuf Habibie, who initiated the period of democratic transition.

⁹⁵ Winters, Jeffrey. "Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia", 11-15

⁹⁶ Robinson, Richard. "The middle class and the bourgeoisie in Indonesia", 84-85

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 86-87

⁹⁸ Aspinall, "Semi-Opponents in Power: The Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri Presidencies" in *Suharto's New Order and its Legacy: Essays in honour of Harold Crouch*, ed. Aspinall, Edward & Fealy, Greg. (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2010), accessed 1 October 2014,

<http://press.anu.edu.au/apps/bookworm/view/Soeharto%E2%80%99s+New+Order+and+its+Legacy+%3A+Essays+in+honour+of+Harold+Crouch/5331/ch08.xhtml>

Post-Suharto Democracy

Between 2000 and 2010, Indonesia was governed by three presidents: Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-2001), Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001-2004), and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014). This period – known as the era of *reformasi* – saw the emergence and strengthening of democratic institutions, the re-structuring or reformation of some Suharto-era institutions (e.g. Ministry of Information), and the emergence of CSOs as key support groups for the reform process. The liberalization of the political system led to the proliferation of thousands of CSOs, political parties, and non-government media outlets, allowing more space for political and social discussions. As some scholars have observed, the strength of Indonesia's ongoing democratization process lies in the country's large and vocal civil society, as many of these institutions have strengthened Indonesian democracy by acting as watchdogs, campaigners, and support for government-led reform.⁹⁹ However, the period following the fall of the Suharto government was also fraught with numerous political and economic problems. Outside of the economic effects of the Asian Financial Crisis, there were growing ethnic, religious, and sectarian tensions. Additionally, the powerful political influence of the military continues to loom as a threat to the civilian government.

Abdurrahman Wahid came to power in 1999 amidst rising sectarian violence, a troubled relationship between the civilian government and the military, and a slow-growing economy. Wahid was unusually liberal-minded as a senior member of the country's political elite in his time, but he was also deemed a "radical" by many observers.¹⁰⁰ For instance, he called for the legalization of the communist party and apologised to the victims of the 1965-66 killings and persecution of communists, a sensitive topic to many members of the elite who had ties to the Suharto-era. Civil-military relations also suffered a setback when Wahid attempted to restructure the military's territorial command structure, thus attacking the foundation of the military's political influence and institutional autonomy. His appointment of the reformist and outspoken Agus Wirahdikusumah, as head of the Strategic Reserves, also angered

⁹⁹ Robinson, "The middle class and the bourgeoisie in Indonesia", 88

¹⁰⁰ Aspinall, "Semi-Opponents in Power: The Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri Presidencies"; Smith, Anthony. "Indonesia's Foreign Policy under Abdurrahman Wahid: Radical or Status Quo State?". *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 22:3 (2000) 498-526

conservative senior members of the military, for his bold plans for military reform. Additionally, his “dovish” approach to separatist unrests in Aceh and Papua marked a dramatic break with past practices and eased ethnic tensions in the area. However, it also antagonised many in the security establishment.¹⁰¹

Wahid’s biggest failure was his treatment of key oligarchic allies. Having constructed a weak coalition when he came to office, Wahid further destabilized it by behaving erratically and being confrontational with the legislature. He isolated himself by sacking important loyalists and ministers from allied parties and taunting their leaders. Amongst the individuals he sacked was the loyalist, Wirahdikusumah, in an attempt to appease the military into siding with him. Eventually, he isolated himself from strategic political parties and failed to preserve his own reformist policies.¹⁰² Amongst these policies was his formerly dovish approach to the Aceh separatist movement, which he changed when he approved military operations in Aceh. Eventually, he tried to bring the military back into the political arena in order to gain its support for a decree to dissolve parliament and allow emergency rule. However, due to his declining popularity and poor relationship with the military, senior officers refused to come to his aid. Rather, the military stationed armoured military vehicles and 40,000 troops in Jakarta in a show of force.¹⁰³ Eventually, he was forced from office by impeachment on 23 July 2001 and replaced by his vice-president, Megawati Sukarnoputri.¹⁰⁴

Megawati was an interesting comparison to Wahid. An aloof conservative, she stabilized civil-military relations by involving conservative military officers in the decision-making process for defence and security issues. She also appointed hawkish military officers and members of the New Order era to her cabinet, rather than reformers like under the Wahid era. She also backed the re-appointment of New Order era elites to strategic governor positions, often against the wishes of the local branches of her party. A particularly surprising move was her backing of General Sutiyoso as

¹⁰¹ Mietzner, Marcus. "The Politics of Military Reform in Post-Suharto Indonesia: Elite Conflict, Nationalism and Institutional Resistance". *East-West Centre* (2006): 22-23, 31-35

¹⁰² Aspinall, “Semi-Opponents in Power: The Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri Presidencies”.

¹⁰³ Barton, Greg. *Abdurrahman Wahid: Muslim Democrat, Indonesian President*. (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002) 363.

¹⁰⁴ Aspinall, “Semi-Opponents in Power: The Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri Presidencies”.

governor of Jakarta. Sutiyoso was the main organizer of the violent military assault on Megawati loyalists who were protesting against her removal as head of the Indonesian Democratic Party in 1996. Such actions not only led to schisms within the party, but it also alienated her from many of her public supporters. Her presidency also resulted in the return of relatively authoritarian policies in the separatist regions of Aceh and Papua, such as the 2003 declaration of military emergency in Aceh (which led to gross human rights abuses) and the banning of any form of public condemnation of the Indonesian government.¹⁰⁵

However, the democratization process did not completely halt during Megawati's presidency. Following Suharto's ouster, CSOs were quick to move into watchdog and technical support roles in the reform process. These organizations remained very influential during the Megawati period and some CSO-led initiatives that began during the Habibie and Wahid periods only came to fruit under Megawati. For instance, CSOs managed to successfully campaign for the formation of the Corruption Eradication Commission, an independent government agency formed to tackle the country's rampant corruption issue. CSOs were also successful in pushing forward various amendments to the constitution including the introduction of direct presidential elections. These two particular products of the Megawati-era would have positive implications for the future of Indonesian democracy, as they weakened oligarchic control in the political arena. Nonetheless, corruption continued to persist as a chronic issue that plagued the country's bureaucracy and legal system. In 2004, disillusioned voters voted against electing Megawati to another term and she was replaced by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in the country's first direct presidential elections.

Yudhoyono ascended to the presidency during a period of unprecedented economic and political stability. His presidency also saw the decline of communal violence, including the end of the 30-year insurgency in Aceh and the return of political stability. He was also able to effectively deal with the country's looming terrorist attacks. By successfully cooperating with American and Australian security agencies, Indonesia's counter-terrorist initiative became one of the most successful in the world.¹⁰⁶ He was

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Horgan, John & Braddock, Kurt. "Rehabilitating the Terrorists?: Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-radicalization Programs". *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22 (2010): 273-274

also able to maintain a stable relationship with the military. While observers have noted that Yudhoyono was a genuine advocate of the removal of the military from politics, he was careful not to upset senior military officers and disturb the delicate relationship. A retired general himself, Yudhoyono understood that political stability and reform cannot be effectively done when the relationship between the civilian government and the military is disturbed. Thus, any reformist policies were ‘never [done] at the expense of the TNI’s [Indonesian Armed Forces] self-appointed core political functions of security and stability’.¹⁰⁷ There were no attempts to limit or reform the territorial command structure or even address continued illegal business practices of the military. However, he appointed reformist generals to key cabinet positions in an attempt to gradually professionalize the military while appealing to the pro-reform segment of the population who remained disillusioned about the pace of reform.¹⁰⁸

Under the Yudhoyono presidency, Indonesia’s economy also improved considerably. Average growth rate was around 5% and Indonesia soon became a part of the exclusive club of one-trillion-dollar economies. Nonetheless, the Indonesian economy continued to be hampered by numerous obstacles. The lack of development in infrastructure remained a key problem in the country’s economy, with underdeveloped roads, ports, and electricity networks slowing down economic activity. Under the Yudhoyono presidency, the government spent on average around 4% of its GDP on infrastructural development – roughly half of what Suharto spent in the 1990s. Mietzner has identified that poor spending on infrastructure is a result of wasteful energy subsidies to benefit the middle class, which constituted 33% of total government expenditure. Additionally, the Yudhoyono-era saw little progress in combatting corruption, which continued to plague the legislature, bureaucracy, and legal system. Yudhoyono’s own Democrat Party was tainted by a series of high profile corruption cases that led to the downfalls of a number of prominent figures.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Kingsbury, Damien. *Power Politics and the Indonesian Military*. (New York: Routledge, 2003) 240

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 243-244

¹⁰⁹ Mietzner, Marcus. "SBY's Mixed Legacy", 18 September 2014, *New Mandala*, <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2014/09/18/sby-mixed-legacy/>

The failure of the Yudhoyono government to effectively address the country's structural problems, corrupt legal system, and remove the military from politics reflected the constraints that his government faced from oligarchic actors. However, perhaps the most significant example of this is the Yudhoyono government's failure to effectively protect the rights of religious minorities. As he feared a backlash from conservative Islamic parties in his coalition, Yudhoyono allowed conservative Muslim groups to push for new religious orthodoxy. As such, radical militias began attacking members of minority Islamic groups, such as the Ahmadi sect and Shiites, as well as non-Muslim groups.¹¹⁰

Many members of Indonesian society have grown increasingly dissatisfied with Yudhoyono's performance. While he was a fairly popular politician in his first term with an approval rating that averaged over 70%, his approval rating dropped to 47.2% in 2010, the lowest throughout his presidency.¹¹¹ Yudhoyono's failure to effectively address political corruption and rising religious tensions disillusioned many members of society, particularly the middle class, who had high hopes that democracy could effectively address the burning political and economic issues of the Suharto era. For many, the era of *Reformasi* continued to pose similar problems and the post-*Reformasi* era has been no exception. Corruption and income inequality continue to be persistent problems for many Indonesians. With the added problems posed by ethnic tensions, increasing religious intolerance, and public political battles between oligarchs, some members of the middle class are nostalgic for the politically stable Suharto-era.¹¹² The results of the 2014 presidential election, where the populist Jakarta Governor Joko Widodo defeated Prabowo Subianto, a controversial Suharto-era general, by less than 7% seems to reassert the notion that Indonesians are increasingly losing confidence in the country's young democracy.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Maulia, Erwida. "Yudhoyono's popularity drops over Century case". *Jakarta Post*. 25 January 2010, accessed 18 October 2014, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/01/25/yudhoyono%E2%80%99s-popularity-drops-over-century-case.html>

¹¹² Kurlantzick, "Southeast Asia's Regression From Democracy and Its Implications", 14

Analysis

Despite a number of potential threats to its democratic institutions, Indonesia's democratization process continued to progress from 2000 until 2010. The resilience of CSOs, which have acted as platforms for citizen discussion, watchdogs, supporting actors, and campaigners have ensured that all authoritarian policies are properly publicized and addressed. Additionally, while Indonesia remains a poor, developing country, it has so far managed to prevent forms of severe regression. Some scholars have often attributed this to the country's growing middle class population, which continues to demand greater political and economic autonomy, as well as for enhanced government efforts to address economic and political woes, such as corruption.¹¹³ However, Indonesia's ongoing process of consolidation also faces many challenges. The dominance of oligarchs within the political sphere, the looming threat of military actors, and the chronic effects of corruption continue to tarnish the image of Indonesia's democracy.

The analysis in this case study, largely validates the structural approach to the emergence and/or consolidation of democracy where structural actors from the authoritarian era continue to shape and pose obstacles to young democracies. The three experiences under Wahid, Megawati, and Yudhoyono suggest that the co-optation of the military is an important factor in democratic survival. However, the process has been one where the military have faced, on an incremental basis, increasing restraints against their exercise of political power. Under Wahid and Yudhoyono, conservative senior military officers had increasingly smaller influence on the democratization process than under Suharto or Megawati, as they were done through the placement of reform-minded and loyal military officers to strategic positions. However, Wahid's eagerness to bring complete civilian control over the military and completely remove its influence from politics resulted in devastating consequences for him, as the lack of a powerful backer meant that he was easily impeached by parliament. By cozing up to the military and enhancing its political influence, Megawati managed to gain

¹¹³Bunbongkarn, Suchit. "The Role of Civil Society in Democratic Consolidation in Asia" in *Growth & Governance in Asia*, ed. Sato, Yoichiro et al. (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2004); Hadiniwata, Bob. *Politics of NGOs in Indonesia: Developing Democracy and Managing a Movement* (London: Routledge, 2003).

considerable support from conservative political parties. However, it also resulted in hawkish and authoritarian policies toward separatist areas, like Aceh and Papua. Yudhoyono made the conscience and effective decision to gradually limit the military's influence over politics by assigning moderate and reform-minded generals to key positions. By doing so, Yudhoyono has created a fairly stable civil-military relationship which has seen the gradual political influence of the military waning out.

Weak political parties and disorganized coalitions have also impacted the behaviours of the three presidents. Wahid's erratic behaviour and radical policies alienated him from many party oligarchs. Megawati learned from Wahid's mistakes and attempted to maintain power by aligning herself with more conservative parties, resulting in her government's reluctance to address serious past issues, such as human rights abuses. Yudhoyono was also unable to address the issue of religious minority rights, as he feared reprisal from the orthodox Islamic parties. Additionally, weak political parties have made money politics a commonality, particularly in the legislature, where party loyalty remains very low. Winters even observes that disheartened oligarchs who lose party chairmanship have often just made their own political parties.¹¹⁴ Due to the circumstances of rapidly shifting allegiances, opposition parties do not act as an effective checks-and-balances.

What of other variables? It seems that income inequality and poverty may act as long-term threats to democratic institutions. The victory of democratic movements in the late-1990s raised hopes that democracy can solve an array of economic problems that resulted from the Suharto-era. While Indonesia's economy has significantly improved in recent years, there is still far more that needs to be done. The failure of *Reformasi*-era governments to address issues of poor infrastructural development, corruption, widening income inequality, and rampant poverty have disillusioned many members of society who have previously supported the democratic movements, leading to the rising popularity of Suharto-era figures, such as Prabowo, who bring up nostalgic images of Suharto-era economic stability.

Indonesia's great ethnic diversity does not seem to pose a large threat to its democratic

¹¹⁴ Winters, "Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia", 20-23

institutions from 2000 and 2010. Following the fall of Suharto, ethnic tensions threatened to completely fragment the already-unstable country with pogroms, separatist movements, and ethnic clashes. However, under the Wahid, Megawati, and Yudhoyono governments, ethnic tensions were quickly subsided through a series of reconciliation, aggressive actions, and then reconciliation again. While there remains some form of ethnic tensions in Aceh, Papua, and Sulawesi, violence has been greatly diminished. On the other hand, religious conflict has worsened in recent years, particularly during the later years of the Yudhoyono era. Increasing attacks on religious minorities have weakened democratic institutions in the country, particularly considering the rather passive response of the government. Yudhoyono's attempt to maintain a good relationship with powerful but orthodox Islamic organizations have meant that religious conflict, rather than ethnic tensions, remain as the key behavioural factor that hampers the democratization process.

Despite its shortcomings, Indonesia's democratization has so far managed to go progressively well. Indonesia's democratic institutions during the period between 2000 and 2010 has faced considerable challenges and obstacles from a number of factors, ranging from the ongoing dominance of oligarchs to the looming threat of military takeover. Today, while the military's political influence has been significantly reduced, oligarchs and weak political parties continue to prevent any progressive reforms to be passed. Additionally, government inaction in the midst of attacks against religious minorities has put to question Indonesia's determination to preserve civil liberties in the post-Suharto era. As such, it should be of no surprise that the public is becoming disillusioned with the political system. While CSOs and pro-reform public figures have ensured that democratic institutions continue to be preserved in Indonesia, the biggest challenge to Indonesian democracy will be to address its tarnished image.

The Philippines

The study of democracy in the Philippines has long been dominated by scholarly interests in the so-called "People Power Revolutions" of 1986 and 2001, which saw the middle class-led overthrows of President Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Estrada, respectively. However, while the overthrows of these regimes may reflect the public's

desire for less corrupt or more liberal democratic leadership, in the latter instance, it also reflects public discontent over the failure of democracy to effectively address issues of corruption and weak state capacity. While the Philippines has not faced any sharp decline to authoritarianism, there is an incremental decline, which has been signposted by the extra-constitutional removal of President Joseph Estrada in 2001, the evident electoral malpractices of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the 2005, and the attacks on civil liberties since the rise of Arroyo. This makes the period between 2000 and 2010 a very important era of research for the study of democratic survival.

The Struggles of Early Democratization

Philippine democracy has the distinction of being the oldest in Asia, having been adopted in 1935. But after nearly 40-years of “cacique democracy”¹¹⁵, Philippine democracy was halted by President Ferdinand Marcos’ declaration of martial law in 1973. Citing economic woes, as well as security problems caused by Marxist insurgents, Marcos also argues that in order to deliver the economic development that the Philippines needed, the regime had to be strong enough to overcome reactionary measures from the “old society”, particularly the old landed oligarchy. Observers argue that during the earlier years of martial law, Marcos enjoyed widespread middle class support, as the government established law and order in a country that has been called “the wild west of Asia”.¹¹⁶ While the Philippine economy temporarily improved, corruption and state inefficiency, which were brought about by cronyism, only made economic stability temporary. Furthermore, security tensions in southern Philippines were quick to intensify, as separatists managed to gain sympathy from many inhabitants in Mindanao, due to the Marcos government’s hawkish and messy response towards separatists.¹¹⁷ The assassination of Benigno Aquino Jr., Marcos’

¹¹⁵ A “cacique democracy”, coined by Benedict Anderson, refers to the dominance of political and local dynasties in Philippine national and regional politics. Anderson provides a good discussion of the term and its origins: Anderson, Benedict. “Cacique Democracy and the Philippines: Origins and Dreams,” *New Left Review* 169 (1988): 3-33

¹¹⁶ Pinches, Michael. “The Philippines’ new rich: capitalist transformation amidst economic gloom” in *The New Rich in Asia: Mobile Phones, McDonald’s and Middle Class Revolution*, ed. Robinson, Richard et al. (London: Routledge, 2013), 111-112

¹¹⁷ Rivera, Temario. “The Middle Classes and Democratization in the Philippines: From the Asian Crisis to the Ouster of Estrada” in *Southeast Asian Middle Classes: Prospects for Social Change and Democratization*, ed. Embong, Abdul Rahman (Bengi: Universi Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, 2011) 237-239

biggest political rival, greatly alienated Marcos from many of his supporters, including those within the middle class. The incident, along with anger over the deteriorating economy, triggered widespread uproar in the Philippines and massive protest movements arose throughout the country, particularly Metro Manila. Accusations that Marcos rigged presidential elections in 1986 led to the first “People Power Revolution”, which saw the massive public protests, the defection of key military players, and the eventual downfall of Marcos and his cronies.

For the first 12-years of the post-Marcos era, the Philippines was governed by two reform-minded presidents: Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos, both prominent opposition figures in the 1986 uprising (the latter defected from the Marcos camp). It was an important priority for Marcos’ successors to remove any negative associations with the Marcos government. The middle class, through CSOs and even the Catholic Church, were invited to policy discussions to assist in creating a series of reforms for the state bureaucracy, election system, and land laws, among others.¹¹⁸ Despite the differences in procedural objectives, strategies, and organizational structures, the anti-Marcos organizations had one common overarching objective: advance an ideology of “clean” democracy and dismantle the corrupt and patrimonial establishment that had been formed under the Marcos presidency.¹¹⁹ However, Aquino and Ramos were also careful not to upset their relationship with the oligarchic elite and the military, as they recognized that any attempt to radically disrupt their political influence could result in a political backlash. As such, the Philippines gradually reverted back to the “cacique democracy” that they were once before. Hutchcroft has perhaps given the best descriptions of the outcomes of both the Aquino and Ramos presidencies:¹²⁰

‘Corazon Aquino, widow of a martyred politician, might be characterized as an *elite restorationist*, since her major achievement was to rebuild the elite-dominated democratic structures undermined by her authoritarian predecessor. Former general Fidel Ramos was the *military reformer* who achieved considerable success in bringing about economic

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 238-240

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* 239

¹²⁰ Hutchcroft, Paul “The Arroyo imbroglio in the Philippines”, *Journal of Democracy* 19:1 (2008): 144

reform through deft manipulation of old-style patronage politics.’

The Aquino and Ramos eras saw the emergence of CSOs and enhanced participatory politics. However, little outside of that seem to have changed since the pre-Marcos era. The political arena continued to be dominated by political dynasties and money politics continues to plague the electoral system. As such, many Filipinos grew increasingly disillusioned with the democratic system.

Philippine Democracy from 2000-2010

From 2000 until 2010, the Philippines was governed under three presidents: Joseph Estrada (1998-2001), Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (2001-2010), and Benigno Aquino III (2010-present). However, as Aquino only began his term in June 2010, this paper will primarily focus on Estrada and Arroyo. During this period, the country’s so-called “cacique democracy” continued to be very fragile. The dominance of the oligarchic elite, weak state institutions, widespread corruption, and weak political parties have eroded Philippine democracy and disillusioned the Filipino people. As Dressel argues, ‘effective participation and true representation are largely illusory’.¹²¹ Dissatisfaction with parliament and political parties led to attempts by the public and rogue factions in the military to forcibly remove politicians or express anger outside formal political structures. While the political and social influence of CSOs and other sections of the middle class have improved since the post-Marcos era, the challenges posed by the Philippines’ “cacique democracy” can pose a threat to the country’s electoral system itself.

Joseph Estrada came to power in a landslide victory in 1998, following the Asian Financial Crisis. While he was unpopular with many members of the urban middle class, he was a popular figure amongst the larger rural and lower classes. A film actor, he was a well-known figure who had campaigned on a “pro-poor campaign”, which had promised to tackle rising unemployment and the lack of affordable housing for

¹²¹ Dressel, Bjorn. "The Philippines: how much real democracy?". *International Political Science Review* 32:529 (2011): 530. doi:10.1177/0192512111417912

the country's poor. He was also fairly popular amongst the urban lower class, who were disillusioned by the country's corrupt and nepotistic political system. Rocamora observes one basis for the support of Estrada by the urban poor was because he mocked the "bourgeois codes" of the traditional elite by dallying in nightclubs, casinos, and the abodes of his mistresses.¹²² But by running as a populist politician, he was not liked by many members of the reformist elite. The urban middle class also disliked his close ties to Marcos. A former Marcos supporter, he lost considerable political power following Marcos' fall, but his popularity amongst the poor allowed him to claim the vice-presidential position under Ramos.¹²³ His presidential campaign was also well funded by Marcos supporters.¹²⁴ As a result, Estrada's ascension to the presidency brought many Marcos supporters and allies into the centre of power once more.

As president, Estrada failed to effectively deliver his promises. Unlike other populist leaders in the region, such as Thailand's Thaksin, Estrada never challenged the political influence or prerogatives of his elite opponents or overtaxed the country's emerging middle class on a large scale. Rather, observers argue that he was far more concerned with rewarding or repaying old debts to friends and family members, including Marcos-era politicians who supported his presidential campaign.¹²⁵ As such, Estrada's political opponents and the middle class felt no need to fundamentally subvert democracy and rather, collaborated to orchestrate his removal. Estrada also alienated considerable support from rural supporters when he declared "all-out war" in the fight against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Southern Philippines island of Mindanao.¹²⁶ The war caused casualties on both sides. Watchdogs have warned of gross violations of human rights abuses, leading to greater tensions between the island's "Bangsamoro" people and the central government.

In October 2010, Governor Luis Singson, a long-time associate of President Joseph Estrada, accused Estrada of receiving millions of pesos from an illegal numbers game.

¹²² Rocamora, Joel. "Estrada and the Populist Temptation in the Philippines", in *Populism in Asia*, ed. Mizuno, Kosuke & Phongpaichit, Pasuk. (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2009) 41

¹²³ In the Philippines, the president and vice-president are not elected as a ticket, but rather independently.

¹²⁴ Rocamora, "Estrada and the Populist Temptation in the Philippines", 45

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 46-48

¹²⁶ Estrada, Joseph. "Speech of Former President Estrada on the GRP-MORO Conflict" (speech, Quezon City, 18 September 2008) *University of the Philippines*, <http://hdn.org.ph/speech-of-former-president-estrada-on-the-grp-moro-conflict/>

This was followed by an outflow of condemnation and accusations of corruption by politicians and prominent members of society, including the influential Manila Cardinal Jaime Sin. These accusations caused public uproar and thousands of demonstrators flooded the EDSA Highway (location of first People Power Revolution) once more. When Estrada was not successfully impeached through the senate, the military sided with the protestors and removed Estrada from power. This extra-constitutional act has been widely criticized by academics, the media, and policymakers as an attack on Philippine democracy.¹²⁷ Estrada was replaced by his vice-president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

While Arroyo ascended to the presidency during a period of political and legitimacy crisis, there was much optimism that things would change.¹²⁸ Promising to transform ‘our politics of personality and patronage’ to ‘a new politics of party programs and process of dialogue with the people’, many hoped that she would address the burdening dominance of “political dynasties” in the political arena.¹²⁹ However, her presidency saw numerous corruption scandals, which implicated strategic political allies. Her family has also been implicated in a number of serious scandals, which continued to damage her reputation. A 2007 survey, by Pulse Asia Inc., reported that a majority of Filipinos believe that Arroyo is the most corrupt president in the past 21 years, even more so than Marcos and Estrada.¹³⁰ Some of the scandals involved machinations – such as money laundering and embezzlement – that are apparently connected to the 2004 general elections, in which Arroyo competed against Estrada ally, Fernando Poe Jr. The “Hello Garci” scandal of June 2005 seemed to confirm vote-rigging, which greatly damaged her public image.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Mydans, Seth. "People Power II' doesn't give Filipinos the Same Glow". *New York Times*, 5 February 2001, accessed 18 October 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/02/05/world/people-power-ii-doesn-t-give-filipinos-the-same-glow.html>

¹²⁸ Following Estrada’s removal, his supporters orchestrated large protests, known as “EDSA III”, which declared his removal and the presidency of Gloria Arroyo illegitimate. However, these protests were quickly dispersed when the government declared a “state of rebellion” and arrested leaders of the protests.

¹²⁹ Macapagal-Arroyo, Gloria. "Inauguration Speech of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo" (speech, Manila, 20 January 2001) *Government of the Philippines*. http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/issues/gloria_macapagal.htm

¹³⁰ "Arroyo "most corrupt" Philippine leader: poll". *Reuters*, 11 December 2007, accessed 20 October, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/12/12/us-philippines-arroyo-idUSSP30281220071212>

¹³¹ The “Hello Garci” scandal was sparked following the release of a recording of a telephone conversation between Arroyo and the election commissioner on the rigging of the 2004 presidential elections.

Despite numerous corruption scandals, Arroyo managed to politically survive and even win a second term in 2004. Some scholars argue that it was because of her success in improving Philippine macroeconomic growth¹³². As a practicing economist, Arroyo made the economy the main focus of her presidency. On average GDP growth under her stewardship was 5%, with the growth rising to 7% in 2007.¹³³ This is the highest growth rate since the Marcos era. Nonetheless, reports from the United Nations seem to suggest that the Philippine government has not managed to improve the lives of its poorer citizens. A 2008 United Nations report suggested that poverty levels were worsening. The study reveals that from 2003-2006, the number of poor Filipinos has increased by 3.8 million.¹³⁴ Additionally, Social Weather Stations have revealed that hunger levels amongst the country's population have also increased to a record 4.3 million households in 2008.¹³⁵

More scholars seem to suggest that her success was through a series of strategic coalescing and bribery. Arroyo has also managed to extend her influence on the country's powerful oligarchic families through the wily use of patronage within both parliament and provincial governments. According to Rolando Andaya Jr., Arroyo's Budget Secretary, Arroyo had the sole discretion to pick the senators and congressperson to be given entitlements from the "Priority Development Assistance Fund" – the pork barrel. Opposition legislators are often advised not to criticize the Arroyo government in order to secure pork barrel.¹³⁶ Quimpo has noted that bribery and strategic use of patronage have weakened any form of opposition against her and fend off a number of attempts at impeachment.¹³⁷ Such acts of bribery have destroyed

¹³² Dressel, "The Philippines: how much real democracy?"; Rivera, "The Middle Classes and Democratization in the Philippines".

¹³³ Landingin, Roel. "Faster growth under Arroyo: reality or statistical illusion?" *Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism*, 25 July 2009, accessed 17 October 2014, <http://pcij.org/stories/faster-growth-under-arroyo-reality-or-statistical-illusion/>

¹³⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "Rethinking Poverty" (New York: United Nations, 2009), available from <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/docs/2010/fullreport.pdf>

¹³⁵ "Fourth Quarter 2008 Social Weather Survey: Hunger at new record-high 23.7% of families; Moderate Hunger at 18.5%, Severe Hunger at 5.2%". *Social Weather Stations*, 22 December 2008, accessed 19 October 2014. <http://www.sws.org.ph/pr081222.htm>

¹³⁶ Carino, Delmar & Labog-Javellana, Juliet. "To get pork, butter up the boss, senators told". *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 26 November 2006, accessed 18 October 2014. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/>

¹³⁷ Quimpo, Nathan. "The Philippines: Political Parties and Corruption", 283-285.

the very sanctity of opposition parties in the Philippines, which must act as watchdogs for government accountability.

Arroyo appointed key loyalists to top military positions throughout her presidency. She also involved them in security-related decision-making. However, in order to ensure their complete loyalty, Arroyo had to court military favour, paying the rank and file with subsidized housing, increased benefits, and pay rises. As a result, Arroyo was always surrounded by powerful and supportive military officers whenever she is in power. She also began appointing retired military officers to key positions in the cabinet. Under her stewardship, there was a significant increase in ‘the influence and participation of the military in running the country’s state affairs’.¹³⁸ Nonetheless, by allocating top positions to loyalists, Arroyo disenfranchised many lower ranking military officers. As a result, Arroyo has survived three mutiny attempts by rogue factions of the military. The most prominent of these mutinies was perhaps the 2006 mutiny, which resulted in the declaration of a state of emergency. Arroyo justified her declaration by arguing that it was necessary to restore order and amidst the ‘clear and present danger to our republic’.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, critics have claimed that this was an attempt to seize greater political power, due to her sagging influence and popularity.¹⁴⁰

Arroyo’s term has also seen a tendency to ignore the rule of law, which has led to problems of personal safety. Statistics show a 28% decline (2005–2008) in the crime rate in Manila, there has been an alarming rise in extrajudicial killings and disappearances of civil society activists, representatives of the church, and journalists.¹⁴¹ *Reporters Without Borders* has even ranked the Philippines as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists after Iraq. An accumulation of these actions have led to the downgrading of the Philippines’ rating by Freedom House from “free” to “partly free” in 2006.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Croissant, Aurel et al. "Breaking with the Past?: Civil-Military Relations in the Emerging Democracies of East Asia". *East-West Centre* (2012): 15-17

¹³⁹ Mogato, Manny. "Arroyo battens down as police move in." *Sydney Morning Herald*. 25 February 2006, accessed 21 October 2014, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2006/02/24/1140670261960.html?from=rss>.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Dressel, “The Philippines: how much real democracy?”, 532-534

¹⁴² "Freedom in the World 2006". *Freedom House*, accessed 17 October 2014. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2006>

Analysis

Philippine democracy has suffered fundamental setbacks in the 2000s. While the country's political system gradually liberalized under Corazon Aquino and Ramos, the political reforms did not seem to be enough to prevent the emergence of Estrada and Arroyo. Democratic institutions under Estrada and Arroyo were both under attack from within the political system and through other non-constitutional means. The effects have been felt in all sectors of society, with rising security problems, increased poverty, and the lasting dominance of political dynasties shaping the country's so-called "cacique democracy".

Like in Indonesia, structural variables seem to largely explain why democratic institutions have been under threat. Weak political parties and the dominance of political dynasties have created a culture of money politics and difficult to participate in for those outside the oligarchy. These families have also weakened the institutional power of political parties, as politicians are dependent on clientelist ties with the electorate, leaving political parties ideologically weak. This is perhaps most visible under the Arroyo government. Arroyo has taken advantage of the country's weak political parties to bribe rivals to support her, bully politicians who criticize her rule, and allow human rights abuses by provincial governments just to gain their support. Unlike in Indonesia, the executive seems to hold far more power than the legislature, allowing the president to enact policies that benefit their own party without great difficulty. The weakness of the opposition parties are reflected in their lack of ability to properly address the government's poor record of governance, which has allowed corruption to soar and the security situation in some parts of the country to worsen, leading to high murder rates. Estrada was far less successful in his attempts to consolidate power. While, he was very popular amongst the country's rural and poor population, he unsuccessfully remained in power because of his top priority of awarding allies and allies only. The corruption scandal that broke out just a few years after the Asian Financial Crisis not only allowed his rivals to justify reasons to oust him, but it also allowed them to enlist the help of the people as well.

The 2001 People Power Revolution reflects public anger and disenchantment with the country's oligarchic political system and corruption. These issues remain pertinent

threats to Philippine democracy, as they tarnish the image of the political system and create a mood of cynicism amongst members of the middle class over the effectiveness of political participation. Romero et al. argue that low level of law enforcement creates an ‘atmosphere of the “self-help” wherein citizens, families, interest groups, and communities are relatively free to pursue their own interests, including negotiating and bargaining with politicians and bureaucrats for electoral favours in exchange for public goods and services’.¹⁴³

One of the successes of the reform movements during the post-Marcos era is the expansion of individual liberties, which have been embodied in the Philippine constitution. This includes the enhancement of basic law and highlighted political discourse.¹⁴⁴ However, due to the weak capacity of law enforcement agencies and political parties, the state struggles to enforce laws, which leads to rampant corruption and little government transparency. These problems have negative implications on the democratization process. Like in Indonesia, it creates disillusionment amongst members of the middle class by negatively portraying electoral democracy as a system that is ineffective in tackling the country’s economic and political woes. This creates an aura of cynicism, over the political system as a whole, particularly amongst the middle class, which has, in the past, viewed itself as a progressive but moderate balance against the oligarchic families.

Thailand

Democracy in Thailand has had a short and erratic history. For around 40 years since the 1932 Siamese revolution transformed Thailand into a constitutional monarchy, Thailand was governed by a powerful military and bureaucratic elite. There have been several experimentations with democracy, but all failed because of political interferences from the military. But in 1997, Thailand was officially recognized as a “free” country by Freedom House, with its five-year old democracy achieving significant results. CSOs have grown increasingly prominent in the political arena, the military’s political influence has been greatly reduced, and an expanding middle class

¹⁴³ Romero, Segundo et al. "Philippine Democracy and Governance 2005: Insights from the Asian Barometer Surveys". *Asian Barometer* (2008): 20

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 20-21

has demanded greater political and economic autonomy from the state. However, by 2014, Thailand was governed once more by a powerful military elite. The period of 2000 and 2010 is a crucial moment in the history of Thai democracy, as it provides critical insight about key causal factors behind the sudden democratic regression.

Period of “Half-Democracy”

Thailand began its first attempt at democratic transition in 1973, following widespread public protests that saw the downfall of Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn. Protesters, largely led academics, were dissatisfied with the Thai military junta for severe political corruption, poor management of state resources, and repression of political freedom.¹⁴⁵ However, attempts to democratize failed after three years, when the government was overthrown by the military, leading to the return of military government. Nonetheless, the military never had the same amount of political power it had prior to 1973. Thailand entered a period of “half-democracy”, where the military and bureaucratic elite entered a power-sharing agreement with the middle class by enhancing the role of opposition political parties.¹⁴⁶ Under this power-sharing agreement, Thailand saw the emergence of new political parties that consisted of academics and professionals. Party politicians also became increasingly prominent in a country where the military had traditionally dominated parliament. This period of political liberalization was led by General Prem Tinsulanonda, who has also overseen the industrialization of the Thai economy. As a result, Thailand saw an expanding middle class that demanded greater political and economic autonomy from government, including the gradual removal of the military from politics.¹⁴⁷

In 1992, elected Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan was overthrown in a coup by the armed forces, which accused the elected government of corruption and abuse of power. The appointment of General Suchinda Kraprayoon caused widespread uproar amongst the country’s middle class population, who were aggravated with the

¹⁴⁵ Hewinson, Kevin. "Emerging social forces in Thailand: new political and economic roles". in *The New Rich in Asia: Mobile Phones, McDonald's and Middle Class Revolution*, ed. Robinson, Richard et al. (London: Routledge, 2013) 140-141

¹⁴⁶ Jumbala, Prudhisan. *Nation-building and democratization in Thailand: a political history*. (Bangkok: Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University, 1992) 3-10

¹⁴⁷ Hewinson, "Emerging social forces in Thailand: new political and economic roles", 141-142

military's political influence.¹⁴⁸ This led to massive protests in Bangkok, known as "Black May", which was led by students, academics, and bureaucrats. While these protests were divided and had different interests, they all demanded the return of civilian rule in Thailand and the removal of the Thai military from politics. On the 20th of May 1992, the Thai monarchy condemned the actions of Suchinda and the protestors, leading to Suchinda's resignation and a general election.

Civilian Chuan Leekpai was elected into power in 1992 and he presided over a period of political liberalization, which saw the stabilization of civilian-military relations, the enhancement of participatory politics, and the emergence of CSOs as important actors in the political arena.¹⁴⁹ While Thailand's democracy had been reported by a number of organizations, such as Freedom House, to be improving up until 2006, several factors in the 1990s seemed to have contributed to the eventual regression of Thailand's democracy. Firstly, free elections led to the rise of corrupt and populist figures, such as Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-archa, who utilized money-based electoral politics and angered the so-called "network monarchy".¹⁵⁰ Secondly, the passing of the so-called "People's Constitution" in 1997 had some unintended consequences. The constitution sought to alter the governance system in terms of executive stability, accountability, and participation. However, critics argue that it 'worked *too well*' and have strengthened the role of the executive and legislative branches and weakened the influence of the network monarchy and military.¹⁵¹ The desire to reclaim more political power by these two actors would harm Thailand's future progress with democratization.

21st Century Democratization

From 2000 until 2010, Thailand was governed under five (not including military or acting) prime ministers: Chuan Leekpai (1997-2001), Thaksin Shinawatra (2001-

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 146

¹⁴⁹ Bunbongkarn, Suchit. "Thailand's Successful Reforms". *Journal of Democracy* 10:4 (1999): 65-68

¹⁵⁰ The "network monarchy", coined by Duncan McCargo, refers to describe King Bhumibol Adulyadej, his proxies, and the Privy Council. McCargo provides a good discussion on the topic in his paper: McCargo, Duncan. "Network monarchy and legitimacy crises in Thailand". *The Pacific Review* 18:4 (2005): 499-519

¹⁵¹ "Thai Talk: Third party – not such a wild idea". *The Nation*, April 15th 2004, accessed 21 October 2014. <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/home/THAI-TALK-Third-party--not-such-a-wild-idea-97135.html>

2006), Surayud Chulanont (2006-2008), Samak Sundaravej (2008), Somchai Wongsawat (2008), and Abhisit Vejjajiva (2008-2011). However, this paper will primarily focus on the Thaksin, Samak, Somchai, and Abhisit premierships. While Chuan's leadership is important to an understanding of the precedence behind Thaksin's premiership, his contributions largely occurred during the 1990s. Surayud was installed by the military and as such, this paper will not analyse their leadership, as the central question necessitates a focus on elected figures. The success of the 1997 constitution has left many organizations and scholars to assume that Thai democracy would be the most enduring in Southeast Asia.¹⁵² However, from 2000 until 2010, Thailand saw a sudden regression of its democratization process. The increasing influence of the legislative and the executive branches have weakened the influence of the network monarchy and military. Additionally, money politics have further weakened political parties and polarized Thai society. In present-day Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra has emerged as, arguably, the most polarizing figure in Thai politics today.

Thaksin came to power in 2001 on a populist platform that promised, among others, a farmer debt moratorium, a universal health care program, and soft loans for every community. These populist policies distinguished him from past prime ministers, who were deemed to be aloof and more concerned with the largely Bangkok-based middle class. Unlike Estrada, Thaksin has had some success in delivering his promises, making him a very popular figure amongst the country's rural poor. For instance, Thaksin initiated programs, like the village-managed microcredit development funds and low-interest agricultural loans, which benefited the country's rural poor. As a result of his policies, nationwide poverty fell from 21.3% to 11.3%. He also introduced subsidized universal healthcare, which helped increase access to healthcare from 76% of the population to 96%. These ambitious policies made him a very popular figure amongst Thailand's poor and rural areas to the point that many had revered him.¹⁵³

However, Thaksin was less popular amongst members of the network monarchy and military. Distancing himself from this elite, observers argue that Thaksin capitalized

¹⁵² Samudavanija, Chai-Anan, "Educating Thai Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 1 (1990): 115

¹⁵³ Elegant, Simon. "Should Thaksin Stay?" *Times*. 13 March 2006, accessed 23 October 2014, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1172779-3,00.html>

on a widespread Thai sentiment against the political elite. For instance, he has accused them of being responsible for the suffering during the Asian Financial Crisis and through deals made with the International Monetary Fund.¹⁵⁴ However, some scholars argue that the network monarchy had been primarily upset over how Thaksin gradually limited their political influence. McCargo observes that the network monarchy was particularly upset over the removal of networks loyal to Prem (who was chair of the King's Privy Council) in a wide range of government sectors and instead replacing them with loyalists and business partners.¹⁵⁵ As Thaksin's power grew, the network monarchy could do little but watch the changes occur.

Thaksin also limited military influence over security-related matters. Under his stewardship, Thaksin adopted an aggressive approach to the southern Thai insurgencies and declared a "War on Drugs". In both conflicts, Thaksin did not grant full authority to generals, particularly in regards to discussions with insurgents. As a number of prominent senior military officers, including Prem, were assigned to lead the conflict, their reputations were on the line. As a result, the ineffectiveness of Thaksin's strategy not only led to many casualties on the military's side, but it also led to public criticism of senior military generals. Another cause of anger was the selection system for promotions. As Thaksin only promoted loyalists, many prominent officers were set aside for Thaksin allies. Ockey observes that in some cases, senior positions went to Thaksin allies over more experienced officers. Thus, the politicization of promotions led to tensions between soldiers and also between soldiers and politicians.¹⁵⁶

Thaksin was also unpopular amongst the middle class population. While his leadership has benefited many members of the rural class, they have often been done at greater costs for the middle class. For instance, many doctors and health officials have criticized Thaksin's universal healthcare policies, as it was underfunded and increased workloads for health care employees.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, the middle class was concerned

¹⁵⁴ Gundzik, Jephraim. "Thaksin's populist economics buoy Thailand". *Asia Times*, 3 August 2014, accessed 23 October 2014. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/FH03Ae01.html

¹⁵⁵ McCargo, "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand", 514-515

¹⁵⁶ Ockey, James. "Thailand in 2006: Retreat to Military Rule". *Asian Survey* 47:1 (2007): 136-137

¹⁵⁷ Khwankhom, Arthit. "Bt30 health scheme still lacks funds, says official". *The Nation*, 14 July 2006, accessed 21 October 2014. http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2006/07/14/national/national_30008668.php

over Thaksin's increasingly autocratic leadership, which began attacking civil and political liberties, including press freedom and the legal system. Thaksin devalued the importance of parliament, neutralised the check-and-balance bodies of the 1997 constitution, and said on a number of occasions in public that rule of law, democracy and human rights were not important because they often got in the way of "working for the people". He also described criticism by press or opposition as "destructive".¹⁵⁸ Additionally, the "War on Drugs" and the Southern Thailand insurgencies caused many civilian casualties, many of which remained unsolved.¹⁵⁹

By the time he was re-elected in 2005, Thailand had been polarized by the effects of his rule. In early 2006, the Shinawatra family sold their entire stake in Shin Corporation to Temasek holdings, raking in nearly US\$2 billion tax-free. The deal made Thaksin the target of accusations of corruption and selling an asset of national importance to a foreign entity and led to large anti-Thaksin rallies. In September of that year, Thailand's 14-year process of democratic consolidation was upturned by Thaksin's overthrow by the armed forces and the return of a military junta in power. The military's justification was that Thaksin was 'meddling with democratic institutions, his unprecedented polarization of society, his actions bordering on *lèse-majesté*, and his corrupt behaviour'.¹⁶⁰ His removal was met with anger by rural supporters and even amongst some members of the middle class. This polarization would dominate Thai politics to this day, as supporters of Thaksin and of the monarchy (which primarily consists of middle class Bangkokians) would frequently clash and paralyse Bangkok. This polarization led to the rise of two prominent pressure groups: the royalist, largely middle class *People's Alliance for Democracy* (PAD, also known as "Yellow Shirts") and the pro-Thaksin *United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship* (UDD, also known as "Red Shirts").

While Thaksin was removed from power, observers have noted that he remained a powerful "kingmaker".¹⁶¹ The ascension of Thaksin supporter, Samak Sundaravej, in

¹⁵⁸ Piromya, Kasit. "Thailand's Rocky Path towards a Full-Fledged Democracy" in *Bangkok, May 2010: Perspectives on a Divided Thailand*, ed. Montesano, Michael et al. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012) 163-165

¹⁵⁹ Hewinson, "Emerging social forces in Thailand: new political and economic roles", 149

¹⁶⁰ Kuhonta, Erik. "The Paradox of Thailand's 1997 'People's Constitution': Be Careful What You Wish For". *Asian Survey* 48:3 (2008): 374

¹⁶¹ Sathian, Mala Rajo. "Thailand in 2008: A Year Long of Protests" *Jati* 13 (2008): 72

the 2007 elections resulted in condemnation from many segments of Thai society, including the network monarchy. Samak was controversial in Thai politics, particularly after announcing that ‘I [Samak] am a nominee of Prime Minister Thaksin, I will make the party strong so that democracy can be restored in this country’.¹⁶² Attempts to remove him from power by the opposition failed, due to his control over a majority of seats in parliament. However, the polarizing effects of Thaksin would soon lead to Samak’s downfall. A month after Samak’s prime ministership, Thaksin returned to Thailand, hoping that Samak would accomplish his promises of amending the military-backed constitutions and support an amnesty bill for politicians banned from politics, such as Thaksin.¹⁶³ However, this resulted in large protests by the PAD, which paralysed Bangkok and drove Thaksin out of Thailand once more. The PAD protesters not only demanded the arrest of Thaksin, but they also demanded the removal of all Thaksin influences from politics. After accidental clashes with security forces left two protesters dead and 400 injured, public support, including that of the monarchy, shifted against the government and with the PAD.¹⁶⁴ In September, Samak was removed from office by the constitutional court for contravening the conflict of interests law and was replaced by another Thaksin supporter, Somchai Wongsawat.¹⁶⁵ However, Somchai presided over a period of political turmoil that saw key state structure and institutions, such as the airport and parliament, blockaded by protestors. While security forces attempted to address the threats posed by the protestors, there was no serious attempt by the police or the military to intervene. Eventually, the constitutional court removed Somchai from office and called for renewed elections.

Abhisit Vejjajiva came to power amidst the Global Financial Crisis and in the aftermath of the 2008 political turmoil in Thailand. He came to power mainly through the support of the network monarchy and his ability to win over parties that had originally sided with Thaksin.¹⁶⁶ While his ascension to the prime ministership was

¹⁶² Case, William. “Electoral Authoritarianism and Backlash: Hardening Malaysia, Oscillating Thailand,” *International Political Science Review* 32, no. 4 (2011), 452.

¹⁶³ Chachavalpongpun, Pavin. "Diagnosing Thailand's democratic crisis". in *Political Change, Democratic Transitions and Security in Southeast Asia*. ed. Caballero-Anthony, Mely. (New York: Routledge, 2010) 42-44

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 47-48

¹⁶⁵ Samak violated the constitution by receiving payment for hosting a cooking show. This violates a constitutional rule that forbade the prime minister from receiving external payment.

¹⁶⁶ McCargo, Duncan. "Thailand State of Anxiety". *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2008): 342-343. doi: 10.1353/saa.0.0002

approved by the network monarchy, some scholars feared that the non-democratic elements of Thai politics in the 1990s would return. For instance, Charoensin-o-larn states that the appointing of Abhisit marked a return of the 'old polluted type of dirty/money politics typical in Thai politics...'.¹⁶⁷ To make matters worse, allegations of widespread corruption tainted Abhisit's administration.

In early 2010, hundreds of thousands of UDD protesters demanded that Abhisit and his government stepped down and call for new elections, as they believed that Abhisit's Democrat Party was not a majority party, but rather a coalition formed under military pressure. At the end of March, Abhisit's government agreed to discuss a possible compromise, but there were disagreements over the election date. This led to an escalation of protests and after attempts to storm parliament, eventual clashes with security forces. Abhisit declared a state of emergency, which provided the military the authority to restore order, causing the mood of the protesters to switch to a high expectation of violence.¹⁶⁸ One year later, Abhisit announced that elections would take place in July 2011, six months earlier than scheduled, leading to the ascension of Yingluck Shinawatra.

Analysis

The strength of Thailand's democratic institutions are with its large middle class population and its vocal, pro-reform CSOs. Thailand's democracy has come a long way since the first attempt at democratic transition in 1973. But, gradually since the 1992 Black May protests, the polarization of Thai society has kept Thailand from embracing a full-fledged participatory democracy and political stability, both at the national and at the local level. Throughout the 1990s, it was apparent that the network monarchy and the military were not comfortable watching their political influence fade away. This is especially in the face of polarizing and pro-rural figures, like Banharn and Thaksin.

¹⁶⁷ Charoensin-o-larn, Chairat. "Thailand in 2009: Unusual Politics Becomes Usual". *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2010): 302. DOI: 10.1353/saa.2010.0002

¹⁶⁸ Connors, Michael K. "Thailand's Emergency State: Struggles and Transformations". *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2011): 288-289

Like in Indonesia and the Philippines, structural variables have created the most lasting impacts on Thailand's democratization process. The strengthening of parliament in the 1980s led to the emergence of new political parties, many of which were personalistic and governed by oligarchs. Thaksin's formation of the Thai Rak Thai Party is a clear example of such situations. Thaksin utilized his party and created it as a "brand", which he used to push his populist and non-ideological agenda to win votes and create larger coalitions. Additionally, the ineffectiveness of opposition parties to pose challenges to Thaksin's party further prove the prevalence of money politics in the country, as rivals were often bought.¹⁶⁹ This has resulted in weak coalitions, such as that under Abhisit, and the failure of the opposition party to effectively address the autocratic actions of Thaksin's government.

But the weakness of the country's political parties are also reflected in their inferior status to the military and the network monarchy. In the absence of parties as strong political abodes, informal institutions and connections have gained prevalence in Thai political sphere. The military possesses significant amount of political power, compared to those in Indonesia and the Philippines. As such, in order for there to be any successful attempt at democratic consolidation, there has to be a stable relationship between the civilian government and the military. Samak and Somchai, with their close ties to Thaksin, had no chance of forming a good relationship with the network monarchy. As a result, security forces that are loyal to those in the network monarchy refused to come and aid Samak and Somchai when Thailand was engulfed in crises in 2008. On the other hand, the Democrat Party, under Chuan and then Abhisit, has been successful in maintaining a stable relationship with the military. By allowing senior military officers and their loyalists to occupy strategic positions, the governments of Chuan and Abhisit were able to survive without much harm from the military. Thaksin did exactly opposite of Chuan and Abhisit, resulting in the return of the military to power.

The issue of income inequality also seems to pose more devastating consequences in Thailand than in Indonesia and the Philippines. The emergence of pro-rural, but

¹⁶⁹ Bjarnegard, Elin. "Clientelism in Thai politics" in *Party Politics in Southeast Asia: Clientelism and Electoral Competition in Southeast Asia*, ed. Tomsa, Dirk & Ufen, Andreas (New York: Routledge, 2013) 143-145

corrupt figures, like Thaksin, have divided Thai society to the point that it has threatened a number of governments after Thaksin's removal. His forced removal from office angered his rural supporters, which formed large protest movements that have clashed with both security forces and opposing protesters. As a result, no government after his were able to complete a full term. Abhisit was amongst these prime ministers who was forced out of power by protests and have resorted to the use of force in order to quell the protesters that have paralysed Bangkok. The polarization of Thai society poses significant security and political implications, which threaten the survivability of Thai democracy.

Today, the democratization process in Thailand has regressed as a result of two military coups. Thaksin has emerged as a polarizing figure whose supporters have clashed with anti-Thaksin supporters and security forces that paralyse Bangkok. Since his downfall, Thaksin's rivalry with the military and network monarchy have defined Thai politics. Following the downfall of his sister, Yingluck, the new military junta, under Prayuth Chan-ocha, has reversed a number of progressive, democratic laws in an attempt to prevent the Shinawatra family and its allies from coming into power again, as well as introduced a number of draconian laws, which are similar to those written in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁷⁰ The polarization of Thai society and the network monarchy's fear of losing political power will continue to hamper efforts to democratize. Nonetheless, the strength and mobilizational power of pro-democracy members of the middle class and CSOs will likely prevent Thailand's democracy to regress any further than "half-democracy".

Conclusion

A series of events, policies, and actions in Southeast Asia from 2000 and 2010 have shown that Third wave euphoria have been premature. The fall of strongly-consolidated patrimonialistic governments in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand created numerous obstacles for young democracies, which include the prominence of informal actors, weak political parties, and the prevalence of ethnic conflict. While the

¹⁷⁰ Kurlantzick, Joshua. "The Pivot and Democratic Regression in Southeast Asia". *Council of Foreign Relations*, 1 October 2014, accessed 20 October 2014. <http://blogs.cfr.org/asia/2014/10/01/the-pivot-and-democratic-regression-in-southeast-asia/>

outcomes of the democratization process in all three countries are different, this chapter has identified common variables that threaten key democratic institutions. Poor civil-military relations and weak political parties pose the biggest threats to democratic institutions in all case studies. Ethnic conflicts and the effects of Asian values have also harmed democratic institutions to some degree. On the other hand, it seems that socioeconomic factors have only weakened democratic institutions in Thailand and, to a degree, the Philippines. The next chapter of this paper will provide a comparative study that will determine what common factors threaten to halt or regress the democratization process in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Comparative Analysis

In the previous chapter, this thesis attempted to identify the variables and causal factors that threaten democratic institutions in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Indeed, socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors all play a role in shaping the three countries' complex process of democratic consolidation. Unsurprisingly, there are unique challenges to democratic institutions in each of the three case studies. But there seems to be some commonalities as well. This chapter will identify what these commonalities are in order to answer the main research question of this paper.

Structural Variables: The dominant threats to democracy?

There has been considerable scholarly focus given to the role of structural actors in challenging new democratic institutions in Southeast Asia, as scholars are fascinated with the role that these actors – many of whom receive greater political power during the authoritarian era – play in the democratic consolidation and transition processes. Rarely does the fall of an authoritarian government mean the complete consolidation of democratic values within all institutions and actors, and the three case studies in Southeast Asia seem to reflect so. It seems that structural actors, particularly oligarchic actors, pose the most dominant direct threats to democratic institutions. These actors are fearful of losing further political power during the period of democracy and as such, would use their informal power of resources and networks to prevent further loss.

One structural challenge has emerged in all case studies: weak and ineffective political parties. In Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, weak political parties have resulted in a lack of party loyalty amongst politicians, the increased prevalence of money politics, weak opposition parties, and the emergence of informal actors – such as oligarchic figures and military – as symbols of conservative or moderate opposition to an often radical government. This result seems understandable, as the authoritarian governments that preceded the period of democratic transition seem to either be

personalistic (e.g. Indonesia and the Philippines) or personalistic-military (e.g. Thailand).¹⁷¹ In either case, authority within these governments were exercised through patronage networks and coercion, rather than through formal rules or institutions. The survival of Marcos' and Suharto's governments were dependent on the approval and support of a strong power base, such as the military. Similarly, the survival of successive military governments in Thailand was dependent on approval from the network monarchy. Their ruling political parties were largely vehicles to manage elite relations and opposition parties were often symbolic and virtually made weak. This seems to confirm Crouch and Morley's observation, as mentioned in Chapter 2, that the collapse of authoritarian governments is marked by a fractured elite and the government's failure to manage elite relationships.

The result of elite fragmentation on the democratization process is twofold. Firstly, elites and other actors from the past authoritarian regime bring their schisms to the electoral process. Elections are expensive, but these figures often possess the necessary resources to compete, or have a proxy, to preserve their political power. This was evident in all three case studies, such as the dominance of oligarchs in Indonesia's political parties, the dominance of political dynasties in the Philippines' political arena, and the emergence of populist counter-elite forces in Thailand. Secondly, weak political parties are forced to form wobbly coalitions that are driven by money politics to counter the dominant parties of the authoritarian era. These two results of elite fragmentation pose a direct short and long term threat to democratic institutions as it weakens the oppositions' ability to properly review government behaviour, tarnishes public perceptions of the legislature as a corrupt institution, and distances itself from disenfranchised voters. The lack of proper governance and disillusionment of governmental and parliamentary capability to address the issues of the state provides non-state actors, including oligarchs, greater impetus to use their material resources to pursue further political power. In some cases, officers within the military – seen in many parts of Southeast Asia as a moderate actor that brings stability

¹⁷¹ A “personalistic authoritarian rule” is a type of authoritarian government characterized by arbitrary rule and authority exercised “mainly through patronage networks and coercion rather than through institutions and formal rules. A “personalistic-military government” is one that utilizes the military as a power base. Gasiorowski provides a good explanation on the two concepts in his book: Gasiorowski, Mark “The Political Regimes Project”, in *On Measuring Democracy: Its Consequences and Concomitants*, ed. Inkeles, Alex (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006).

– may believe that it is the prerogative of the military to interfere and bring back political stability to the state. This was the case in the Philippines, when they intervened in Estrada’s overthrow.

This brings up the question of whether the political influence of the military continues to pose a threat to democratic institutions. In all three case studies, only the Thai military poses a significant challenge to democratic institutions, which threaten to bring full regression in the democratization process. The military’s influence on politics in Indonesia and the Philippines is less severe, but remains damaging. In an attempt to earn their loyalty and maintain a stable relationship with the military, Arroyo, Megawati, and Yudhoyono have provided them institutional autonomy. Under Arroyo and Megawati, the military had enhanced decision-making power on security-related matters and political and economic protection, which somewhat mimics – to a lesser degree – what Suharto and Marcos had done to stabilize their relationship with the military. There are negative implications of doing so, as conservative senior military officers have been shown to possess hawkish approaches toward security issues, as seen with the escalation of conflict in Aceh and Mindanao. Additionally, by continuing a tradition of a “political class” of soldiers, the Indonesian and Philippine governments have risked doing exactly what Huntington, Chambers, and Croissant had warned, which was that it would create a division within the military between the professional and political classes. Such risks are more felt in the Philippines, where rogue factions of the military have undertaken several attempts at Mutiny during the post-Marcos era, including three times under Arroyo.

The implications of allowing the military to possess a political role can further upset the democratization process, which is already harmed by weak political parties. The empirical evidences in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand seem to suggest that structural variables pose a short and long term threat to democratic institutions. They are the dominant threats to democratic institutions in the region and pose an even bigger threat than the socioeconomic and cultural and ethnic variables below.

Socioeconomic Variables: Is Southeast Asia still an anomaly?

Scholars of political science have long argued over the role socioeconomic variables play in preserving democratic institutions. To the modernization theorists who believe in the causal relationship between socioeconomic development and democracy, Southeast Asia remains an anomaly as it is home to wealthy hybrid regimes, like Singapore, and poor democracies, like Timor-Leste. Nonetheless, as mentioned in Chapter 2, scholars of Southeast Asian politics seem to agree that economic performance is a key priority for all governments, regardless of regime type. Indeed, economic performance has contributed to regime stability in the past. UMNO, Suharto, PAP, and even Marcos in his early years were dependent on positive economic growth and stability for their survival. However, in the present day, it seems that there are only few causal links between poor socioeconomic development or income inequality and democratic regression. In all three Southeast Asian countries, income inequality continues to be prevalent. However, the political side effects of income inequality is most problematic in Thailand, where Thaksin and other populist figures have polarized Thai society. The political implications of income inequality is not as disastrous in Indonesia and the Philippines. While income inequality has generated forms of ethnic conflicts in these areas, they have largely subsided during the period between 2000 and 2010. Even the separatist conflicts in Papua and Mindanao have largely eased down, despite some widening in the income gap.

Perhaps the explanation behind this lies in the level of modernization that these three countries have endured. In the past, when large segments of the population remained poor, modernization remained underdeveloped, and ideological or corrupt democrats posed significant threats to economic and political stability. Thus, there was great support for their removal from office. Unlike in the past, where large segments of the population supported the overthrow of democratic institutions in these three countries, the past ten years have seen significant economic growth and an expansion of a middle class that is non-supportive of authoritarian rule. Presently, all three countries are classified as “middle income countries” by the World Bank, with Indonesia possessing a GDP per capita of 3,475, Thailand \$5,779, and the Philippines \$2,765.¹⁷² If we were

¹⁷² "Middle Income". *World Bank*, accessed 18 October 2014. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/mic>.

to apply Przeworski et al.'s argument to the three case studies, each of these countries would have a maximum life expectancy of 20 years before regressing or halting due to political crisis¹⁷³. Only Thai democracy has regressed and even so, scholars argue that Thailand is unlikely to regress beyond a "half-democracy".¹⁷⁴ An expanding middle class continues to demand greater political and economic autonomy from the state and as surveys mentioned in the previous chapter have shown, there is vast support for democratic institutions in Southeast Asia. It is possible that a democratic regime would not survive if the government fails to properly address and/or prevent a severe economic crisis from occurring. However, there is yet to be an example in recent years to prove this. Similarly, severe income inequality would polarize a country and lead to political instability that dismantles democratic institutions. But as this has only occurred in Thailand, this paper concludes that socioeconomic variables are not common threats to democratic institutions in Southeast Asia.

Cultural and Ethnic Factors: Shaping political culture

Democracy seems to be a very popular form of government for many Southeast Asians, as the Asian Barometer surveys this paper shown has proven, but we must also consider the ethnic and cultural challenges to democratic institutions as well. From 2000 until 2010, there seems to be growing support for democratic institutions in Southeast Asia, which may seem to put the Asian values arguments at rest. However, a history of acceptance of Asian values has had negative implications on the democratic process. The Asian values political culture was primarily predominant in Malaysia, Singapore, and to an extent, Indonesia. However, communitarian political culture and paternalistic leadership style that surround the Asian values seem to be prevalent in other political cultures in the region. The personalistic leaderships of Marcos and Suharto, as well as the personalistic-military leaderships of the successive Thai military juntas emphasize on the importance of centralized rule and subservience to a hierarchy. This political culture has led to the importance of patron-client relations in determining key posts, including within the bureaucracy. Thus, key posts would be

¹⁷³ Przeworski et al. "What makes democracies endure?"

¹⁷⁴ Takashi, Shiraishi. "The Asian Crisis Reconsidered". (working paper, Research Institute of Economy, Trade, and Industry, 2003) <http://www.rieti.go.jp/jp/publications/dp/05e014.pdf>

based on loyalty and networks, rather than merit. As was discussed in the case studies on the Philippines under Arroyo, Indonesia under Megawati, and Thailand under Thaksin, this hampers attempts at good governance and weaken the abilities of the state to properly ensure rule of law.

Ethnic tensions seem to also pose a threat to democratic institutions in all three case studies, where young democratic governments are instantly faced with challenges from separatist groups and ethnic tensions, which not only threaten political stability in certain regions, but also test the abilities and political influence of elected civilians in office. In Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and several regions in Indonesia, such as Aceh and Papua, ethnic conflicts have led to an escalation of armed conflict between rebels and government forces. Under intense internal pressure, governments may be forced to adopt aggressive measures to address these challenges. Under Thaksin, Estrada, Megawati, and (eventually) Wahid, ongoing tensions have led to the introduction of authoritarian and hawkish policies, which have seen gross human rights abuses and attacks on civil and political liberties. As a result, the by-products and challenges posed by ethnic tensions have posed direct threats as well to democratic institutions.

How have democratic institutions continued to survive?

This paper has found that of the three approaches, only the structural, cultural, and ethnic variables present threats to democratic institutions in all three case studies. Nonetheless, the structural variables, particularly the weakness of political parties, pose the biggest threats to democratic institutions. These four variables have resulted in the continued prevalence of personalistic parties, weak oppositions, bad governance, and ethnic violence. The effects of these problems have resulted in public disillusionment of the democratic regime, as it seems to have failed to address the political and economic woes of the authoritarian era. Although these variables have significantly slowed the pace of democratization in the three case studies, the democratization processes of all these three countries are far from regressing completely.

Perhaps, in this case, the political modernists have it right. The expansion of a middle class from outside the state bureaucracy during the period of industrialization in the 1980s and 1990s (or 1950s, in the case of the Philippines) have led to demands of greater political and economic autonomy from the state. This has led to the formation of CSOs that demand greater political and economic freedoms, as well as protection of civil and political rights. The protests that saw the end of the Marcos, Suchinda, and Suharto governments were largely driven by the middle class and their CSO vehicles, which expanded their political and mobilizational power by acting as watchdogs and providing technical support for reform-driven changes. In all three countries, CSOs have played active roles to gradually remove power away from oligarchs or other elite actors through the strengthening of independent government agencies, such as Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission, and through the passing of laws which enhance the importance of participatory politics and the role of CSOs, such as the 1997 Constitution of Thailand. These factors not only strengthen democratic institutions, but they also play an important socializing factor that enhances public support for democracy. In this case, while the democratization process is not guaranteed to continuously progress in more affluent countries, Przeworski et al. may be correct when they argue that a country's economic development greatly determines the likelihood of democratic survival.

Conclusion

As the euphoria over the *Third Wave* in Southeast Asia was quickly subsided by creeping fears of regression, the literature on democratic survival in Southeast Asia grew increasingly large and rich, with scholars bringing forward new analysis and approaches to conceptualize democratic survival, amidst continuing economic or structural challenges, ethnic conflict, and the spectre of past authoritarian oligarchs and elites. While, the political diversity of Southeast Asia has made it difficult to find justification for a single conceptualization of democracy for the region's democratizing or liberalizing political entities, this substantial variation in regime outcomes provides enormous opportunities for the study of Southeast Asian democracy. The key contribution of this paper is its particular focus on the problematic period between 2000 and 2010. It was during this time that we begin to see the deceleration of democratization processes in all three countries. By conducting a vast comparative analysis of the impacts of the six structural, socioeconomic, and cultural and ethnic variables in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, this paper has managed to identify the key commonalities in the region's decelerating democracies.

This non-traditional approach to the study of democratization in Southeast Asia allows us to further investigate the variables that decelerate the region's democratization process. This paper has managed to identify six key variables, within the broad literature of Southeast Asian democracy, that threaten democratic survival. However, this paper has found that only four of these six variables – weak political parties, the political influence of the military, ethnic conflict, and the authoritarian influence of the “Asian values” on state institutions – threaten democratic institutions in the region. On the other hand, the two dominant socioeconomic variables of income inequality and lower levels of modernization only influence the democratization processes of few countries. While the socioeconomic approach remains largely dominant in the study of democratic survival, this paper has found that Southeast Asia largely remains an anomaly, as income inequality and lower levels of modernization have not directly posed a threat to democracy in the Philippines and Indonesia. Rather, from this paper's historical-comparative analysis, it has identified that structural variables have posed the most significant threats to democratic institutions. Structural actors that were

prominent under past authoritarian governments rarely go down with the authoritarian. Rather, they continue to shape the post-authoritarian political arena by taking advantage of the electoral process and weak political parties to assume or consolidate power. Additionally, a political culture of communitarianism and paternalistic leadership style has somewhat continued traditions of patron-client politics, which may hamper attempts of good governance. The eagerness of new democratic regimes to prove that it is able to confront political and security challenges have also increased efforts to address challenges from insurgent and ethnic groups, which often end in an escalation of armed conflict. All these challenges have led to instances of bad governance, severe violations of political and civil liberties, and the emergence of informal actors as counterbalances to the democratic government. These issues have led to greater public disillusionment with the democratic regime, as it is incapable of addressing the similar political and economic woes of the past authoritarian government. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that democratization is going to completely regress, as the emergence of a politically active middle class and the increasing political influence of pro-reform CSOs are likely to preserve and campaign for the protection of key tenets of democracy, such as freedom of expression and political participation.

What do the findings of this paper tell us about the factors that challenge democratic institutions in Southeast Asia? While there seems to be widespread public support for democracy and its key institutions of political participation and freedom of expression, the public are thus far disappointed with the progress of democratization in their countries. The collapse of a strong authoritarian government that manages to weaken and fracture its opposition has meant that it is not only unprepared to deal with the array of economic, ethnic, and political challenges that it faces, but it also continues to be influenced by figures from the authoritarian past. For Thailand and the Philippines, the period between 2000 and 2010 reflected the power struggle between traditional elite forces and the new, including segments of the middle class. The deceleration – or regression, in the case of Thailand – of the democratization process was caused by the urge of informal actors to reclaim its diminishing influence. It was not caused by socioeconomic matters. Indonesia's relative success with the democratization process may be caused by the youthfulness of its democracy. The last few years of the Yudhoyono presidency has been marred by rising religious tensions

and the re-emergence of oligarchic actors. The progress of democratization in the 2010s will expose whether informal actors are content with their diminishing political power.

The findings of this paper will contribute to ongoing debates over the causes of democratic survival in Southeast Asia. However, as a comparative analysis of a region, this paper also seeks to contribute to debates over the role of democratic regimes in the democratic socialization of other states. The regression or deceleration of the democratization processes in key ASEAN countries pose a threat to the ongoing liberalization of the Association and the region. This paper hopes that by identifying the root causes of the three biggest democracies in Southeast Asia, we will have a better understanding of how young democratic institutions in the region are operated. The role of structural actors continue to matter in Southeast Asia, as informal political actors continue to hold considerable political sway. There has to be greater attention given to the role of these actors within discussions of democratic socialization. This is perhaps an area for future research for scholars on Southeast Asian democracy.

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