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EKSAENGSRI, Kanala Sukhabanij, 1946
POLITICAL CHANGE AND MODERNIZATION:
NORTHEAST THAILAND'S QUEST FOR IDENTITY
AND ITS POTENTIAL THREAT TO NATIONAL
SECURITY.

State University of New York at Bing-
hamton, Ph.D., 1977
Political Science, general

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NORTHEAST THAILAND'S QUEST FOR IDENTITY
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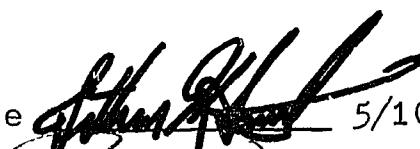
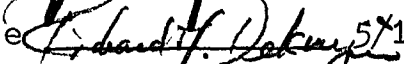

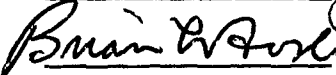
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DEDICATED TO
MY FATHER
PROFESSOR KACHORN SUKHABANIJ

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. GENERAL THEORY AND APPROACHES OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND MODERNIZATION	26
A) Theory and Characteristics of Modernization	27
Huntington's nine characteristics to the modernization process	31
B) Concepts of Political Development and/or Political Modernization	39
Pye's ten concepts of political development	42
C) Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Political Development and Modernization	55
The comparative-historical approach ..	56
The institutional approach	59
The political culture approach	64
The functional approach	70
III. MODERNIZATION OF NORTHEAST THAILAND IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE	79
A) The Kingdom of Sukhothai and the Destruction of the Khmer Empire	79
B) The Rival for Power: Kingdom of Ayuthaya vs. Kingdom of Lan Chang	82
C) Chao Anu and the Vientiane Rebellion ...	94
IV. RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE "NORTHEASTERN PROBLEM"	105
A) General Characteristics and Economic Problems of the Northeast	105
B) Security, Needs and Problems	124
C) Peasant Personality, Political Culture and Socialization	139
Political culture and socialization of the Northeast ..	153

V.	ETHNICITY AND INTEGRATION	179
	A) Theoretical Analysis of Ethnicity and Political Development	179
	B) Bangkok Centralization Schemes and the Emergence of Isan Regionalism	193
	King Chulalongkorn's Administrative Reforms	203
	C) Isan's Quest for Identity and the Northeasterners' Attitudes towards Bangkok and the Kingdom of Laos	216
	The Bangkok-Northeast relationships ...	221
	Northeastern "Isan" villagers' attitude towards the Kingdom of Laos	231
VI.	DILEMMAS OF CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY AND THE ROLE OF ISAN ELITES IN OPPOSING MILITARY DICTATORSHIPS	243
	A) Praetorianism and Civil-Military Relations: A Theoretical Analysis	243
	B) The Thai Political Climate and Successive Military Interventions	249
	June 1932 and the emergence of pseudo-democratic rule	257
	C) Bangkok Power Struggles and the Dedication of Northeastern Politicians to Democratic Reforms and Parliamentary Rule	272
	Executive dominance over the Assembly during Phibun's Administration, 1938-1943	304
	Japanese occupation and the emergence of civilian supremacy, 1941-1945	308
	The postwar re-emergence of parlia- mentary power, 1945-1948	319
	Phibun's 1947 coup and the restoration of military supremacy in politics, 1947-1957	323
	Parliamentary debates and the "Northeastern Problem" in the 1950's ..	332
VII.	CRISIS IN THE NORTHEAST AND ITS POTENTIAL THREAT TO THAILAND'S NATIONAL SECURITY	346
	A) Communism and Insurgency	346
	The Communist Party of Thailand	346
	B) Insurgency in the Northeast and the Participatory Role of Communist Neighbor- ing States	369
	The role of Peking in the Thai revolutionary movement	375
	C) Guerrilla Warfare and Political Unrest in the Northeast	389

VIII.	U.S. INVOLVEMENT AND THE "SPILL-OVER" OF THE INDOCHINA INTO NORTHEAST THAILAND	430
	A) The Postwar Thai-U.S. Alliance and the Beginning of U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia	430
	The Korean War, its aftermath and the period of adjustment, 1950-1954	442
	U.S. foreign policy and Thai praetorian politics	446
	SEATO and the Thai-U.S. military commitment, 1955-1960	449
	B) The 1960's U.S. Intervention and the "Spill-Over" of Indochina War into Northeast Thailand	454
	The Laotian Crisis and the dispatch of U.S. troops to the Northeast	455
	C) The U.S. Military Build-Up, the Contingen- cy Plan, and the Escalation of Guerrilla Warfare in the Northeast	472
	D) Troubled Partnership and the Renewal of U.S. Escalation	490
IX.	CONCLUSION	514
.....		
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	543
	ABSTRACT	583
	MAPS OF THAILAND AND THE NORTHEAST	587
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	590

LIST OF TABLES

1. Pye's Major Meanings of Political Development ...	54
2. The USOM List Showing the Percentage of Northeast Villagers' "Needs and Problems"	137
3. Table Showing the Postwar Rise of Army Officers and the Accumulation of their Ministerial Functions	326
4. Results of the February Election for the Whole Kingdom and the Northeastern Region	336
5. Ethnic Groups of Communist Terrorists Throughout the Country	412
6. American Expenditures in Thailand: 1952-1955	452
7. Major U.S. Government Expenditures in Thailand, 1965-1972	490

PREFACE

In the process of political development and modernization, an "identity crisis" occurs when members of a distinct community discover that what they had once unquestionably regarded as the physical and psychological definitions of their collective selves are no longer acceptable under newly-emerging historical conditions and changes. This is exactly the case of Northeast Thailand following the Administrative Reforms of King Chulalongkorn and the subsequent "takeovers" of the regional power base and the local political structure by Bangkok officials. The suppression of the Isan political identity, the brutal executions of the outspoken Isan political elites and the continued neglect of the Northeast's demand for equal economic development and political integration by successive Bangkok military regimes have effectively changed these regional grievances into large-scale Communist insurgent activities which inevitably became critical with the U.S. intervention and the "spill-over" of the Indochina war into the region. In order to solve this "Northeastern Problem", the Thai ruling regime must realize that the "identity Crisis" is, in fact, a phase of political growth and an essential stage of modernization, which a political

system must inevitably experience whenever its basic forms are substantially changed. It is certainly a sign of growth and change, not of weakness or abnormality.

The author's interest in the problem of the Northeast and its potential threat to Thailand's national security and territorial integration goes back for many years. Attempts to gather data and information on this subject matter have preoccupied her throughout the long years of graduate studies in the United States. In fact, the research for this dissertation originated in several research projects in which the author became involved during the pursuit of degrees both at the School of International Service at the American University in Washington, D.C. and at the Department of Political Science at S.U.N.Y., Binghamton.

Unfortunately, the sensitivity of the subject matter, especially the problem of Communist insurgency and the ethnic identity of the Isan villagers, has caused great difficulty in conducting research as well as in the attempt to acquire reliable data and empirical information. In addition, the extreme secrecy involved in the process of decision-making and the formulation and execution of the Thai foreign policy, - i.e., the conclusion of secret treaties and agreements between the governments of Thailand and the U.S., - which characterized the administration of

the Thanom-Prapas regimes have made it difficult to assess their impact on the development of the Northeast and its relationship to the budding Communist-inspired insurgency in the area. Despite having to face these shortcomings, the author has, to the best of her ability, attempted to evaluate and to analyze the problem with frank and logical interpretations acquired from applying theoretical analyses in the field of political development and modernization with a mass of data and information gathered both in the U.S. and in Thailand, coupled with empirical observation and reasoned inferences.

The standard transliteration of Thai words used in this dissertation is adapted from Mary Hass' system, as well as from the "General System of Phonetic Transcription of Thai Characters into Roman" as devised by the Royal Thai Institute in Bangkok.¹ As for the Thai and Lao names of people and places, the basic transliteration commonly used in Western literatures has been applied to prevent unnecessary confusion.

The author wishes to express her gratitude and appreciation to several people whose invaluable supports and encouragement have contributed greatly to the completion of this research project. First of all, my profound gratitude goes to my parents, Kachorn and Chulie,

¹It was published in Phraya Anuman Rajadhon, The Nature and Development of the Thai Language (Bangkok: The Fine Arts Department, 1961), pp. 32-35.

whose financial assistance and psychological support have made it possible for me to carry on my graduate studies throughout these long years. Special thanks go to my mother who devoted her efforts in raising my daughter, Jetika, which has made my often frustrating and difficult years of study a much easier task.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation and profound gratitude to Professor Arthur K. Smith, my Doctoral Dissertation Committee Chairperson, whose professional advice, encouragement, inspiration and tolerance have made my doctoral studies and this research project a success. Without Professor Smith's assistance, understanding and kind suggestions, I would have had to encounter a much more difficult task in the struggle to complete the dissertation as well as to get my degree. My special appreciation goes to Professor Walter O. Filley, who has devoted his invaluable hours to correcting all my mistakes and given me valuable advice and kind assistance. I owe further thanks to Professors Richard H. Dekmejian and Brian L. Foster who have also contributed to the completion of my dissertation without unnecessary delays and problems.

Also, I should like to express my indebtedness to a number of people in Thailand who have kindly provided me with various assistance in the conduct of my research.

Special thanks are owed to Mrs. Chalathip and Mrs. Pacharee at the Thailand Information Center, Chulalongkorn University. My gratitude and greatest respect are given to my former professors, Dr. Kramol Thongthammachat, Dr. Somsakdi Xuto and Dr. Kusuma Snitwongse, whose lectures during my undergraduate years have enlightened my interpretations of the subject and whose kind assistance have made it possible for me to continue my studies to the graduate level. During my field trip research in the "sensitive areas" of the Northeast, my old friend, deputy district officer Kasemsak Saenpoj, has kindly provided me with safe accommodation, official escort and easy access to sources of interviews in the remote villages. I am greatly indebted for his kind assistance.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to my husband, Asadakorn, whose understanding, patience, encouragement, academic assistance, including typing and consultation, and his lack of a male-chauvinist syndrome throughout these years of emotional stresses and strains of our residence in the U.S., have contributed greatly to the success of my doctoral studies and dissertation. My special thanks also go to my daughter, Jetika, which I owe her for her understanding and the years of separation while I was striving to achieve my degree.

In spite of all the assistance and advice I have

acquired in an attempt to complete this dissertation, I alone take full responsibility for the accuracy and interpretations of the subject matter.

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Binghamton, New York.

May 1977

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Political modernization involves the rationalization of authority, the replacement of a large number of traditional, religious, familial, and ethnic political authorities by a single secular, national political authority. Political modernization involves assertion of the external sovereignty of the nation-state against transnational influences and of the national government against local and regional powers. It means national integration and the centralization or accumulation of power in recognized national law-making institutions.¹

Thailand emerged from the Second World War considerably more stable and secure than any other nation of Southeast Asia. Its political system, especially prior to the beginning of 1970's, has been characterized as having successfully achieved a high degree of continuity, order and stability. Kenneth T. Young, former U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, referred to Thailand as "viable, unified, dynamic, and progressing rapidly in her own way ... Thailand's success in domestic progress and regional diplomacy is one of the most significant factors in Asia's

¹Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 34.

prospects for 1970's."¹

Unlike her neighbors, Thailand has exhibited a remarkable capacity to cope with the demands made on the political system, domestically and internationally, not to mention its ability to maintain independence throughout a long and endurable period of colonial expansion. Daniel Wit observed that major transformations of Thailand throughout its long history as a statist society have always depended upon government identification of the need for change, willingness to lead the way, and skill in achieving the established objectives.²

Moreover, the reasons for Thailand's political stability are inextricably bound up with traditional cultural patterns. For the Thai peasant, noted Clark Neher, "the legitimacy of a regime stems not only from the elaborate process of promulgating constitutions, calling new elections, setting up respectable temporary heads of government, and claiming obeisance to the king, but also from the regime's very capacity to maintain authority and

¹Kenneth T. Young, "Thailand's Role in Southeast Asia," Current History 56:330 (February 1969), p. 94.

²Daniel Wit, Thailand: Another Vietnam? (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 155.

retain power."¹

Economically speaking, Thailand is well-balanced with regard to the ratio between its total population of more than 42 million² and the land area of about 514,000 kilometres. The gross national product, in 1966, amounted to about 86 billion baht, or roughly 4.2 billion U.S. dollars. The level of income per head in 1966 was about 2,600 baht³ or nearly U.S. 130 dollars which by 1973 had increased to about 4,000 baht (\$ 200) per year, comparing favorably with most other countries in Southeast Asia.⁴

Thailand has been an agricultural society with 85 per cent of the population earning their living on the land.⁵ Nevertheless, the latest statistics revealed that,

¹Clark Neher, "Thailand," in Roger M. Smith, ed., Southeast Asia: Documents of Political Development and Change (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 22.

²Thai News Weekly, The Royal Thai Embassy, Washington, D.C., December 30, 1975. According to the latest national census, there are at present 42,121,146 Thai population, of whom 21,228,756 are male and 20,895,390, female.

³Thailand: Facts and Figure 1966. Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation, Ministry of National Development (Bangkok 1966), p. 13.

⁴Thailand Year Book, 1973-1974 (Bangkok: Kurusapha Lard Praow Press, 1974), p. D7.

⁵John Audric, "Thailand Today," Contemporary Review 214:1241 (June 1969), pp. 296-298.

by 1973, the percentage of total work force engaged in agriculture, fisheries and forestry has been reduced to only 75 per cent, with the remaining 25 per cent engaged in commerce, services, and industry.¹ Rice, accounting for 33 per cent of the total exports, is the principal product of the country.² In 1969, agriculture contributed 39,165.7 million baht (approximately 2 billion U.S. dollars), or 31 per cent of the gross domestic product, which was 127,161.3 million baht (roughly 6,400 million U.S. dollars).³

The economic system of Thailand is essentially based on private enterprise. The government plays an important, though in most areas a less direct, role through the provision of services that are essential for the successful functioning of the private system, such as power production, maintenance of the transportation system, and provision of educational services by the passage of laws designed to promote the growth of private industry.

¹Thailand Year Book, op. cit., p. D7.

²SEATO: Background Notes, Thailand, Department of State Publication, Bangkok (June 1967), no. 7966.

³U.S. Army Area Handbook For Thailand, Prepared by Foreign Areas Studies Division, Special Operations Research Office, The American University, Washington, D.C., 1971, p. 231.

Rather than by direct control, the government influences the economy through the allocation of funds to the various sectors in the annual budget and through the formulation of economic and social development plans. While public investments are planned and programmed, private enterprises are left to operate freely. Little discrimination is made between domestic and foreign investors.

Economic planning on an organized basis was initiated with the implementation of the First National Economic and Social Development Plan, covering 1961 to 1966. The overall objectives of development planning have been the acceleration of economic development and an improvement of the standard of living. The Second National Economic and Social Development Plan (1967-1971) incorporated the major objectives of the first plan and expanded them, carrying them forward in greater details. The four major objectives were: the most efficient use of human, natural, and financial resources to expand productive capacity and national income, as well as distributing the benefits of growth to all classes of people; the promotion of social justice and preservation of social stability, national institutions, customs, and culture; the maintenance of economic and financial stability as a basis for long-term growth; and the preservation of national security, which depends, in some measure, on economic and social

strength.¹

Policies to achieve these goals included emphasis on development of rural areas to increase income in that sector, expansion of employment opportunities and the upgrading of skills, encouragement of accelerated private industrial investment through governmental inducements, an increase of agricultural productivity, and enhancement of the role of science and technology. The government accepted as its major functions the implementation of economic and social infra-structural programs and the provision and maintenance of a climate conducive to increased private investment, both domestic and foreign.

As far as politics is concerned, ancient Thailand (Siam) was ruled by a paternalistic monarch called "pho-khun," which means father-lord or father-ruler. In this regard, the monarchs had direct contact with their subjects, particularly where petitions for redress of grievances or other claims for justice were made. Nevertheless, when the capital was moved to Ayuthaya during the fourteenth century, Khmer influence in the Thai monarchy brought with it the Khmer **doctrine** of the divinity or near-divinity of the king. The king was thereafter regarded as "bodhisattva" (Buddha-to-be) and was made into a demigod surrounded by elaborate ceremony. Consequently, the Ayuthayan king later

¹Ibid., p. 233.

personified all virtue, as well as being the symbol of authority. Under the Chakkri dynasty, beginning from the reign of Rama I until the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932, Thai kingship reflected the modification and the blend of both the Sukhothai conception of the king as paternalistic "father of the people" and the majestic mysticism and ceremonial which had surrounded the Ayuthayan sovereigns.

The coup d'etat of 1932, to a great extent, shook the foundation of traditional Thai political structure in terms of mysticism and the supreme of the kings and their courts. Fred Riggs asserted that it sought to replace the absolute monarchy, as master of the restructured bureaucracy with the conventional Western institutions of constitutional government: a parliament, political parties, courts, a responsible cabinet headed by a prime minister, private interest groups, a free press, and an electoral system. ¹ In fact, the essence of the many alterations made in the political order since 1932 was that the locus of power was shifted from the king and the aristocracy, which surrounded him, to a succession of groups of military officers and associated civil officials whose commanding

¹Fred W. Riggs, Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity (Honolulu: The East-West Center Press, 1966), p. 148.

positions was the result of their influence among the armed forces, the police and the bureaucracy. Hence, Clark Neher remarked in 1971 that:

Politics in Thailand is concerned primarily with factional groupings, variously referred to as cliques, clects, and entourages, which pervade all levels of Thai society ... These factions are held together essentially by bonds of personal loyalty and reciprocity so that the bond is mutually advantageous.¹

Nevertheless, the politics of cliques since 1932 has been more a contest for power for its own sake than a contest between alternative policies. Moreover, it has been a politics in which even loyalty to the leading personality has been less important than political survival, with the result that it has had much of the flavor of that "transformism" which has so characterized modern Italian politics.²

Another impact of the 1932 revolution on the traditional power politics of Thailand is reviewed by George Tanham, former American advisor on counterinsurgency to Thailand. He wrote that:

The continuity of the Chakkri dynasty reflects the general stability of Thailand, but its role changed drastically after the 1932 revolution ... A num-

¹Clark Neher, "Thailand: Toward Fundamental Change," Asian Survey 11:2 (February 1971), p. 131.

²Wit, op. cit., p. 101.

ber of coups and attempted coups occurred after 1932, engendered by men almost within the system. Thus the 1932 revolution, although a step forward toward constitutional government, left a legacy of uncertain methods for the transfer of political power.¹

The political history of Thailand, according to Wit, reveals four fundamental characteristics of major importance in any assessment of the polity's role in society: (1) the polity has long been deeply rooted in the national culture (not alien to it) and thus has benefited from a significant degree of general consensus; (2) concurrently, it has been harmoniously and effectively inter-related with the social and economic structural-functional systems of society rather than clashing with them; (3) the inter-relationships among the several strategic structural-functional systems have been such that the polity always has been overwhelmingly dominant, while the other vital organizing systems have been ancillary to and supportive of it; (4) this historic pattern has continued down to the present, despite various changes and modifications within the polity itself, changes which, of course, inevitably have been reflected in the other key systems too.²

¹George Tanham, Trial in Thailand (N.Y.: Crane Russak & Co., Inc., 1974), p. 21.

²Wit, op. cit., p. 21.

For the majority of the Thai people, politics (kaan-muang) belongs to a wider world, the world of people who have power (amnaaj). When the Thai villagers talk about "kaan-muang", they talk about who has power in Bangkok, what decisions are made, personalities within the provincial government, and programs affecting their lives.¹ Consequently, although more than 42 million people live in Thailand, the number who are active in politics is very small. Of Thai adults, an overwhelming majority is not involved in politics. According to David Wilson, most of these persons "have a 'we and they' attitude toward politicians, or, more broadly, of the ruling class and politics is something of a show that, as they see it, has little tangible effect on their lives."² In this manner as Donald Hindley observed:

One of the most remarkable phenomena of the Thai political system was the political passivity of the overwhelming majority of the people. They have watched royal dynasties rise and fall, foreign invasions roll in and out, and since 1932, a series of military coups and military dictatorships.³

¹Stephen B. Young, "The Northeastern Thai Village: A Non-Participatory Democracy," Asian Survey 8:11 (November 1968), p. 875.

²David A. Wilson, Politics in Thailand (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 99.

³Donald Hindley, "Thailand: The Politics of Passivity," Pacific Affairs 12:31 (Fall 1968), p. 359.

As for the role of the peasantry who constitute the mass of the Thai population, they are certainly devoted to Buddhism and to kingship. Although their interaction with the Thai bureaucracy is remote, there is by and large no resistance to the government, except among certain elements in the border regions. Tambiah classifies these dissidents into three groups: peasants victimized by the police and the bureaucracy; fugitives from justice; and a small number of politically committed "communist insurgents." While the support of the rural peasantry is largely passive, that of the relatively large bureaucracy manned by educated Thais is more direct and politically more important for purposes of power maintenance. Tambiah summed it up by stating that "it is this seemingly unique character of the Thai polity and its orientation (when compared to the political configuration of other Asian countries) that should be remembered in trying to understand modern developments."¹

Boonsanong Punyodyana, a sociology professor and the late Secretary General of the Socialist Party of Thailand²

¹S. J. Tambiah, "The Persistence and Transformation of Traditional Southeast Asia, with Special Reference to Thailand," Daedalus 102:1 (Winter 1973), pp. 55-84.

²Boonsanong was assassinated on February 28, 1976, during the heat of the election campaign which was scheduled to be held on April 4, 1976. His death has had a significant impact on the development of Thai politics and the nation's experience on parliamentary democracy. It is believed that in the future, the self-proclaimed socialists, such as Boonsanong, will be forced to change their tactics from a peaceful strategy of fighting within the system (seeking parliamentary seats) to carrying on their struggle outside the

revealed an interesting fact about the so-called relationship between the Thai Government in Bangkok and the mass of the Thai villagers residing in the countryside. Boonsanong remarked that:

Bureaucratic contacts with the peasants are mostly established through the headman; thereby a social distance between the bureaucrats and rank-and-file peasants is traditionally maintained. But the reality of the social distance does in no way suggest that the authority of the latter over the former is unreal ... the Thai government "administers" the peasants in a great number of ways concerning a great number of matters which affect the very existence of the peasants themselves. The peasants have always been conscripted to the corvée labor force, and, later, to the armed forces. They have been taxed annually and perpetually. Their means of livelihood, e.g., rice production and exchange, has been continuously subject of elaborate measures of control devised by a certain government in whose policy making they have no voice. In short, the "image" of the bureaucratic authority among the peasants is genuine, preponderant, and overwhelming.¹

The reason for the people's passivity in politics may result from the traditional characteristics of the Thai society. Since childhood, Thai people are taught to accept the three basic components of the Thai life-view. The first one is the acceptance of authority, whether it be in the

establishment, usually from underground strongholds in the countryside, especially from the remote and vulnerable areas of the Northeast.

¹Boonsanong Punyodyana, "Social Structure, Social System, and Two Levels of Analysis: A Thai View," in Hans Dieter Evers, ed., Loosely Structured Social Systems: Thailand in Comparative Perspectives, Cultural Report Series, no. 17 (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1969), p. 94.

family, the school, the work situation, or the Buddhist church. The second concept is an unquestioning acceptance of existing rules of conduct. The third concept is a belief that an individual's position in life is a result of good deeds (in the present or the past incarnation) and good luck.¹ Consequently, with regard to these three concepts, Thailand has become a relatively open society. There are no insuperable barriers of race, religion, caste, region, class or language to prevent any individuals from climbing the socio-economic ladder.

Nevertheless, in spite of the relatively peaceful political atmosphere resulting from the people's passivity towards politics (kaan-muang), power (amnaaj), and administration (boriharn), there still exists a threat to national security and territorial integration originating in the northeastern part of the country. This Northeast region or "Isan" has long been a "difficult" and "underadministered" area from the viewpoint of the central government, an area of "lam-baak" (difficulty) and the source of dissident complaining voices.²

The present political system of Thailand represents

¹Hindley, op. cit., p. 363.

²Charles F. Keyes, Isan: Regionalism in Northeast Thailand, Southeast Asia Program, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. V.

special characteristics similar to those of the so-called "praetorian society" in Huntington's term, in which the participation of new groups has exacerbated rather than reduced tensions. "Such political systems ordinarily have a high degree of legitimacy and effective uses so long as political participation is limited."¹ Huntington's model could well be applied to the political system of Thailand and especially the relationship between ruling military leaders in Bangkok and their villagers in remote areas of the Northeast. As noted by Huntington, the social roots of radical praetorianism lie in the gap between city and country. The extent of the instability depends upon the extent to which the government is able and willing to use the countryside to contain and to pacify the city.

If the countryside is passive and indifferent, if rural elites and rural masses are both excluded from politics, then the government is caught in an urban prison of instability ... at the whim of the city mob, the capital garrison, and the central university's students. If, however, the countryside turns against the political system, if the rural masses are mobilized against the existing order, then the government faces not instability but revolution and fundamental change.²

Since the early 1960's, Northeast Thailand has been recognized as an area of strategic importance in the overall

¹Huntington, op. cit., pp. 198-199.

²Ibid.,

security picture of Southeast Asia. Its vast area of 70,000 square miles constitutes almost one-third of the country's land area. The fact that the Northeast shares a common border with the Kingdom of Laos and the Republic of Cambodia has converted this region into a significant base area and even a potential front in the Indo-China War. As a result, the politics and developmental process of the Northeast are apparently a matter of considerable anxiety to the Thai Government and its American ally, at least since the emergence of Chinese-supported "liberation fronts" in the latter part of the 1950's, following the collapse of the Afro-Asian Conference of 1955 held at Bandung, Indonesia.

Insurgencies spring from local conditions. Undoubtedly, the conditions in Northeast Thailand make it in many ways an obvious seat of insurgency which, if not treated properly, may develop into a larger scale guerrilla warfare of the Vietnamese type. Characteristically, Northeast Thailand, as pointed out by David Wilson, has been confronted with the crises which derive primarily from several factors: (1) its ethnic distinction from central Thailand and similarity with Laos; (2) the appeal of Lao separatism; (3) the presence of non-Thai ethnic communities, such as Vietnamese and Cambodians; (4) the isolation of substantial parts of the population from the government authority; (5) the relative economic deprivation of the region; (6) the susceptibility

of the Lao border to infiltration by hostile elements, Thai or otherwise; (7) the availability of weapons from Laos; (8) the occurrence of certain number of acts of violence which are interpreted as having political motives; (9) a history of political dissidence;¹ (10) the intervention of the U.S. Government by establishing a number of air-bases in the Northeast to help supporting and even escalating its military campaigns in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Isolated and steeped in their own problems, the inhabitants of the Northeast or "khon-phaak-isan," had little identity with the national leadership in Bangkok. Traditionally, the Northeast has unquestionably demonstrated a tendency to oppose the central government. In the period of the constitutional regime, (i.e., since 1932) the members of the National Assembly from the northeast provinces have usually sided with the opposition. Although true even in the pre-World War II period, but this did not become a critical issue until after the war. Furthermore, Wilson observed that, since the mid-1940's, the question of the Northeast has consistently been a major focus of parliamentary dissent. The basis for this dissent has been mainly that the region has been economically neglected or even ex-

¹David A. Wilson, "Introductory Comment on Politics and the Northeast," in Symposium on Northeast Thailand, Asian Survey 6:7 (July 1966), p. 349.

ploited by a government dominated by the central Thai. In the ideological spectrum of politics in the Northeast, opposition has come from both the royalist right and the socialist left.¹ To make things worse, noted G. L. S. Girling, "the years of official neglect of the area, aggravated by local politicians' resentment at their continued exclusion from power, fostered separatist tendencies."² As a result, the Northeast elites are always suspected by the Bangkok regimes of planning to united the Lao-speaking people with the Kingdom of Laos, all under the domination of North Vietnam.

With regard to the chaotic political condition in the Northeast, coupled with the growing power and influence of the North Vietnamese communists in neighboring Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos with the support of their own Northeastern peoples was, then, given first priority in the Bangkok Government's top national security considerations. Certain provinces and districts, mainly along the Laotian border have, therefore, been declared "security sensitive." Also, the Thai Government has sponsored, sometimes jointly with the U.S. Government, a number of programs designed to enhance

¹ibid.,

²J. L. S. Girling, "Thailand: Tomorrow's Vietnam?" Foreign Affairs 2 (January 1968), p. 390.

the welfare of the inhabitants and strengthen the government's position and accountability vis-a-vis Communist agitators in these areas. Of course, the threat to rural insurgency is a principal motive for these programs. Apparently, the Thai Government has come to realize, although it was a little late, that a substantial appeal to the most numerous and powerful elements in the countryside is the sine qua non for the stability of any government in a modernizing country and that this is as true for a military government as for any other. To quote Huntington, "a military regime which is not able to mobilize such support, whose backers come only from the barracks and the city, lacks the social base upon which to build effective political institutions."¹

As viewed by successive Thai governments, insurgency is not a purely local phenomena; instead its origins, and military, ideological and other forms of support are seen as springing from hostile Communist states of the region. Rajaretnam contended that "this reluctance to recognize that domestic rebellions could be largely the result of economic deprivations and the failure of the Government to integrate the non-Thai minorities into a political system defined mainly by the ethnic Thai majority has significantly retarded the problem's resolution."² Moreover, it has con-

¹Huntington, op. cit., p. 242.

²M. Rajaretnam and Lim So Jean, Trends in Thailand:

tributed to a reliance on repressive military methods, which in effect often served to only further alienate the already sullen population.

The increasing frustrations of the ethnic minorities as expressed in their resort to armed rebellion has had one favorable effect: it has forced the Thai Government to pay more attention to the need to improve and develop these areas. In trying to solve its minority problem, Rajaretnam suggested that the Thai Government may have to accept a formula which allows for a greater degree not only of local autonomy but also of ethnic particularism. Changes in the present policy of intense assimilation are therefore necessary if the political loyalties of these subjects are to be secured.¹

Political movements in the region, as discussed earlier, are doubtless connected to objective economic conditions, but the precise link in this instance has not been demonstrated. Furthermore, the picture contains a number of different elements. Charles Keyes, thus, commented that, as a recent study of the Isan region shows, "recognition of national interests has lagged behind the

Proceedings and Background Paper (Singapore: Institute of Asian Studies, University of Singapore Press, 1973), p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 17.

consolidation of Thai control. The Isan 'culture' resists national aims, and the current solution depends upon the degree to which adherents of Isan regionalism continued to be persuaded to work for their objectives within the existing system."¹

The hypothetical theme of this research paper is the contention that crises and insurgency in the Northeast have not been originally instigated by an external force, namely the world Communist liberation movement; instead, they have largely resulted from domestic problems, i.e., economic backwardness, geographical isolation and governmental maladministration, coupled with exploitation by hard-core subversive cadres. Inadequate educational facilities as well as the lack of local protection in the past (up to the late 1950's), aggravated by successive attempts of the ruling military juntas and their bureaucratic counterparts to prevent political participation and institutionalization on the part of the Isan politicians, have helped to stir political discontent and animosity as well as to foster separatist tendencies. Similarly, the subjective attitudes of military leaders towards politics, their opposition to politics, their condemnation and intolerance of the parliamentary system, as well as their brutal executions of Northeastern political leaders, fur-

¹Keyes, op. cit., p. 61.

ther aggravated the alienation and misgivings among the majority of Isan villagers.

Besides, from the point of view of the Northeast peasants, especially the ones who migrated to Bangkok for temporary jobs, their increasing contacts with their Bangkok fellow countrymen caused further conflicts and frustrations. They suddenly became aware of the inferiority and dissimilarities, either cultural or economic, which existed between them and the 'superior' Bangkokians. On the contrary, their feelings toward the Laotians, from across the Mekong River, became more fraternal and cordial as a result of their common heritage of cultural as well as ethnic background. This alienation automatically triggered local resistance to the Thai Government's attempts to assimilate and even communicate in order to achieve its total goal of national integration and socio-economic and political development.

The military governments in Bangkok, which had held power successfully from 1958 until October 1973 and from October 1976 up to the present,¹ have throughout in-

¹At present, it is obvious that although the civilian government of Thanin Kraivichien is nominally ruling the country, the junta of the October 6, 1976 "Savage Coup," hold the real political power. Like Khuang's civilian government of the 1940's, Thanin's government was chosen to replace the "juntas' ruling committee" in order to give an air of legitimacy to the government and to avoid any possible Western objections.

sisted on the external causes of the Northeastern problem and, at the same time, have been extremely inconsistent with regard to its alleged gravity. As a matter of fact, Thailand has experienced a so-called "political stalemate" as well as socio-economic stagnation following a series of military coup d'etats and dictatorial regimes for almost two decades. Until the October "student uprisings" of 1973, it is apparent that the ruling regime have attempted to legitimize their illegitimate rule by successfully diverting people's attention from domestic politics to something external. Their tactic is to create the fear of Chinese and North Vietnamese expansionist designs and even territorial invasion. At the same time, the issue of guerrilla insurgency is kept alive, although under the government's close surveillance, in order to justify the necessity of having a ruling strong military governments in Bangkok. In this regard, the military governments were able to deliberately exercise their authoritarian and even abusive power without any participation, approval or even acknowledgement from people's representation. Frank Darling has documented very closely the way in which the Communist scare was used by successive Thai military regimes to obtain aid and military support which served both to maintain the regime in power and suppress internal opposition.¹

¹Frank C. Darling, Thailand and the United States (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs, 1965), pp. 20-21.

Insurgency in the Northeast, although it largely derives from domestic forces, is also affected by external pressure and incidents. The Laotian Civil War and the large-scale spill-over of Indochina guerrilla campaigns into the Northeast have directly and indirectly threatened the security of the area and, of course, of the whole country and the overall security of Southeast Asia as well. It is reasonable to assume that there is such a chain reaction and a high degree of correlation between the extent of American military campaigns in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and the levels of Communist insurgency and guerrilla warfare in the Northeast of Thailand. Recent documents seem to support the argument that, the more the U.S. escalated its war efforts in Indochina from bases in the Northeast of Thailand through bombings, raids, sabotage and other strategic operations, the higher the levels of guerrilla activities in Thailand, especially in the Northeast, in the form of excessive political and military retaliations can be expected to arise. Meanwhile, there are also increasing attacks through Radio Peking and Radio Hanoi, as well as through the "Voice of the People of Thailand" Radio. The propaganda themes are focused on the Thai Government's repressive measures towards the minority groups, especially the Isan villagers, with the alleged support of the imperialist American Government.

In conclusion, it is perhaps usefule to quote

Daniel Wit who raised the question in 1968:

Is Thailand going to be another Vietnam? It does not have to be, as its many assets and strength indicate. But it may nevertheless become one. As an essentially administrative state governed by a conservative bureaucracy, it may not be able to rise to the new challenges sufficiently because to do so requires a major rapid self-transformation in the ruling oligarchy. One can only hope that the Communist pressure is limited enough, the traditional Thai cultural resistance to revolution still strong enough, the education of new bureaucracy modern enough, and the dedication of senior Thai elites to their country great enough to produce in time that societal development (above and beyond limited economic growth) which can prevent still another agonizing Southeast Asia catastrophe.¹

¹Wit, op. cit., p. 191.

CHAPTER II
GENERAL THEORY AND APPROACHES
OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND MODERNIZATION

The emergence during the past three decades of a swarm of new states born out of the holocaust of World War II and the collapse of empires has presented students of political science with great challenges and exciting new grounds for further exploration. These emerging states have, nevertheless, confronted political scientists around the world with a range of qualitatively new problems which have already begun to influence every traditional field of governmental studies. Obviously, the established models of analysis in comparative government based on European and American experiences tended to break down when confronted with the realities of non-Western politics. This intellectual frustration is well recorded by Ann Ruth Willner in her review article, "The Underdeveloped Studies of Political Development," as followed:

But the dilemmas of the political scientists who focus on what once were the exotic areas of the world are doubly compounded. They encounter nominally political structures that do not perform the functions they are supposed to and sense rather than see processes that pursue devious and untraceable paths of their own ... Moreover, the revolution of rising expectations no longer permits

them to remain modest country specialists. It requires them to contribute more than data to the development of developing country theory... and so there develops not only a profusion of alternative terms but what appear to be alternative concepts and approaches to the new terrain.¹

The new development in comparative politics in the 1950's, then, involved extension of the geographical scope of concern from Western Europe and related areas to the non-Western "developing" countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Manfred Halpern pointed out that there are good reasons for concentrating on the study of new states. "It is the very scarcity of our present knowledge about underdeveloped nations that makes this new kind of liberal education not only possible but essential ... The study of new nations is not only a manageable undertaking but will probably remain so, as the likely increase in data with greater discrimination of what facts are really worth looking for."²

A) Theory and Characteristics of Modernization

As a consequence of this academic revival, theorists in the field of political development and moderniza-

¹Ann Ruth Willner, "The Underdeveloped Study of Political Development," World Politics 16:3 (April 1964), pp. 469-470.

²Manfred Halpern, "Toward Further Modernization of New Nations," World Politics 17:1 (October 1964), pp. 159-61.

tion contend that the essential differences between modern and tradition lies in the greater control which modern man has over his natural and social environment. This control, in turn, is based on the expansion of scientific and technological knowledge. As a result, the concept of modernization is generally understood as "a complex process whereby traditional societies take on the characteristics of "modernity."¹ In a similar vein, Robert Ward views modernization as "the movement toward a modern society, characterized by its far-reaching ability to control or influence the physical and social circumstances of its environment."²

Historically speaking, Cyril Black defines modernization as "the process by which historically evolved institutions are adapted to the rapidly changing functions that reflect the unprecedented increase in man's knowledge, permitting control over his environment, that accompanied the scientific revolution."³ S. N. Eisenstadt further suggested that political modernization can be equated with

¹Roy C. Macridis and Bernard E. Brown, eds., Comparative Politics: Notes and Readings (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1972), p. 394.

²Robert E. Ward, "Political Modernization and Political Culture in Japan," World Politics 15:4 (July 1963), p. 570.

³Cyril Black, The Dynamics of Modernization (N.Y.: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966), p.7.

those types of political systems which developed in Western Europe from the seventeenth century and then spread to other European countries, to America and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to Asian and African continents.¹

Another view of political modernization associated with empirical applicability is presented by Robert Kearny. Accordingly, modernization is a term that has come into use to refer to the complex processes of change that are producing significant social, economic, political, and psychological transformation in Asia and many other parts of the globe. In addition, Kearny contended that in the modernizing process, old social relationships, customary patterns of social and economic activity, and former attitudes and values are being eroded, gradually replaced, or joined by new and different social and psychological patterns. The transformations which bring about an expansion of political awareness, participation and wider exposure of mass media not only create new freedom and opportunities, but also produce new uncertainties, stresses and conflicts.² Pierre

¹S. N. Eisenstadt, "Initial Institutional Patterns of Political Modernization: A Comparative Study," Civilizations, Part I, 12:4 (1963), p. 462. See also Joseph LaPalombara, "Political Science and the Engineering of National Development," in Monte Palmer and Larry Stern, eds., Political Development in Changing Societies: An Analysis of Modernization (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Co., 1971), p. 33.

²R. N. Kearny, ed., Politics and Modernization in South and Southeast Asia (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), p. 3.

de Briey, therefore, suggested that the political modernization of rural areas is not likely to be swiftly and easily achieved. The mental habits of the members of these groups are deep-rooted and the roles assigned to them do not admit of sudden change.¹

To cope successfully with modernization, Huntington maintained that a political system must be able, first, to innovate policy, that is, promote social and economic reform by state action. Examples of this type of reform include, for example, the changing of traditional values and behavior patterns and the broadening of loyalties from family, village, and tribe to nation, the secularization of public life, and the rationalization of authority structures. A second requirement for a political system, according to Huntington, is the ability to assimilate successfully into the system the social forces which are produced by modernization and in due course demand participation in the political system. Hence, the system either provides for their participation in ways harmonious with the continued existence of the system, or it alienates them and produces overt or covert civil strife and secession.²

¹Pierre de Briey, "Difficultés de Modernisation Politique dans les Nouveaux États," Civilisations 13:1 (1963), p. 11.

²Samuel Huntington, "Political Modernization of Traditional Monarchies," Daedalus 95:3 (Summer 1966), pp. 766-767.

In his attempt to apply modernization theory to the developmental processes of Southeast Asian states, Kearny maintained that modernization need not be confused with "progress," nor should it involve teleological assumptions. Similarly, modernization is not identical with "Westernization." In fact, the nations of Southeast Asia have moved and generally are striving to move toward positions similar to those reached in the West in such fields as the application of science and technology and to some degree in economic and political practices and organizational forms, which may reasonably be considered as aspects of the modern process. Of a different nature, asserted Kearny, is the adoption of Western language, religion, mode of dress, and similar cultural attributes not necessarily relevant to modernization. "Contemporary Western society is not the inevitable model of the modernized Asian society of the future."¹

In sum, Huntington concluded that most modernization theorists implicitly or explicitly assign nine characteristics to the modernization process.²

(1) Modernization is a revolutionary process.

¹Kearny, op. cit., p. 4.

²Samuel Huntington, "The Change to Change," in Macridis and Brown, Comparative Politics, op. cit., pp. 411-413.

This follows directly from the contrast between modern and traditional society. The one differs fundamentally from the other, and the change from tradition to modernity consequently involves a radical and total change in patterns of human life.¹ In addition, Black argued that the shift from tradition to modernity is comparable to the changes from pre-human to human existence and from primitive to civilized societies.² Hence, Bendix asserts: "the changes in the eighteenth century were comparable in magnitude only to the transformation of nomadic peoples into settled agriculturalists some 10,000 years earlier."³

(2) Modernization is a complex process. It cannot be easily reduced to a single factor or to a single dimension. It involves changes in virtually all areas of human thought and behavior. At a minimum, its components include: industrialization, urbanization, social mobilization, increasing literacy and education, and expansion of political participation.⁴

¹ibid., p. 411.

²Black, op. cit., pp. 1-5.

³Reinhard Bendix, "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered," Comparative Studies in Society and History 9 (April 1967), pp. 292-293.

⁴Huntington, "The Change to Change," op. cit., p. 412.

Political modernization, therefore, consists of the elaboration of new and more complex forms of politics and government as societies restructure themselves so as to absorb progressively the stock and flow of modern technology which is essentially uniform. Rostow contended that the "stages of growth" are addressed directly to the process whereby that absorption of common technologies occurs. The view here is that political, economic and social forces fully interact.¹

(3) Modernization is a systematic process. Changes in one factor are related to and affect changes in the other factors. Modernization, as Daniel Lerner has expressed it in an oft-quoted phrase, is "a process with some distinctive quality of its own, which would explain why modernity is felt as a consistent whole among people who live by its rules." The various elements of modernization have been closely associated together "because, in some historic sense, they had to go together."²

(4) Modernization is a global process. Modernization originated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Europe, but it has now become a worldwide phenomenon.

¹W. W. Rostow, Politics and the Stages of Growth (London: University of Cambridge Press, 1971), p. 3.

²Daniel Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Society (N.Y.: Glencoe, 1958), p. 438.

This is brought about primarily through the diffusion of modern ideas and techniques from the European center, but also in part through the endogeneous development of non-Western societies. "In any event, all societies were at one time traditional; all societies are now either modern or in the process of becoming modern."¹

Put in somewhat different terms, modernization involves the diffusion of what Pye called the "world culture" based on advanced technology and the spirit of science, a feeling for justice in public affairs, and, above all else, on the acceptance in the political realm of the belief that the prime unit of the polity should be the nation-state.²

(5) Modernization is a lengthy process. The totality of the change which modernization involves can only be worked out through time. Consequently, while modernization is revolutionary in the extent of the changes it brings about in traditional society, it is evolutionary in the amount of time required to bring about those changes. Western societies required several centuries to modernize. The contemporary modernizing societies will do it in less time. Rates of modernization are, in this sense, accele-

¹Huntington, "The Change to Change," op. cit., p. 412.

²Pye, op. cit., p. 8.

rating, but the time required to move from tradition to modernity will still be measured in generations.¹

(6) Modernization is a phased process. It is possible to distinguish different levels or phases of modernization through which all societies will move. Societies obviously begin in the traditional stage and continue in the modern stage. This intervening transitional phase, however, can also be broken down into subphases. Societies consequently can be compared and ranked in terms of the extent to which they have moved down the road from tradition to modernity. While the leadership in the process and the more detailed pattern of modernization will differ from one society to another, all societies will move through essentially the same stages.²

(7) Modernization is a homogenizing process. Many different types of traditional societies exist; indeed, traditional societies have little in common except their lack of modernity. Modern societies, on the other hand, share basic similarities. Modernization produces tendencies toward convergence among societies. In Black's viewpoint, modernization involves movement "toward an interdependence among politically organized societies and toward an ultimate integration of societies." The universal im-

¹Huntington, "The Change to Change," op. cit., p. 412.

²Ibid.,

peratives of modern ideas and institutions "may lead to a stage at which the various societies are so homogeneous as to be capable of forming a world state."¹

(8) Modernization is an irreversible process.

While there may be temporary breakdowns and occasional reversals in elements of the modernizing process, modernization as a whole is an essentially secular trend. "A society which has reached certain levels of urbanization, literacy, industrialization in one decade will not decline to substantially lower levels in the next decade. The rates of change will vary significantly from one society to another, but the direction of change will not."²

Profound social changes have accompanied and complemented the intellectual, political, and economic aspects of modernization. In the course of this process societies that for many generations were composed predominantly of peasants, with perhaps no more than ten per cent of the population engaged in administration, manufacturing, and trade, may within a few generations change to the extent that a relatively small minority remains rural.³

¹Black, op. cit., pp. 155 & 174.

²Huntington, "The Change to Change," op. cit., p. 413.

³Black, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

(9) Modernization is a progressive process. The traumas of modernization, as Huntington acknowledged, are many and profound, but in the long run modernization is not only inevitable, but it is also desirable. The cost and the pains of the period of transition, particularly its early phases are great, but the achievement of a modern social, political, and economic order is worth them. Modernization in the long run enhances human well-being, culturally and materially.¹

Development, then, implies a progression from one point to another. In terms of political, economic and social development, the progression is away from societies organized along traditional tribal and village lines and toward an ideal-type modern society approximated but not fully achieved by the world's more industrialized states.²

Nevertheless, Heeger argued that the above viewpoint, which perceived social change and modernization as being inevitable, not only yields a somewhat restricted definition of political development: it is also arbitrarily places limits on the time span of underdevelopment. Heeger contended, on the contrary, that if change is inevitably

¹Huntington, "The Change to Change," op. cit., p. 413.

²Monte Palmer, The Dilemmas of Political Development: An Introduction to the Politics of the Developing Areas (Ill.: Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1973), p. 3.

modernizing, then underdeveloped states must be transitory phenomena. Therefore he questioned the continued tendency to define 'underdeveloped' societies as 'deviant', 'delayed', or 'arrested' states which constituted 'gaps' when comparing them with modern states.¹

There are many roads to modernization. Methods differ; the time available differs; the priorities differ. In Great Britain, the process was gradual. Social, economic and political alterations were not concurrent: changes occurred over many centuries. In the Soviet Union, by contrast, modernization was much more compressed: industrialization, forced collectivization of agriculture, and a turning away from the West typified the Stalinist period. Social, economic, and political change - all under the restricted control of the Communist Party - raised the U.S.S.R. from a relatively weak state to a leading world power. The modernization of Japan did not occur under the auspices of a revolutionary political party but under the benevolent guidance of an aristocratic bureaucracy. Judging from these examples, three points deserve particular attention: the roles of the intellectuals, the uneven nature of change, and the active role of the government in promoting modernization.

¹Gerald A. Heeger, The Politics of Underdevelopment (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1974), p. 4.

B) Concepts of Political Development
and/or Political Modernization

Generally, the terms "modernization" and "development" are synonymous, the exception being that modernization refers to the process of moving toward that idealized set of relationships posited as modern by various social theorists. Development meanwhile refers to the process of achieving parity with the world's most economically developed states in the production of goods and services.¹

The concept of "political development"² remains surrounded by a number of ambiguities and disagreements. In general, political development implies systematic change, that is alterations of a relatively fundamental nature in the functioning of the political system. Despite the variety of conceptualizations, Kebschull claimed that most political scientists would probably agree that, as a minimum, political development, similar to political modernization, involves the increasing capacity of a government to govern through increasingly specialized institutions in an increasingly complex society and economic setting.³

¹Palmer, op. cit., p. 4.

²The term "political development" is used in this study as a synonymous with "political modernization." Occasionally, the two concepts are used interchangeably to avoid too much repetitions.

³Harvey G. Kebschull, ed., Politics in Transitional

Karl von Vorys distinguished the processes of "political development" from that of "modernization." He argued that:

Political development is a special kind of process, one which is distinct from modernization ... It is a process whose goal is a political system which can provide for the functional requirements of long-term persistence, a system which does not have to do so. It is a process which includes social and economic changes, but whose focus is the development of the governmental capacity to direct the course and the rate of social and economic change.¹

As previously stated, definitions of political modernization are legion. Huntington observed that several writers may prefer the term "political modernization" to "political development" and use them interchangeably. Nevertheless, there are four characteristics of political development which are referred to most commonly: rationalization, national integration, democratization and participation.

In spite of the ambiguity and confusion inherent in the concept of "political development", Huntington contended that most of the definitions of political development

Societies: The Challenge of Change in Asia, Africa and Latin America (N.Y.: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1973), p. 17.

¹Karl von Vorys, "Toward a Concept of Political Development," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 358 (March 1965), p. 19.

do share two closely related characteristics. First, political development is identified as one aspect of, or as intimately connected with, the broader process of modernization in society as a whole. Modernization affects all segments of society; its political aspects constitute political development. Second, if political development is linked with modernization, it is necessarily a broad and complex process.¹ In sum, Huntington concluded that although the definitions of "political development" are many and diverse; but, with a few exceptions, the characteristics which they identify with political development are all aspects of the processes of modernization.²

In 1966, Lucian Pye carried out an exhaustive enumeration and analysis of the major meanings of political development. "Our purpose in doing so," noted Pye, "is not to establish or reject any particular definitions, but rather to illuminate a situation of semantic confusion which cannot help but impede the development of theory and becloud the purposes of public policy."³ In the following pages,

¹Samuel Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay," in Claude E. Welch, Jr., ed., Political Modernization: A Reader in Comparative Political Change (Belmont, Calif.: Duxbury Press, 1971), p. 239.

²Ibid.,

³Lucian Pye, Aspects of Political Development (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1966), pp. 33-45.

Pye's analysis of the ten concepts of political development will be discussed together with valuable critiques of others concerning political development scholars.

(1) Political development as the political prerequisite of economic development. - When the problems of economic growth and the need to transform stagnant economies into dynamic ones arise, the economists were quick to point out the political and social conditions could play a decisive role in impending or facilitating advance in per capita income. Thus, it was appropriate to conceive of political development as the state of the polity which might facilitate economic growth.¹

In an operational situation, such a view of political development, nevertheless, tends to be essentially negative. Pye, therefore, argued that such an economic view of political development have become exceedingly dim in many of the poor countries in the last decades. Pye, on the contrary, suggested that people in most developing countries are concerned with far more than merely material advancement; they are anxious about political development too. Therefore, to link political development solely to economic

¹Studies which in varying degrees take such an approach to political development include Paul A. Baran, The Political Economy of Growth (N.Y.: Monthly Review Press, 1957); Barbara Ward, The Rich Nations and the Poor Nations (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

events, in Pye's judgement, would be to ignore much that is of dramatic importance in the developing countries.¹

(2) Political development as the politics typical of industrial societies. - The assumption is that industrial life produces a more or less common and generic type of political life which any society can seek to approximate, whether it is in fact industrialized or not. In this view, the industrial societies, whether democratic or not, set certain standards of political behavior and performance that constitute the state of political development and represent the appropriate goals of development for all other systems.² Pye, then, commented that the specific qualities of political development became certain patterns of presumably "rational" and "responsible" governmental behavior, such as an appreciation of the values of orderly administrative and legal procedure, an acceptance of some forms of mass participation, and some sense of limitations on the sovereignty of politics.³

¹Pye, op. cit., p. 34.

²Walt Rostow emphasizes the relationship between stages of economic growth and forms of political organizations in his book, The Stages of Economic Growth (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

³Pye, op. cit., p. 35.

(3) Political development as political modernization - This view considers "political development" as synonymous with "political modernization" and at the same time equates the concept of political modernization with Westernization.¹ Consequently, Pye is inclined to consider this meaning as tainted by Western ethnocentrism. Once what is Western and what is modern become almost synonymous, there is no other way to measure political development except to assume that its level increases or decreases according to its greater or lesser incorporation of Western institutions and traits, a view opposed by Pye in the name of cultural relativism.²

Representing the same point of view, Shils defined the term "development" as the movement from tradition to

¹Several social scientists have sought to compile indices of social and economic change and relate these political and especially democratic development. See in particular Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," American Political Science Review 53:1 (March 1959), pp. 69-105; James Coleman and Gabriel Almond, eds., The Politics of the Developing Areas (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960; Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," American Political Science Review 55:3 (September 1961), pp. 493-502.

²Pye, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

modernity. In this sense, modernity means egalitarian democracy, representative government with a welfare emphasis, and scientific and technological advances. In short, Shils sees the drive to reach this goal as the major factor in the public life of new states and the predominant social concern of their elites.¹

(4) Political development as the operation of a nation-state - This view assumes that historically there have been many types of political systems and all communities have had their forms of politics, but that with the emergence of the modern nation-state a specific set of requirements about politics came into existence. Thus, if a society is to perform as a modern state its political institutions and practices must adjust to these requirements of state performance. The politics of historic empires, of tribe and ethnic community or of colony must give way to the politics necessary to produce an efficient nation-state which can operate effectively in a system of other nation-states.²

¹The definition appeared in Edward Shils's essay, "Political Development in the New States," which was originally published in Comparative Studies in Society and History (1959), p. 16; it is reprinted in an abridged and slightly modified form in John J. Johnson, The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962).

²Pye, op. cit., p. 37.

Hence, political development becomes the process by which communities that are nation-states only in form and by international courtesy become nation-states in reality. Specifically, this involves the development of a capacity to maintain a certain level of public order, to mobilize resources for a specific range of collective enterprises, and to make and effectively uphold types of international commitments.¹

(5) Political development as administrative and legal development - Indeed, the concept of political development as organization building has a long history. This tradition has given strength to current theories that the establishment of effective bureaucracies lies at the heart of the development process. In this view administrative development is associated with the spread of rationality, the strengthening of secular, legal concepts, and the elevation of technical and specialized knowledge in the direction of human affairs.²

¹This approach appears in K. H. Silvert, Expectant Peoples: Nationalism and Development (N.Y.: Random House, 1964); Edward Shils, Political Development in the New States (The Hague: Mouton, 1962); and William McCord, The Spring-time of Freedom: Evolution of Developing Societies (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1965).

²For details and further analysis, see Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1947).

Scholars who adhere to this definition of political development are regarded by Packenham as adopting the administrative approach. Packenham claimed that the administrative theorists "have tended to argue that political development is primarily a function of the administrative capacity to maintain law and order efficiently and effectively and to perform governmental output function rationally and neutrally."¹ This view was, nevertheless, criticized by Pye on the grounds that "the concept of political development as merely improved administration overlooks entirely the problem of citizenship training and popular participation, both of which are clearly aspects of political development."²

(6) Political development as mass mobilization and participation - Primarily, this definition involves the role of the citizenry and new standards of loyalty and involvement. According to most views, political development does entail some degree of expanded popular participation, but Pye cautioned that it is important to distinguish among the conditions of such expansion. Pye's meaning in this respect is essentially political and results from delib-

¹Robert A. Packenham, "Approaches to the Study of Political Development," World Politics 17:1 (October 1964), p. 113.

²Pye, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

erate efforts to convert parochial people into active participants, mobilized by an ideological motivation and a mass party. This view of political development is typical in former colonial countries. Nevertheless, Pye asserted that this meaning is insufficient and that political development, besides mass mobilization and participation, requires the establishment and preservation of public order.¹

(7) Political development as the building of democracy - This brings us to the view that political development is or should be synonymous with the establishment of democratic institutions and practices. Pye himself argued that indeed there are those who would make explicit this connection and suggest that development can have meaning only in terms of some form of ideology whether democracy, communism, or totalitarianism.²

This view which considers political development as the development of the responsiveness of the political system is also discussed by Jaguaribe, who comments: "this view which Pye endorses axiologically but objects to as a factual definition because of its value content, has been the prevailing view among Western writers for a long time." Accordingly, Jaguaribe commented that political development has been considered as being a process of imitation of the political structures and procedures typical to the Western

¹Ibid., p. 40.

²Ibid.,

democracy, "and the democratic content of the Western industrial societies has been uncritically or ideologically exaggerated by the mechanical identification of democracy with the formal machinery of elections and parliaments."¹

(8) Political development as stability and orderly change - The political component of this view, according to Pye, usually centers on the concept of political stability based on a capacity for purposeful and orderly change. Stability that is merely stagnation and an arbitrary support of the status quo is clearly not development except when its alternative is manifestly a worse state of affairs. Nevertheless, Pye contended that stability is legitimately linked with the concept of development in that any form of economic and social advancement does generally depend upon an environment in which uncertainty has been reduced and planning based on reasonably safe predictions is possible.²

An example of the relationship between political development and orderly change is provided by Eisenstadt who notes:

Modern political system are faced not only ... with the problem of how to maintain in general some

¹Helio Jaguaribe, Political Development: A General Theory and a Latin American Case Study (N.Y.: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), pp. 203-204.

²Pye, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

balance between political demands and policies, but also with that of maintaining such a balance while absorbing demands ... that are, potentially at least, continuously changing. Hence, the central problem of political modernization can be seen as the ability of any system to adapt itself to these changing demands, to absorb them in terms of policy-making, and to assume its own continuity in the face of continuous new demands and new forms of political organization.¹

The problem with this view of development is that it leaves unanswered how much order is necessary or desirable and to what purpose change should be directed. Moreover, on the scale of priorities there is the feeling that the maintenance of order, however desirable and even essential, stands second to getting things done; and thus development calls for a somewhat more positive view of action.²

(9) Political development as mobilization and power - This point of view leads to the concept that political systems can be evaluated in terms of the level or degree of absolute power which the system is able to mobilize.³ Some systems that may or may not be stable seem to operate with a very low margin of power, and the authorita-

¹S. N. Eisenstadt, "Modernization and Conditions of Sustained Growth," World Politics 16:4 (July 1964), p. 578.

²Pye, op. cit., p. 42.

³For further analysis of the concept of capacity as basic to political development, see Talcott Parsons, "Evolutionary Universals in Society," American Sociological Review 29:3 (June 1964), pp. 339-357.

tive decision-makers are close to being impotent in their capacity to initiate and consummate policy objectives.¹

As for the relationship between political development and mobilization, Pye argued that this does not necessarily lead to a crude, authoritarian view of development as simply the capacity of a government to claim resources from the society. In 1961, Deutsch, in the broader frame of the process of societal modernization, equates political development with political mobilization. Accordingly, social mobilization is "the process in which major clusters of old social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior."²

(10) Political development as one aspects of a multi-dimensional process of social change - According to this point of view all forms of development are related; development is much the same as modernization, and it takes place within a historical context in which influences from outside the society impinge on the processes of social change. Milne, then, observed that in some instances, "modernization does not seem to overlap with political

¹S. N. Eisenstadt, "Breakdown of Modernization," Economic Development and Cultural Change 12:4 (July 1964), pp. 345-367.

²Deutsch, op. cit., p. 494.

development, for example, it may be used to refer to the control of man over nature, to wholesale transformations as shown by a wide range of economic and social indicators, to the borrowing or cultural diffusion of practices, institutional forms, or technologies."¹

Concern over political instability and disorder, which often has accompanied rapid modernization, has led to the notion of 'negative' development or 'political decay'.² From this perspective, political development is distinguished from the process of modernization, which is seen as politically disruptive. Swift social mobilization followed by rising popular demands and mounting political participation may widen the gap between aspirations and satisfactions, producing social frustration, which in turn may lead to political unrest or upheaval. Like Huntington, Kearny asserted that if the institutionalization of political organizations has not progressed sufficiently to allow the political system to withstand the stresses of rapidly rising participation and to respond to the growing demands, the result is likely to be turbulence, instability, and resort to repressive regimes. "Hence, for political

¹R. S. Milne, "The Overdeveloped Study of Political Development," Canadian Journal of Political Science 5:4 (December 1972), p. 562.

²For further discussion, see Samuel Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay," World Politics 17 (April 1965), pp. 386-430.

order without repression, a balance must be maintained between the rate of growth of participation and the rate of institutionalization within the political system."¹

From the comparative political standpoint, it is apparent that the concept of "political development" has received an overwhelming acceptance by political scientists over the competing and over-embracing term of "modernization." Schweinitz persuasively maintained that "the brief schematic view of political development has the virtue of being free of ethnocentric value judgements. Political development may take place anywhere, anytime, and through any number of institutional variants. It may evolve from the judicious leadership of political elites or as a consequence of a revolution of the oppressed."²

¹Kearny, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

²Karl de Schweinitz, Jr., "Growth, Development and Political Modernization," World Politics 22:4 (July 1970), p. 529.

Pye's Major Meanings of Political Development

Political development is understood as:

1. the political pre-requisites of economic development.
(Pye's comment: The view is insufficient, since economic growth has taken place in distinct political systems and regimes.)
2. the politics of industrial societies.
(P: The view is inappropriate as a political criterion.)
3. political modernization.
(P: Political modernization is considered as being equal to Westernization. Pye opposes the view in the name of cultural relativism.)
4. the operation of the nation-state.
(P: This is the view attributed to Kalman Silvert. Pye agrees in part but considers it insufficient. In addition to nationalism, citizenship is required.)
5. administrative and legal development.
(P: This is the colonialist view. Citizenship training and popular participation are missing.)
6. mass mobilization and participation.
(P: This is a partial view. Public order is not considered.)
7. democracy building.
(P: This view is a value concept. Pye objects on methodological grounds.)
8. stability and orderly change.
(P: This is a middle-class view. Order is less important than getting things done.)
9. mobilization and power.
(P: This is understood in the sense of increasing capability. Pye agrees in large part.)
10. one aspect of a multi-dimensional process of social change.
(P: This is Millikan's view. Pye basically agrees; political development is intimately associated with the other aspects of social and economic change.)

Source: Jaquaribe, op. cit., p. 197.

C) Theoretical Approaches to the Study
of Political Development and Modernization

Approaches to the study of political development and modernization are many and varied. Theorists often divide them to suit their own purposes at specific moments and keep switching them back and forth at their whim, creating confusion and ambiguity. One writer became disillusioned and alienated to such an extent that he proclaimed the notion of "political development" to be "useless, even misleading, both as an analytical tool and as a guide to policy making. In this sense its study has been overdeveloped."¹

In an attempt to apply the concept of political development to politics in developing societies, it is most useful to divide the study of political development and modernization into four main approaches: the comparative-historical, the institutional, the political culture and the functionalist. Each approach is essentially represented by leading theorists in the field of political modernization, such as Cyril Black, Samuel Huntington, Lucian Pye, S. N. Eisenstadt and Gabriel Almond. Their analyses and critiques of the political development study will be discussed in the

¹Milne, "The Overdeveloped Study of Political Development," op. cit., p. 560.

following pages.

The Comparative-Historical Approach

Represented by Cyril Black, this approach is concentrated upon the notion that modernization must be thought of not as a simple transition from tradition to modernity but as part of an infinite continuum from earliest times to the indefinite future. In making the distinction between a modern and a traditional society, comparative-historical theorists tend to start with a general conception of the nature of change in recent centuries.

"Modernization," as indicated in Black's The Dynamics of Modernization, owes its special significance both to its dynamic character and to the universality of its impact on human affairs. It stems initially from an attitude, a belief that society can and should be transformed, the change is desirable. Hence, it is defined as "the process by which historically evolved institutions are adapted to the rapidly changing functions that reflect the unprecedented increase in man's knowledge, permitting control over his environment, that accompanied the scientific revolution."¹

This process of adaptation, according to Black, had its origins and initial influence in the societies of Western Europe, but in the nineteenth and twentieth cen-

¹Black, op. cit., p. 7.

turies, these changes have been extended to all other societies and have resulted in a worldwide transformation affecting all human relationships. Nevertheless, Black acknowledged that political scientists frequently limit the term "modernization" to the political and social changes accompanying industrialization. Instead, Black argued that a holistic definition is better suited to the complexity and interrelatedness of all aspects of the process.¹

In Black's judgement, all aspects of modernization have been graught with strife, and its politics has been particularly susceptible to crises arising from the struggles of contending leaders to assure the acceptance of their policies. The issues have been posed in a great variety of ways, but it is possible to distinguish certain critical problems that all modernizing societies must face:

(1) The challenge of modernity - the initial confrontations of a society, within its traditional framework of knowledge, with modern ideas and institutions, and the emergence of advocates of modernity.

(2) The consolidation of modernizing leadership - the transfer of power from traditional to modernizing leaders in the course of a normally bitter revolutionary struggle often lasting several generations.

(3) Economic and social transformation - the devel-

¹Ibid.,

opment of economic growth and the social change to a point where a society is transformed from a predominantly rural and agrarian way of life to one predominantly urban and industrial.

(4) The integration of society - the phase in which economic and social transformation produces a fundamental reorganization of the social structure throughout the society.¹

Black's comparative political model is formulated on the conception that the central problem faced by modernizing political leaders is that of adapting the particular traditional culture of their own society to a way of life commensurate with the opportunities afforded by modern knowledge, and politics is the struggle for the power to implement the programs that they advocate. The substance of the competing programs nevertheless embraces the aggregate of the problems confronting the society, and the crises of political modernization reflect intellectual, economic, social, and psychological problems, as well as political ones. The discussion of political crises, then, calls for a consideration of the entire process.²

There are many different kinds of criteria that can be employed to compare and categorize modernizing categories. The criteria that have been suggested by Black

¹Ibid., pp. 67-68. ²Ibid., p. 68.

are cast in a framework of historical development, nation-building, and international relations. At the same time, this classification serves to group societies in considerable measure on the basis of cultural, economic, and social criteria as well.

Interesting patterns combining a variety of criteria have been formulated by Black as well. These are based on the rather high correlation that has been found between such variables as literacy, gross national product per capita, and levels of education, health and communications media, and facilitate the construction of typologies based on levels of development that are quite enlightening. Nevertheless, Black's criteria of classification based on the characteristic political problems faced by modernizing leaders have a particular value mostly in a historical context, but in other contexts typologies based on alternative criteria would have to be elaborated. In sum, Black's approach does not help much in the cause of prediction.

The Institutional Approach

This approach, which may also be termed the neo-functional, was among others, represented by Samuel Huntington in his 1968 volume on Political Order in Changing Societies. Accordingly, its central focus of political change is held to be the relationship between political

participation and political institutionalization. The relationship between these factors determined the stability of the political system. The fundamental source of expansion of political participation is the non-political socio-economic processes identified with modernization. In sum, the impact of modernization on political stability is mediated through the interaction between social mobilization and economic development, social frustration and non-political mobility opportunities, and political participation and political institutionalization. Starting with a central concern for the social-process approach to modernization, i.e., the relationship between socio-economic changes (urbanization, industrialization), on the one hand, and political participation, political instability, and violence, on the other, this approach attempts to introduce into the analysis elements of social (mobility opportunities) and political (political institutionalization) structure. Huntington expresses these relationships in a series of equations:¹

- (1) $\frac{\text{Social Mobilization}}{\text{Economic Development}} = \text{Social Frustration}$
- (2) $\frac{\text{Social Frustration}}{\text{Mobility Opportunities}} = \text{Political Participation}$
- (3) $\frac{\text{Political Participation}}{\text{Political Institutionalization}} = \text{Political Instability}$

¹Huntington, Political Order ..., op. cit., p. 55.

According to Huntington, social and economic change "extend political consciousness." These changes undermine traditional sources of political authority and traditional political institutions. "The rates of social mobilization and the expansion of political participation are high; the rates of political organization and institutionalization are low. The result is political instability and disorder."¹ In summary form, political stability will be harmed by social mobilization, unless the latter is accompanied by economic development. If economic development does not provide sufficient opportunities and benefits, political participation will increase in order to demand them. If political participation is not accompanied by political institutionalization, political instability will result.

As a political institutionalist, Huntington subscribes to the notion that the level of political community a society achieves reflects the relationship between its institutions and the social forces, which comprise it. He states that:

... a social force is an ethnic, religious, territorial, economic, or status group. Modernization involves, in large part, the multiplication and diversification of the social forces in society ... A political organization or procedure, is an arrangement for maintaining order, resolving disputes, selecting authoritative leaders, and thus promoting community among two or more social :

¹ibid., pp. 5 & 55.

forces.¹

Hence, Huntington asserted that the more complex and heterogeneous the society, the more the achievement and maintenance of political community become dependent upon the workings of political institutions.

To sum up, an important corollary of Huntington's institutional view, duly stressed by him, is his theory of the negative effects of excessive mobilization. Mobilization becomes "excessive," for a given organization or institution², when it brings about the participation of more people than those who have internalized the values of the system. In other words, when the process of political mobilization and participation exceeds the process of political socialization, the concerned political system is submitted to unmanageable stresses and begins to decay. Political development, therefore, implies both political institutionalization and the containment of excessive political mobilization and participation. One facet is oriented toward the creation and consolidation of institutions, the other, toward the slowing down of mobilization, particularly through the institutionalization of stages of admittance of the masses to the centers of decision, so that a balance will be kept between participation in the system and adjustment

¹Ibid., pp. 8-9.

²Ibid., p. 86.

to it. For both functions, Huntington considers the political party the most relevant instrument.

In spite of its advantages and merits, Huntington's approach still deserves some criticism, since it is an approach in favor of political order and stability presumably on the expense of basic human rights and decency. For Huntington, a strong government which can command political order is a benevolent government regardless of the fact that it may exercise the power through fascist, dictatorial or other totalitarian forms of government. Obviously, the approach neglects the issues of legitimacy, specific merits as well as general accountability on the part of the government for its performance and responsibility. In addition, Huntington's emphasis on the merits and superiority of the political party over those of the bureaucracy in the process of modernization and development does not always represent the true picture of the Third World politics. Typically, the bureaucracy in the developing societies appears to be highly effective and enjoys a great reputation while the existence of a strong party is rare and its performance is usually questionable.

Critiques of the institutionalists are further launched by Chong-do Hah and Jeanne Schneider with the following comment:

By addressing themselves to the discontinuities, ruptures and ambiguities in political development,

the institutionalists view socio-political change as a problematic process, one to be faced by national leadership ... The field has been particularly hampered by social scientists who prescribe the institutionalization of social change as the most effective development scheme. They confuse the study of developmental change with the strategy of institutionalization ...¹

Huntington's model was given as an example in Chong-do Hah and Schneider's analysis of political development theory. They contended that by equating political development with such factors as institutional development, complexity, autonomy and succession, Huntington "claims to have formulated a complete developmental model. In actuality, however, he has ascribed only one pattern of institutional change - that is expansion. The institutional monopoly he prescribes may be quite vulnerable to the vagaries of rapid change in that it tends to be very conservative. Like the Imperial Chinese bureaucracy, Huntington's model may be inimical to modernization."²

The Political Culture Approach

This approach, which is represented by Lucian Pye, Sidney Verba and Gabriel Almond, is based on the assumption that if we are going to compare politics in order to understand better the dynamics of political development, we must

¹Chong-do Hah and Jeanne Schneider, "A Critique of Current Studies on Political Development and Modernization," Social Research 35:1 (Spring 1968), pp. 52-53.

²Ibid., p. 53.

make our analysis in terms of the way in which people develop, maintain, and change the fundamental basis of political behavior, and in terms of the collective stability and instability of different constellation of attitudes and sentiments.

These considerations suggest that analysis which focuses on the phenomenon of culture may be particularly well adapted for comparing and classifying political systems in terms that are relevant for understanding the character of political development and change. The result may be an approach which can exploit the richness of the separate traditions of country and area studies, while keeping attention focused on universal problems and processes basic to the human condition.

Lucian Pye, in Political Culture and Political Development, noted that the concept of political culture comes from Gabriel Almond's observation that "every political system is embedded in a particular patterns of orientation to political actions."¹ Sidney Verba, in addition, asserted that political culture consists "of the systems of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which define the situations in which political action takes

¹Gabriel Almond, "Comparative Political Systems," in Heinz Eulau, ed., Political Behavior, A Reader in Theory and Research (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1956), p. 34.

place."¹

Consequently, Packerham maintained that the political culture theorists see political development as primarily a function of the political culture - that is "the set of attitudinal and personality characteristics that enable the members of the political system both to accept the privileges and to bear the responsibility of a democratic process."² Obviously, Packerham considers political culture as largely a psychological concept. The psychological mechanism at work occur on at least two levels: (1) the level of attitudes or sets of expectations about political roles held by members of the polity, and (2) the level of personality.³

The "political culture" approach of political development theory was developed in response to the need to bridge a growing gap in the behavioral approach in political science between the level of micro-analysis based on psychological interpretations of the individual's political behavior and the level of macro-analysis based on the variables common to political sociology. In this sense, the approach constitutes an attempt to integrate psychology and

¹Lucian Pye and Sidney Verba, eds., Political Culture and Political Development (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 513.

²Packerham, op. cit., p. 117.

³Ibid.,

sociology in order to be able to apply to dynamics political analysis both the revolutionary finding of modern depth psychology and recent advances in the sociological techniques for measuring attitudes in mass societies. Within the discipline of political science, the theory, as Pye noted, "signals an effort to apply an essentially behavioral form of analysis to the study of such classic concepts as 'political ideology', 'legitimacy', 'sovereignty', 'nationhood', and 'the rule of law'."¹

Political development, no matter what aspect is emphasized, obviously strikes at the roots of people's beliefs and sentiments about politics, and hence the process of development must be profoundly affected by the character of the political culture of a society. As a result, Pye contended that "this is why through the analysis of how different political cultures have reacted to the pressures of changes we may hope to gain greater understanding about the forces supporting and inhibiting development and modernization."²

According to Pye, there are certain common generalizations about the structure of the political cultures in spite of the great diversity among the countries. One of them is the observation that in no society is there a

¹Pye and Verba, op. cit., p. 8.

²Ibid., p. 13.

single uniform political culture, and in all polities there is a fundamental distinction between the culture of the rulers or power holders and that of the masses. In general, for the less developed countries there is a fundamental crisis of leadership, and since the prospects for development depend so heavily upon the capabilities of leadership it is understandable that the studies of developing countries are directed more to the elite cultures. In the more advanced countries, the principal issue tends to become one of whether democracy will survive and whether popular sentiments will support continuing development.

As far as the politics of developing societies and elite studies are concerned, Pye pointed out that in non-Western societies, the political sphere is not sharply differentiated from the spheres of social and personal relations. Among the most powerful influences of the traditional order in any society in transition are those forces which impede the development of a distinct sphere of politics. In most non-Western societies, the pattern of political relationships is largely determined by the pattern of social and personal relations. The political struggle tends to revolve around issues of prestige, influence, and even of personalities. The elites who dominate the national politics of these societies generally represent a remarkably homogeneous group in terms of educational

experience and social background.¹

In order to sum up the analysis of political culture, four general themes are emphasized by Pye,² Almond and Verba³ as the content of the political culture in relation to the developmental process.

(1) The first theme is that of trust and its opposites, distrust and suspicion. Each political culture differs according to its pattern of trust and distrust. The presence of the kinds of public organizations essential for national development. An equal obstacle to development, however, is the widespread existence of an uncritical and childlike trust in the rules and in all forms of higher authority.

(2) The second theme is the stress on hierarchy and its opposite, equality. All political cultures must deal with attitudes toward power, for all politics must involve the relations between superiors and inferiors, between initiators and followers. Traditional societies tended to emphasize and to provide moral justification for

¹Lucian Pye, "The Non-Western Political Process," in Harvey Kebschull, ed., *Politics in Transitional ...*, op. cit., p. 221.

²Pye and Verba, op. cit.; also see Lucian Pye, Politics, Personality and Nation-Building (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1962).

³Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, eds., The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1965).

hierarchical relationships. Development demands effective leadership. How the different countries cope with this dilemma appears to be a central issue in determining their relative successes in development.

(3) The third general theme is that of liberty and its converse, coercion. Most of the authors in Pye's volume tend to place the value of liberty near the center of their interpretations of the democratic political culture.

(4) The last value which most of the authors mention relates to the level of loyalty and commitment, and whether the political culture stresses particularism in the form of intense and overriding identification with family or parochial grouping, or a more generalizable identification such as with the nation as a whole. This process, however, must occur without at the same time causing the people to become alienated from or hostile toward the primordial attachments that give vitality to their parochial associations.

The Functional Approach

The leading theorists in this approach are, for example, Talcott Parsons, Marion Levy, Leonard Binder, David Easton and Gabriel Almond. This approach distinctively assumes an inherent equality of all societies, in that certain political functions are performed in all, although by differing structures and in different ways. Ann Ruth

Willner claimed that in spite of its more recent systems framework, the functional approach "partially eliminates the 'pathological' and ethnocentric bias from the study of new and rapidly changing countries. This approach, however, is fraught with the problems of identifying politically relevant components of the system, specifying and labeling political functions, and locating the units or actors by whom they are performed."¹

The concept of "function," like that of structure, has been used so indiscriminately and perfunctorily in nearly all the social sciences that "its pedagogical value seems to have diminished since the early writings of the functional anthropologists."² Chong-do Hah and Schneider comment:

... the concept of function has another stigma; it has been accused of both conservative and radical teleology. We have heard ad nauseam the argument that functional models emphasize social stability and equilibrium to the detriment of social change. Those scholars who would wish to rid themselves of any special ideological bias often give such a hazy definition of function as to rid the term of any explanatory value. For example, a function is often defined as the consequences of any action upon a system; if every event is a function, there can be no "nonfunction" or "dysfunction."³

¹Willner, op. cit., p. 475.

²Chong-do Hah and Schneider, op. cit., p. 140.

³Ibid.,

For our purposes, function will refer to any property that is needed to maintain a structure. Thus, all systems have functional cohesive, or integrative properties. The contrary of a functional factor would be one that is disruptive to the status quo arrangement of variables. This implies newly differentiations in all systems (such as differentiated patterns of social and technical status), and changes in the patterns of differentiation call for new levels of integration.

Talcott Parsons has produced one of the best general schemes of functionalist analysis and its categories. He organizes them into four central functional problems with respect to the maintenance of control; namely, pattern-maintenance, goal-attainment, adaptation and integration. Essentially, Parsons requires us to make a systematic study of an entire society, from its work habits to its leisure activities, from its kinship groups to the ideas held by competing subgroups, before he would permit us to make an effective analysis of politics.¹

Further discussion of the functional approach is

¹Talcott Parsons, "Order and Communities in the International Social System," in James N. Rosenau, ed., International Politics and Foreign Policy (N.Y.: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), pp. 120-121; Also see James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., Contending Theories of International Relations (N.Y.: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1971), pp. 106-110.

advanced by Packenham, who considers the functional theorists as "those who have tended to argue that political development is primarily a function of the administrative capacity to maintain law and order effeciently and effectively and to perform governmental output functions rationally and neutrally. This approach stresses the output side of Easton input-output model."¹

Historically speaking, the case for political development in terms of advanced administration has been put mos brilliantly by Max Weber. "Weber saw bureaucratization as an institutional form inherent in all democracies."² It was characterized by neutrality, rationality, and achievement rather than by ascriptive criteria as the basis for selection and promotion.

Comparatively, Almond and Powell have inclined to much the same positionas Parsons in their functional categories related to the political system.³ Their approach is to consider the activities, or functions, of political system from three points of view. The first is the conversion functions of interest articulation, interest aggregation,

¹Packenham, op. cit., p. 113.

²Seymour M. Lipset, Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics (Garden City, N.Y., 1960), p. 29.

³Gabriel Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1966), p. 14.

political communication, rule-making, rule application, and rule adjudication. The second consideration is the operation of the political system as an "individual" in its environment. Almond and Powell refer to this aspect of the functioning of a political system as its capabilities. Finally, they consider the ways in which political systems maintain or adapt themselves to pressures for change over the long run which they term -system-maintenance and adaptation functions, - political recruitment and political socialization.¹

Perhaps, one of the best known works in the functionalist school is The Politics of the Developing Areas by Almond and Coleman. It is a work of such great significance to the study of political development that Harold Lasswell has written: "the Almond-Coleman model of political development lurked meaningfully in the wings."² Nevertheless, this study contends that, although the Almond model has been least adoptable in its entirety, segments of its conceptual vocabulary such as "socialization," "articulation," and "aggregation," have had a most lasting influence.

Almond writes in his introductory chapter:

This book is the first effort to compare the pol-

¹Ibid.,

²Harold Lasswell, "The Policy Sciences of Development," World Politics 17 (1965), p. 286.

itical systems of 'developing' areas, and to compare them systematically according to a common set of categories.¹

To sum up, there are two main aspects of the functional model of political development. The first of these is the concern for the functional requisites of all political systems: the input demands of socialization, recruitment, articulation and aggregation on the one hand, and the outputs of authoritative decisions in administration, legislation, and adjudication on the other. The second essential element of a political system is to be found in the types of structures performing these functions and the "style" of performance. These two archetypal criteria are derived from Talcott Parsons' and Max Weber's delineations of the pre-modern and modern political systems: the traditional system is diffused in its types of social status, and particularistic in its value orientation, the modern system is specific and achievement-oriented, and it claims universal functions.² In addition, Chong-do Hah and Schneider observed that, although Almond views societies as dual in the sense that they possess elements drawn from both ideal models,

¹Gabriel Almond and James S. Coleman, eds., The Politics of Developing Areas (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 1.

²Talcott Parsons, ed., The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations, trans. by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1947), p. 3.

political development is measured by the extent to which a system follows the Weberian precedent. "While Apter speaks of modernization in terms of degree of complexity and democracy, Almond speaks in terms of increased differentiation and specialization."¹

Perhaps the most important deficiency of the functional approach to the study of political development is that it cannot be tested except in the most extreme conditions. Since large-scale units like societies show considerable adaptive flexibility, and their leaders possess great skill in supplying alternative instruments and modes of operation in order to prevent social breakdown, the viability test may be applied in research only when it is already quite apparent that a society or an other unit has become unviable and a system change is in order. Other difficulties in this kind of analysis stem from the lack of a firm definition of "political system," with the result that it is virtually impossible to separate the politics from other kinds of systems. Therefore, it is not exactly clear how the functions and structures are derived and how they relate to each other. More significantly, their requisites status remains unspecified.

In the final analysis, the value of the functional approach, nevertheless, is that it generally helps us to

¹Chong-do Hah and Schneider, op. cit., p. 142.

understand the purposes and meaning of actions. The viability analysis sharpens the focus, restricting the analysis of purpose to the survival of the unit and a set of meanings based on that purpose. This helps us to understand the properties and widely differing activities of certain systems and leads to the exploration of different levels of meaning, latent, and manifest, cognitive and emotive. In this sense, functionalism relies first on semantic empiricism, and only secondly on the operational empiricism, that is, it is pragmatic before it is operational.

In the following chapters, an attempt will be made to apply political development and modernization theories to the course of political change and development in Thailand Northeast. Historical aspects of the Northeast's modernization, i.e., the migrations of Thai-speaking Lao ethnic group into the Khorat Plateau which constitutes the present northeastern part of Thailand, and the incorporation of the Northeast and its population under Thai suzerainty will be discussed thoroughly. Also the Administrative Reforms of King Chulalongkorn, which were initiated in order to strengthen Thai control over the areas, and its repercussions will be included in the study. In the fourth chapter, the focus of the analysis will rest largely on the "Northeastern Problem"; an episode which took place as a result of the discrimination and neglect displayed by Bangkok officials towards the Northeast. This political discrimination and

the Thai prejudicial attitudes toward the Isan elites and their attempts to direct the course of region's development for the maximum benefits of Bangkok and with no regard for the villagers' needs and well-being, have instead given rise to the emergence of ethnic identity, the so-called "Isan regionalism." Throughout the 1940's and the 1950's, this growing sense of ethnic identity was greatly strengthened when the Bangkok ruling juntas tried to deny its leaders their rightful place in the National Assembly. Their demands for social and economic reforms as well as democratic development were ignored and their existence was finally suppressed through political pressures and public executions. Hence, it is no surprise to see that the Northeast, with its strategic location and history of political dissidence, became an area of budding insurrections and communist insurgency following the intense struggle in Indochina; the tragic event which turned to a large-scale civil war with the interventions of the Superpowers, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

CHAPTER III

MODERNIZATION OF NORTHEAST THAILAND
IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVEA) The Kingdom of Sukhothai and
the Destruction of the Khmer Empire

Prior to the end of the thirteenth century, the Khorat Plateau, which comprises the present day Northeast Thailand and some parts of Laos, had been for several centuries a part of the Great Khmer Empire. Its population was, of course, believed to be predominantly Khmer, although they appear to have resided with other minority ethnic groups in the area at the same historical period. The appearance of the T'ai-speaking people in the area is recorded as starting from sometime in the twelfth century, although the historical record of the events are very confusing. For example, Maha Sila Viravong, a famous Laotian historian, noted that the Thai and Lao chronicles buried the emergence of T'ai-speaking people in the middle Mekong region in legend.¹

¹Maha Sila Viravong, History of Laos, translated from the Lao by the U.S. Joint Publication Research Service (N.Y.: Paragon Reprint Corp., 1964), pp. 25-26.

The migration of the T'ai-speaking people is also subjected to confusing evidence and arguments. It is traditionally believed among scholars, Asian and Western, that their migration was stimulated by political events in Southern China, the homeland of these people by that time. This theory is, nevertheless, rejected by several authorities in Asian history. Charles Keyes, a specialist on Northeast Thailand, has, for example, asserted that, whatever the actual reasons may be, "the appearance of T'ai-speaking peoples on the areas ... was probably not as has sometimes been suggested, a sudden massive 'innundation' stimulated by political events in the southern Chinese homeland of these people."¹

As far as the origins of the T'ai race are concerned, historical records are rarely available. Unfortunately, the available ones present confusion and controversy. The most accepted theory so far is that the T'ai (or Thai) people, prior to their migration southward to the Indochinese peninsula and the later foundation of the Kingdom of Sukhothai in the year 1253, had enjoyed prosperous and civilized ways of life centering around the powerful

¹Charles Keyes, Isan In A Thai State: A Brief Survey of the Thai "Northeastern Problem," mimeo., (Bangkok, Thailand: Thailand Information Center, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, March 1967), p. 5.

Kingdom of Nanchao.¹ Cœdès, the French historian, maintained that the Thai people escaped to the south right after the Kingdom of Nanchao was attacked and taken over by Kublai Khan in early thirteenth century and not before that.² This theory was later challenged by Kachorn Sukhabanij, a very influential Thai historian, who, on the contrary, argued that the Thai people had to migrate to the area along Chao Phraya River long before the destruction of the Kingdom of Nanchao. He believed that it must have taken several hundred years before the Thais could establish the Kingdom of Sukhothai and could invent the Thai alphabet.³

In addition, Cœdès, whose view has later been re-evaluated, asserted that the migration process of the T'ai-speaking people was, rather, "probably one of gradual infiltration of immigrants who began by holding positions of command over communities of sedentary agriculturalists, and ended by gaining control over the native peoples among

¹Kachorn Sukhabanij, Kho-moon jaak a-deet [Documents from the Past] (Bangkok: Kled Thai Publishing Co., 1975), p. 13.

²George Cœdès, The Indianized States of Southeast Asia, trans. by S. B. Cowing, (Honolulu: The East-West Center Press, 1968), p. 190.

³Kachorn Sukhabanij, op. cit., p. 13; for further information of Thai early history, see Kachorn Sukhabanij, Thai Beach-Head States in the 11-12th Centuries (Bangkok 1956).

whom they had settled and whose culture they had assimilated."¹

Subsequent evidence has shown that in the thirteenth century a T'ai chieftain overthrow a Khmer provincial governor or commandant in an outpost of the Angkor Empire located at Sukhothai in north central Thailand and established the first important autonomous T'ai state in an area formerly dominated by the Mons and Khmers. As a result, the Kingdom of Sukhothai was eventually founded. Its second king, Ramkhamhaeng, (1270-1316), who was both a great warrior and administrator, had been able to extend the Thai power and influence from the capital of Sukhothai over most of north central and western Thailand, part of the peninsula, and the northern part of what is now Northeast Thailand. Keyes, however, noted that there is no evidence to suggest that there was any sizable T'ai-speaking population in the parts of northeastern Thailand controlled by Sukhothai at this time.²

B) The Rival for Power: Kingdom of Ayuthaya vs. Kingdom of Lan Chang

The Kingdom of Ayuthaya, the successor of Sukhothai,

¹George Coedès, The Making of Southeast Asia, 2nd. edition, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1969), p. 102.

²Keyes, Isan In a Thai State, op. cit., p. 6.

was founded in the mid-fourteenth century at almost the same time as the founding of the Laotian Kingdom of Lan Chang (or Lan Xang) which literally means the "kingdom of a million elephants". Although Ayuthaya is situated in what is today the heart of central Thailand, at that time it lay at the edge of T'ai influence.¹ In its expansion, the rulers of Ayuthaya pursued two important goals; they were primarily interested in consolidating control over central and eastern Thailand, and in reducing the power of the Khmer and only very secondarily, if at all, in extending their influence over what is today northeastern Thailand. Keyes claimed that although theoretically the successor to Sukhothai's control over the northern part of northeastern Thailand, "Ayuthaya abandoned this claim at the outset in the face of a strong claim exerted by the new Lao Kingdom of Lan Chang."²

The historical picture of power politics in Southeast Asia during this period is well described by Poole. He observed that the lack of contact between Siam and Vietnam in the fourteenth century through the late seventeenth century was due not only to the mountainous barrier between

¹O. W. Wolters, "A Western Teacher and the History of Early Ayudya," The Social Science Review (Bangkok), Special Issue on Thai History, 3 (1966), pp. 88-97.

²Keyes, Isan: Regionalism . . . , op. cit., p. 5.

them but also to the emergence of a buffer kingdom, covering much of the present area of Laos and Northeast Thailand, during this period. Lan Chang, as the Kingdom was called, lacked the agricultural resources to support a large number of population and was torn apart by frequent struggles over succession, but it managed to hold together and to absorb some of the expansionist energies of its much stronger Burmese, Siamese, and Vietnamese neighbors.¹

The Laotian Kingdom of Lan Chang was established in 1353 by a Lao prince, Fa Ngum, with the help of his father-in-law, the King of Cambodia. Historical evidence pointed out that Lan Chang had its origins in the small Lao principalities which had appeared some time before the fourteenth century in northern Laos. It is apparent that Khmer approval and/or support for Fa Ngum was necessary for his success in creating a unified Lao Kingdom which had then included the former Khmer subjects. In regard to the interpretation of Maha Sila Viravong from the ancient Lao annals, he contended that the Khmer had given their support to Fa Ngum because of their desire to see the expansion of the Siamese stopped. He noted that:

The Khmers had gradually fallen down to the point where they were unable to defend themselves

¹Peter A. Poole, The Vietnamese in Thailand: A Historical Perspective (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 9.

(against T'ai expansion) ... The Khmer king had a strong desire to retaliate against the Thais (Siamese), or at least, to check their advance. Hence the Khmer king's kindness to Prince Fa Ngum so that he could use him to stop the Thai expansion.¹

In spite of Khmer support and its attempt to exercise indirect control over the kingdom of Lan Chang through family relationship with Fa Ngum, Poole argued that the Annamite mountains helped to prevent the spread of Vietnamese influence over the more settled areas of the kingdom. But those areas were (and are) much less isolated from Siamese influence.² This fact, added to the close kinship between the Lao and Siamese peoples, helps to explain why Siam gradually established a preponderant influence over Laos by the late eighteenth century.

Fa Ngum, having successfully strengthened his power over the throne of Lan Chang, started his expedition in 1349 to unify several rival princely states of Laos. After conquering the northern area of Lao upstream on the Mekong, he moved down to include the Vientiane area. It was only at this point that the areas of Northeastern Thailand were united to form into the new Laotian kingdom of Lan Chang. Within this context, Le Boulanger claimed that Fa Ngum, in his expedition of 1350's, was able to bring into the Kingdom of Lan Chang all of the parts of the Khorat Plateau except

¹Maha Sila Viravong, op. cit., p. 27.

²Poole, op. cit., p. 11.

the area around Nakorn Rachsima which remained in Khmer hands.¹ Perhaps, this conquest was successful because it deposed Ayuthayan officials at Roi-et and, by convinced the Ayuthayan King that the Lao were powerful enough to meet any military challenge which Ayuthaya might in order to protect its interests in the Northeast.²

Perhaps the first clue to the migration of a sizeable number of Lao into northeastern Thailand lies in the remarks which Maha Sila Viravong has made in connection with Fa Ngum's conquest. According to this version, Fa Ngum ordered the resettlement of some 20,000 Lao families to around Vientiane and the northern part of the Khorat Plateau. Maha Sila Viravong suggested that "that was the reason why a great number of Lao people established themselves in the Khmer territories."³

Consequently, Keyes remarked that Lao, Siamese and indigenous provincial histories make little mention of what took place in the Khorat Plateau between the middle of the fourteenth century and the early part of the seventeenth century. However, what information exists "does provide certain crucial clues which make possible some conclusions

¹Paul Le Boulanger, Histoire du Lao Français (Paris: Libraire Plon, 1934), pp. 41-51.

²Keyes, Isan In A Thai State, op. cit., p. 8.

³Maha Sila Viravong, op. cit., p. 34.

about cultural developments within the region."¹

After the expansion of Fa Ngum, the Laotian capital was eventually transferred from Luang Prabang to Vientiane in 1563. Prior to and even right after this incident, the interest of the Lao Kingdom of Lan Chang in the Khorat Plateau was primarily restricted to areas lying along the shores of the Mekong in what are today Loei, Nongkhai, and Nakorn Phanom provinces of the present day Northeast Thailand. As for the Siamese kingdom of Ayuthaya, it had even less interest than Lan Chang in the Khorat Plateau as a territory which might be brought within its metropolitan domains prior to the seventeenth century. The first Siamese foot-hold in the Northeast appears to have been established during the reign of King Narai (1656-1688) when the two old Khmer towns of Muang Sema and Muang Khorakhabura were combined into a single fortified outpost of Ayuthaya with the name of Nakorn Rachasima.²

In spite of their lack of concern and desire to include the Northeast within their territories, both the rulers of Ayuthaya as well as Lan Chang, however, did share a common interest in the region; that is to maintain the

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism ... , op. cit., pp. 6-7.

²Manit Vallibhotama, Guide to Pimai and Antiquities in the Province of Nagara Rajasima (Khorat), abridged and trans. by M.C.C. Subhadradis Diskul, (Bangkok: The Fine Arts Department, 1962), pp. 18-19.

Khorat Plateau as a wide border area between their two kingdoms. Maha Sila Viravong contended that the Khorat Plateau, by virtue of its intermediate location formed a major battleground in the battles between the Lao and the Siamese kingdoms in the mid-1500's and later at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of nineteenth centuries.¹

Although little of the Northeast was fully incorporated into the Lao Kingdom prior to the beginning of the seventeenth century, Keyes remarked:

Culturally, the region was becoming increasingly Lao as we define that ethnic tradition today ... The migratory patterns of Lao into the region first mentioned in connection with the rule of Fa Ngum in the mid-14th century continued during the subsequent period. In addition to what must have been a constant flow of a few Lao at a time into the region, the Khorat Plateau seems to have been a haven for the politically dispossessed of Laos.²

Moreover, Maha Sila Viravong reported that in the last decades of the sixteenth century, large numbers of Lao around Vientiane migrated to areas extending from Roi-et to Champasak in order to escape the rules of a usurper who had come to the throne of Lan Chang.³ Besides, local Thai

¹Maha Sila Viravong, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

²Keyes, Isan In A Thai State, op. cit., p. 10.

³Maha Sila Viravong, op. cit., pp. 67-70.

documents such as a history of Kalasin province also report a steady migration of Lao people into the area between 1050 and 1750 and a large migration of political dissidents from Vientiane in the latter part of the eighteenth century.¹

Hence, early in the seventeenth century, only a few parts of the Northeast were thoroughly incorporated within the Lao Kingdom of Lan Chang and obviously no part of the areas lay within the Kingdom of Ayuthaya. According to Keyes,

... the definition by these two kingdoms of the rest of the region as a wide border zone made possible the autonomy of whatever socio-political units -- villages and/or principalities -- may have existed in the region. Culturally, the region was becoming increasingly Lao, but without a court center to look to local variations developed perhaps to a greater extent than within Laos itself.²

Political autonomy and localism in the region were to become threatened only after the shift in the relative power of the Lao and Siamese kingdoms which began to take place early in the seventeenth century.

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the power and influence of the Burmese Kingdom began to substantially increased to the extent that the kingdoms of Ayuthaya and Lan Chang began to weaken. In an attempt to take ad-

¹Changwad Kalasin, Ngan Chalong 25 phut-sat-ta-wat chang-wad kalasin [25th Century of the Buddhist Era Celebration of Kalasin Province] (Bangkok:Ministry of the Interior, 1957), pp. 4-5.

Keyes, Isan In A Thai State, op. cit., p. 11.

vantage of what Lan Chang considered to be the greater weakness of Ayuthaya, the Laotian troops attacked the Siamese capital. Unfortunately, the Thai (Siamese) armies, having recovered faster, were able to return the attacks and finally conquered and scattered the Lao forces. Wood considered this to be the turning point in the relations between these two kingdoms since from that time on the power of the Siamese Kingdom began to grow while the Laotian influence and suzerainty in the area began to disintegrate.¹

With the death of King Suraya Wongsa (1633-1694), who was the last important King of a unified Lan Chang, the Laotian Kingdom of Lan Chang fell apart. A series of events that followed Suraya Wongsa's death could be described as a period of anarchy deriving from the struggle for power among King Suraya Wongsa's grandsons over the succession to the throne which resulted in the division of Laotian territories into three small kingdoms: Luang Prabang, Vientiane and Champasak. This crucial incident was well recorded by Poole as followed:

On Souliga Vongsa's death in 1694, Lan Ch'ang quickly disintegrated when the king's grandsons tried to enlist Siam and Vietnam in their struggle over the succession. Three Lao principalities emerged. Luang Prabang in the north remained an independent Kingdom but acknowledged its vassalage to Siam by sending regular tribute. Champasak in

¹W. A. R. Wood, A History of Siam (Bangkok: Chalmernit Bookstore, 1924), pp. 61-62.

in the South, (including a portion of Stung Treng province in Cambodia) was ruled directly by Siam. Vieng Chan, comprising the Mekong valley area between Luang Prabang and Champasak, was first a tributary of Siam and later was ruled directly.¹

Undoubtedly, the collapse of the Kingdom of Lan Chang had shifted Thai attention from focusing only with the struggle for power with Burma back to that of the intensification of Siamese control over the northeastern region of the Kingdom. In similar vein, the Burmese rulers appeared to have great interest in the Laotian political turmoil and power struggle and would not hesitate to intervene if the opportunity should provide. Hence, David Wyatt noted at this point that the most important ingredient in the events of the 1770's in Laos was the continuing struggle between Siam and Burma. In order both to strengthen their own forces and to deny strength to their enemy, each side became involved in Laos affairs. The opportunities for both sides were heightened by the deep-seated hostility which existed in the division of the Kingdom of Lan Chang and had been aggravated further by Burmese interference, in particular, in Lao affairs.²

In this respect, Keyes suggested that the weakened

¹Poole, op. cit., p. 11.

²David Wyatt, "Siam and Laos, 1767-1827," Journal of Southeast Asian History 4:2 (September 1963), p. 14.

condition of the Lao states, although not the only factor, was undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the intensification of Siamese expansion towards the Northeast which was to continue, with only temporary abatements, until the end of the nineteenth century.¹ Thus, "the stage was set," argued Keyes, "for northeastern Thailand to become a meeting place for the interests of at least three states --Vientiane, Campasak, and Ayuthaya. However, before such a confrontation could occur, Burma in 1767 again attacked and laid seige to Ayuthaya."²

After the fall of Ayuthaya, Vientiane was forced to give support to Burma in order to avoid confronting the same invasion. Wood made it clear when he stated the Vientiane's offense to the Siamese was exacerbated by its allowing the self-proclaimed ruler of Khorat to find asylum in Vientiane after the fall of Khorat to King Taksin, who later became the ruler of the new Thai Kingdom at Thonburi in 1786.³ Furthermore, Prince Damrong Rachanuphap, a very influential scholar and famous historian, explained the reason why Luang Prabang gave aid to Burma arguing that it was necessary to do that because one of the King's younger brother was taken as a hostage by the Burmese.⁴

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., pp. 9-10.

²Ibid., p. 10.

³Wood, op. cit., p. 156.

⁴Damrong Rachanuphap, Prince, Thai rob pha-maa

Having consolidated his power, establishing the new capital at Thonburi and successfully uniting the Thai people once again, King Taksin ordered the invasion of Vientiane as punishment for disloyalty. In November and December of 1778, the Thai armies moved out to attack Vientiane. General Chakkri, who had later become Rama I of the Chakkri dynasty of Bangkok, took a force of 20,000 men over land, while his brother, General Surasri, went to Cambodia. There he raised a vassal naval force of 10,000 men and headed up the Mekong capturing Champasak, Nakorn Phanom, and Nongkhai en route, as well as several smaller towns which were then vassals of Vientiane.¹ Finally, the Thai forces stormed the city of Vientiane, aided by a small force dispatched by Luang Prabang, which was "forced to accept the suzerainty of Siam."² Many members of the ruling family were captured, together with the city's prized Buddha images, the Prabang and the Emerald Buddha, and a very large number of Lao families were forced to evacuate to settle in the region of Saraburi, northeast of Ayuthaya. Vientiane was, of

[Thai Wars With Burma] (Bangkok 1962), p. 639

¹Damrong Rachanuphap, Prince, ed., Phra-rat-cha-phong-saa-wa-daan cha-bab phra-rat-cha-hat-tha-lekha [His Majesty's Chronicles] (Bangkok 1962), vol. II, pp. 418-423; see also Toem Singhathit, Fang khwaa mae-naam khong [Right Bank of the Mekong River] (Bangkok 1956), I, pp. 145-149.

²Maha Sila Viravong, op. cit., p. 103.

course, placed under a Thai military commander.¹

As a consequence of these Siamese invasions and the defeat of the Lao Kingdom, Vientiane and Champasak became vassals of Bangkok, while Luang Prabang although remained independent, its rulers acknowledging its vassalage to Siam by sending regular tribute to Thonburi and later to Bangkok. All three Lao kingdoms, thus, came under the spreading umbrella of Thai power. More importantly for our considerations, the parts of the Khorat Plateau not included within the territories of these vassals were incorporated as "outer provinces" within the Siamese Kingdom.

C) Chao Anu and the Vientiane Rebellion

According to David Wyatt, the sources which deal with the 1778 Thai invasion of Vientiane offer interesting material relating to the differing relationship holding between Bangkok and the Lao states on the one hand (Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Champasak) and between Bangkok and the northeast provinces of old Siam on the other. "While these relationships are by no means clearly defined, and in practice varied greatly, certain general characteristics are readily apparent."²

Following the Siamese conquest of Laotian kingdoms,

¹Wyatt, op. cit., p. 20.

²Ibid., p. 21.

the area in present day Northeast Thailand under direct Thai administrative control greatly expanded to cover virtually all of the Thai Northeast, except for a narrow band along the Mekong River. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, roughly around the end of the First Reign (1782-1809), this area included such muang (provinces or towns) as Srisaket, Ubon, Yasothon, Roi-et, Kalasin, and Khon-khaen, as well as many more towns clustered more closely around Khorat.¹ The governors (chao-muang) of these towns were quite independent within their own jurisdictions. Nevertheless, they did not have the power to execute criminals, to appoint higher officials within the muang, or to make war. Such decisions were referred to Khorat or Bangkok.²

By the same token, provinces in the Northeast were attached to various ministers and officials in Bangkok as a part of the financial support of the latter, and to them the muang had to render revenue and labor service. For such purposes, periodic censuses were made of every muang by officials from the capitals. Their boundaries were set and, in this period, often shifted by Bangkok in order to create new muang in the area. A policy of Rama I, continued by his successors, was to reward the chao-muang for increases of

¹Ibid., p. 22.

²Toem Singhathit, op. cit., pp. 496-497.

population and territory by bestowing on them titles which reached as high as phraya (lord).¹ In general, in the sphere of administrative control, these Northeast provinces did not differ greatly from the rest of the Kingdom.²

As for the areas of Lao that came under the suzerainty of Bangkok, Wyatt observed that they enjoyed quite a different relationship with Siam in the reign of Rama I. For example, they had the powers of capital punishment, of making war with Thai consent, and of independently appointing all but the four highest officials of the realm. Their obligations to provide revenue and corvée labor were very much curtailed, and amounted to "little more than an annual tribute of the 'silver and gold trees' and providing armies in time of war. Each of the three Lao states had its own vassals and, to some extent, carried on limited independent foreign relations."³ Wyatt summed up in his statement that "in short, the Lao areas were more properly 'vassals', comparable to the Malay vassals of Bangkok, although because of the cultural affinities between Thai and Lao, the rela-

¹Sipphanphansanoe Sonakun, M.C., Pra-wat-saat thai sa-mai krung rat-ta-na-koo-sin yuk raek ... cha-bap rang [Thai History in the First Part of the Bangkok Period Period ... Draft edition], (Bangkok 1958), p. 61.

²Mom Ammorawong Wichit, "Phong-saa-wa-daan huamuang mon-thon i-saan," [Chronicles of the Provinces on Monthon Isan], in Collected Chronicles, vol.4 (Bangkok 1915), pp. 222-229.

³Wyatt, op. cit., p. 22.

tionship was more open to the close ties of royal marriages, the education of Lao princes in Bangkok, and cultural and religious exchanges."¹ In spite of this relatively independence on the part of the Laotian royalties, Siam's position in Laos during this period was maintained by both diplomatic and military means. Bangkok still named the rulers of Chapasak (1791) and Vientiane (1781) and approved the choice of a ruler for Luang Prabang. With the appointment of Chao Anu to the throne of Vientiane in 1804, the Laotian Kingdom of Vientiane was brought under the direct administration of Siam.

Chao Anu came to the throne under most favorable auspices. He was highly respected and honored by Siamese for his royal services in the Thai wars with Burma. According to Le Boulanger, Chao Anu was described as follows:

Politically clever, (Anu) hid his true sentiments and maintained the attitude of deference to his suzerain which circumstances had imposed on him. He acquired the confidence of the Thai court, and the annals of the Thai recognized his courage and the incontestable services which he rendered to Siam for five years. When Chao In died, he was immediately appointed as his successor.²

After the ascension to the throne of Rama III of Bangkok, Chao Anu finally decided that he would try to restore the independence of the Kingdom of Vientiane. Chao Anu

¹Ibid., pp. 22-23.

²Le Boulanger, op. cit., p. 59.

decided to attack Bangkok during the period when the governor of Nakorn Rachasima was absent and from his conviction upon hearing a rumor that the British were sending a naval force against Bangkok.

Prior to this episode, Chao Anu also came to Bangkok for the royal cremation of King Rama II. His behavior began to sow the seeds of rebellion deriving from a series of events he confronted in Bangkok since that time. Maha Sila Viravong noted that following the cremation, some of the Laotians in Anu's entourage were called up for the Thai corvée, and put to work cutting palm trees at Suphanburi.¹ Moreover, while in Bangkok, Chao Anu made a number of demands on Rama III, acting on the assumption that he was an important vassal of Siam and a necessary ally, particularly at a time when it appeared that Siam was threatened by British actions in Burma and Malaya and by Vietnamese pressures on Cambodia.²

¹Maha Sila Viravong, op. cit., p. 113; see also Thiphakorawong, Chao Phraya, Phra-raj-phong-saa-wa-daan krung rat-ta-na koo-sin raj-cha-kaan thi 3 [Royal chronicles of the Third Reign of the Bangkok Period] (Bangkok 1938), p. 24.

²Le Boulanger, op. cit., p. 166; also see Toem Wiphakphotkit, Pra-wat-saat i-saan [History of Isan], vol. I, (Bangkok: The Social Science Society of Thailand Press, 1971), pp. 356-357; Thailand, Khrom Silaphakorn, comp., Chot-mai-haet ruang praap khabot wiang-chan Documents Concerning the Suppression of the Vientiane Rebellion (Bangkok 1962), p. 6.

Another cause for Chao Anu's discontent with Rama III was the refusal of the King to comply with Anu's demand for the return of Lao dancers and artisans in the Thai royal services to return to Vientiane. Anu's request that the Lao families who had been deported from Vientiane in 1778-1779, amounting to some ten thousand persons, be returned was also turned down. The denial of his request and the treatment of members of his entourage, consequently, must have convinced Chao Anu that his value to Siam was not as high as he had supposed. In addition, he may have taken offense at the favors shown to Chao Mangthaturat of Luang Prabang in response to the latter's submissiveness and obedient behavior.¹

After the cremation, Chao Anu returned to Vientiane and began to plot his revolt. In 1827, having seized upon a false rumor that the British gunboats were about to attack Bangkok, - coupled with the known fact that the Chao-muang (governor) of Nakorn Rachasima, which was the only town along the route to Bangkok, was absent, - Chao Anu moved his troops towards Bangkok. John Whitmore gave an interesting account of this event as follows:

The struggle that broke out in Laos in the 1820's centered on Vientiane and involved all of central Laos and the forces of both the Thai and the Vietnamese states. In 1826 Chao Anu, ruler of Vien-

¹Wyatt, op. cit., p. 24.

tiane, took advantage of a slight, real or imagined, which he received during a visit to Bangkok as an excuse to avenge all the wrongs done to his state and himself by the Thai. He attacked the Thai directly and moved swiftly toward Bangkok, spreading the word that the English were attacking from the sea. His son, ruler of Champasak, brought southern Lao troops to his support, and he almost reached Bangkok before the Thai recovered from their surprise. The Thai armies then struck back at both Vientiane and Champasak forces.¹

In his attempt to resist growing Siamese encroachment on Laos as well as to check its continued political fragmentation, Chao Anu unfortunately failed. In retaliation, Rama III ordered the complete destruction of the city of Vientiane and the deportation of the Laotian population by the tens of thousands to the east bank of the Mekong River,² as well as the public ridiculing of Chao Anu and his family in Bangkok.

In the end, the Kingdom of Vientiane and, of course, Champasak were abolished. Its population forcibly removed and resettled in northeast Thailand. Its former territories fell under the direct administrative control of the Thai provincial officials. Likewise, the Thai installed a new

¹John K. Whitmore, "The Thai-Vietnamese Struggle for Laos in the Nineteenth Century," in Nina S. Adams and Alfred W. McCoy, eds., Laos: War and Revolution (N.Y.: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), pp. 56-57.

²Philippe Devillers, "The Laotian Conflict in Perspective," in Adams and McCoy, eds., *ibid.*, p. 37.

line of rulers at Champasak and drew that state more firmly into the Thai administrative system of the Thai Northeast. Luang Prabang remained weak, to carry on alone the shade of old Lan Chang.¹ Hence, the Kingdom of Vientiane passed from existence and the territories under both Vientiane and Champasak were reduced to the same status as those of the Khorat Plateau -- namely, that of being provinces responsible to Bangkok rather than vassals.

Keyes, in his impressive study of regionalism in the Northeast, acknowledged that the Chakkri dynasty of Bangkok, in contrast to the demise of independent Lao political power, "proved to be one of the most stable and effective of Thailand's history. The strength of the dynasty, although due in no small part to the personal abilities of several of the kings, was enhanced, ironically, by the arrival of the European colonialists in mainland Southeast Asia."² Even more significant was the ability of the Siam's rulers to preserve its independence in spite of the fact that all of the neighbors had fallen under colonial administration, either French or British.

As far as the French colonial expansion is concerned, it had established itself in Cochin-China by 1826

¹Whitmore, op. cit., p. 60.

²Keyes, Isan Regionalism ... , op. cit., p. 11.

and began to advance to other parts of Indochina until 1907. Under strong pressure and protest, Thailand, in 1867-1868, ceded its authority over Cambodia and later in the following year renounced any claims to the Sipsong Chao Thai area in northern Vietnam. Successive events showed that the Thais had to give up all of the Lao areas on the left Bank of the Mekong River under the Franco-Siamese Treaty of 1893, involuntarily signed by the Thai rulers under threat of a French military ultimatum. This marked Thailand's first major territorial concessions to France.¹

Lunet de la Lajonguière asserted that at this point many French officials agreed with the Siamese, albeit for different reasons, about the essential absurdity of the division of the Lao areas on ethnic grounds. Several of these officials argued strongly for French expansion into the Khorat Plateau, since the people of this area were also "Lao."² Nevertheless, the period of French colonial expansion was over, and, with the exception of a brief interlude

¹Ibid., p. 12; See also Paitoon Meekusol, Kaan pa-ti -ruup kaan pok-krong mon-thon i-saan, B.E. 2436-2455 [The Administrative Reforms of the Isan Province, A.D. 1893-1910], (Bangkok), n.p., Document on the Exhibition of Education, The Ministry of Education, 1974, pp. 1, 82.

²E. E. Lunet de la Lajonguière, "Le Laos Siamois," Bulletin du Comite de l'Asia Francaise (Paris 1907), vol. 76, pp. 268-294.

in the Second World War when the Japanese army occupied almost all of mainland Southeast Asia, the boundaries dividing Laos and Thailand have remained unchanged since 1904.

In conclusion, in spite of its ability to evolve a "response to the West" which made possible the preservation of independence when the rest of its neighbors fell under colonial rule, Thailand still did not entirely escape the territorial ambitions of the colonial powers, and it was in the newly incorporated Lao territories that Siam suffered the greatest territorial losses. In this respect, as Keyes significantly remarks:

French colonization in Southeast Asia had the effect of halting Siamese expansion eastward and northeastward and of establishing the present boundaries of the Thai Northeast. Such internationally recognized boundaries were an innovation in an area where before control had been based on population rather than territory.¹

So far, the historical development of Northeast Thailand, in which the area has been incorporated within the greater state of Siam, was examined in some length. The struggle for power between the Thai and Laotian rulers finally led to the destruction of the Kingdom of Lan Chang and instead gave rise to the growing Thai power and influence in the area. Successive mass migrations into the Northeast, including those of many Laotian dissidents, and in the following centuries, the deportations of tens of

¹Keyes, Isan In A Thai State, op. cit., p. 16.

thousands Laotian families from Vientiane to resettle in areas around the Khorat Plateau, which constitutes the present day Northeast Thailand, had a great impact upon the future development of the region. Having been inhabited by a large number of Laotian immigrants from across the Mekong River, the Northeastern part of Thailand has gradually and finally become more "Lao" in both its culture and its 'way of life'. In the following chapter, the physical aspects of the Northeast, i.e., its geographical isolation, the economic dislocation of the region, the villagers' needs and problems, as well as a survey of the "Northeastern Problem" will be critically analyzed as part of the overall development of the Northeastern part of Thailand.

CHAPTER IV

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

AND THE "NORTHEASTERN PROBLEM"

The wind out of China, Vietnam and Laos has been blowing good as well as ill in Thailand of late, especially along the retarded Northeast frontier ... Recurrent troubles with bandits, who turn out upon capture to be underprivileged, discontented peasants, has helped to focus both attention and effort upon what has now been identified as a major national problem of modernization. Even more galvanizing to action, however, have been the discovery of a few scattered Communist cells in the jungle; the infiltrators of occasional armed subversives from North Vietnam via Laos; ... These long neglected border provinces have now been declared a strategic zone and designated for crash programs of defense and development.¹

A) General Characteristics andEconomic Problems of the Northeast

Thailand is divided into four regions; the Central Plains, the North, the South and the Northeast. The Northeast region, or the Khorat Plateau, includes about one-third of the land area of the whole country and geographically lies for the most part between latitude 14 and 18

¹Willard Hanna, Thailand's Strategic Northeast: Defense and Development, American Universities Field Staff, vol. 14, no. 1, Southeast Asia Series, (January 1966), mimeographed copy at Thailand Information Center, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, p. 1.

north and between longitude 101° and 105° east. The region is separated from the rest of the country by the Phetchaboon range and by the smaller ranges of the Dong-Phraya-yen and San-kam-paeng, and from Cambodia by the Phnom-Dong-rak mountain range. Obviously, no other region is as sharply demarcated from the Central region as is the Northeast. The Northeast also is set off from the Kingdom of Laos by the Mekong River which evidently appears to be a geographical boundary is in fact a major channel of communication between villages located in the opposite banks of the river.

Topographically, the Northeast contrasts sharply with the Central Plains of Thailand in many respects. While the Central region is a low-flooded plain which receives fresh accretions of rich top soil from the North each year, the Northeast is a dry flat plateau, with sandy fertile soil, still largely under forest or scrub. According to Robert Pendleton, the topography of the Northeast is "largely one of low reliefs, and vast expanses are covered with slow growing forests of hardwood, on soils usually too infertile and insufficiently watered to be worth clearing for agricultural uses."¹ Pendleton further noted that most of the lowlands and the lower valley slopes, on which suitable depths of rain water can be held during the summer, are

¹Robert L. Pendleton, "Land Use in Northeastern Thailand," Geographical Review 33 (1943), p. 21.

laid out in small diked fields planted to paddy. "Here and there are open grassy plains ... with thorny bamboo along the creeks. These remain uncultivated, because in the wet season they are flooded too suddenly and deeply to make their use for paddy practical and in the dry season they are too dry."¹

Geographically, the Northeast is one of the four major administrative regions of Thailand. It forms the largest region of the country, covering approximately 170,226 square kilometres (about 66,250 square miles) or 32 per cent of Thailand's land area.² Compared to the teak-covered mountainous area of the North, the rice-growing plains of the central, or the rubber, tin, and rice-producing southern peninsular, the Northeast is the driest area of all. Thailand, since it lies in the rain shadow of the mountain ranges dividing the Northeast from the rest of the country. Since these mountains stand as a barrier to the southwesterly monsoon, the Northeast as a whole is more dependent for its rainfall on the cyclonic storms that originate over the South China Sea.³

¹Ibid.,

²Hanna, op. cit., p. 2.

³Hans Platenius, The Northeast of Thailand: Its Problems and Potentialities (Bangkok: National Economic Development Board, October 1963), p. 9; see also Chu, Valentin, Thailand Today (N.Y.: Thomas Crowell Co., 1968), pp. 17-18.

The physical problems of the Northeast are enormous. Its population, which accounts for some ten millions or 32 per cent of Thailand's total population, lacks resources and is traditionally remote from the main current of national affairs.¹ In the Khorat Plateau area, the soil is poor, rainfall is scanty during most of the year and the crop yield is also uncertain. The Thai-Lao, or "Isan" (which literally means "northeast") population, which is closely akin to that of the Laotians, is generally backward and for the most part of the region, lacks the material and cultural assets of the rest of the nation. As an added handicap, the Northeast in the past "has drowsed along without either the advantages or the distractions which would have accrued from really active participation in national or regional developments."² Within the last decade, however, with the deterioration of the situation in the adjacent Indochina and the threatened overflow of trouble into Thailand, the Northeast has suddenly been subjected to massive media coverage as well as national political focus. Externally, foreign correspondents and experts who paid a visit to the Northeast unanimously conceded that the situation there had become

¹For further details see Somporn Saengchai, 'Attitudes in Northeast Thailand (Bangkok: USOM Research Division, May 1969), p. 3.

²Hanna, op. cit., p. 2.

more sensitive and delicate and that the pace of development in the region can hardly be described as impressive.¹

General Saiyud Kerdpol, Director of the CSOC (Communist Suppression Operations Command), whose primary concern focused on the military aspect of development in the Northeast, also acknowledged the importance of socioeconomic problems of the region. He observed:

The Northeast is a region which has suffered from poor soil, drought or floods from inadequate irrigation and from lack of communications. The area is poorer than the rest of Thailand although by no means as critical as in other parts of Asia. Educational facilities and medical care have been deficient. Given these handicaps and the local feelings of having been neglected by the government, it was inevitable that the Communists should exploit the situation.²

Seasonal conditions govern the Northeast farmer's existence. With a mean average rainfall of 50 inches per year, which is certainly lower than in the Central Plains or the South, and which is concentrated into a very short period, the rainy season in the Isan areas culminates in extensive flooding which continues nearly unchecked across the northern plateau from northwest to southeast and which often causes damage to the paddy fields.³

¹A. B. Santosh, "Insurgency in Thailand: The First Round," FEER 56:1 (April 6, 1967), p. 23.

²Saiyud Kerdpol, "Communist Infiltration," Speech to the American Women's Club of Thailand at Erawan Hotel, Bangkok, September 24, 1968, mimeo., n.p.

³Charles Keyes, "Thailand, Laos, and the Thai Northeastern Problem," Australia's Neighbors 4:17 (July-August, 1964), p. 1.

Throughout most of the rest of the year, the region experiences a dry season, particularly from March to May, during which water becomes scarce and many of the shallow wells in the villages dry up completely. During this difficult period, villagers in some parts of the Northeast have to walk from one to four kilometers to the nearest deep well, carrying back all the water they need for washing, cooking and drinking. It has been estimated that only about 4,000 of the 14,000 villagers in the region have a sufficient supply of water for agricultural purposes.¹ In similar vein, the onset of the monsoon rains in May or June - lasting until October - is not an unmixed blessing. While at least in the dry half of the year the rough cart tracks between villages can be used by jeeps or motorcycles, during the rains the tracks deteriorate, fill with water and become impassable.² The yearly cycle of drought and flood is punctuated by only a short period when there is sufficient water, though the intensity of this lack and surfeit of water varies from year to year.³ As a result of poor weather and road conditions,

¹Bangkok World, June 29, 1963.

²J. L. S. Girling, "Northeast Thailand: Tomorrow's Vietnam?" Foreign Affairs 46:2 (January 1968), p. 388.

³For the relationship between the drought problem in the Northeast and the possibility of major investment in the area, see Amnuay Viravarn, "A Hard Look At Investment," The Investor (Bangkok, November 1970), mimeo., n.p.

provincial officials are restricted for a large part of the year - unless they care to walk - to the district towns and to those villages which are on or near the main roads. By citing an example of some 40 to 50 per cent of the villages in the "insecure" province of Sakol Nakorn that are cut off in this way, Girling claimed that this enforced isolation helps to explain some of the difficulties met in countering the spread of subversion or insurgency.¹

An acute problem of the unseasonal drought in the Northeast is also discussed by Toshio Yatsushiro, who headed the USOM Research Division team assigned to do a field survey in several Northeastern provinces. Yatsushiro recorded the following observations:

During the period of July 11-15, 1966, I visited Nakorn Phanom province as an "observer" with a team of five Thai officials of the Department of Local Administration conducting interviews with Phuyaiban'Kamnan (village headmen) in selected amphurs and tambols (districts and groups of villages). What impressed me most during the entire visit was the conspicuous lack of rain and consequent critical shortage of water, a condition that has prevented the completion of rice transplanting in the area ... As a consequence, the people were engaged in desperate measures in the hopes of resolving their predicaments.²

Similarly, a report compiled by the Joint Thai-U.S.

¹Girling, op. cit., pp. 388-389.

²Toshio Yatsushiro Drought in the Northeast and Rainmaking Ceremony (Bangkok: USOM Research Division, July 19, 1966), p. 1, mimeo.

Military Research and Development Center, entitled "Village Security Pilot Study: Northeast Thailand," also stresses the lack of water supply as an obstacle to agriculture in the region. According to the report, rice farming and cattle husbandry are principal occupations in Udorn and other provinces of the Northeast. "Because as yet no effective means of conserving water exist, the land is dry for a greater part of the year, and because successful rice crops are greatly dependent on sufficient and timely rains, rice farming in Udorn and other provinces is a very unstable source of income. Plantations in the province on which tobacco, soya beans, cotton corn, jute and fruit trees are cultivated, occupy an area of about 155,766 rai."¹

Therefore, the Joint Thai-U.S. Research Team concluded in its reports that the relatively arid Khorat region is a generally an area of chronic water shortage. The reports gave reasons for the water shortage in the Northeast as followed:

- (1) concentration of rainfall within a few months of the year.
- (2) very high evapo-transpiration and runoff of rainwater.
- (3) inadequate catchment and storage facilities.

¹The Joint Thai-U.S. Military Research and Development Center, "Village Security Pilot Study: Northeast Thailand" (Bangkok, May 1965), p. 9.

(4) difficulty in tapping ground water sources, complicated by the presence in the ground of salt lense which render brackish much of the water that is found.¹

Similar concern over the concentration of rainfall in short period of the year in the Northeast which resulted in the futile attempt for year-round cultivation is expressed by Udhis Narkswasdi as well. "Although the rainfall is about as heavy as in the Central Plains," wrote Udhis, "the main reason alleged for low crop yield is the uneconomical use of water."² He then suggested that a large sum of money should be used to build irrigation canals. There are many large water sheds in the Northeast region as well as a surplus of run-off during the rainy season which can be held back by small resevoirs. "We do believe that if the irrigation system is developed and water from different sources is drawn into the resevoirs, there will be enough water for use all year round."³

Economically speaking, of the four major regions of

¹Ibid., p. 99; see also The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, A Public Development Program for Thailand (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), p. 7.

²Udhis Narkswasdi, A Study of the Socio-Economic Conditions of the People in the Development Areas of the Northeast (Bangkok: Research and Evaluation Division, Community Development Department, Ministry of the Interior, September 1965), p. 119.

³Ibid.,

Thailand, the Northeast is the poorest. The National Statistical Office published in mid'1960's the first regional income estimates which show that in 1962 per capita income in the Northeast was only 45 U.S. dollars¹ compared with roughly 100 U.S. dollars for the remainder of the country². Poverty in the Northeast is a rural phenomena. People who live in the towns of the Northeast are as well off as those who live in the towns of other areas (Bangkok excluded), but the farmers in the Northeast only earn on average about 65 per cent of what farmers earn in other areas of the country.³ Moreover, income among farmers is not, as has sometimes been claimed, equally distributed; the upper 2 per cent of villagers in the Northeast received ten times as much cash income per capita as the lowest 78 per cent, and also consumed

¹In 1968 an editorial of the Bangkok World revealed that with a per capita income of 1,260 baht (U.S. \$ 63), the Northeast of Thailand is still the poorest region. Of this amount, less than 600 baht (U.S. \$ 30) is in cash, the rest being in the form of produce consumed on the farm. "North-east Thailand, Part I: Economic Point of View," Bangkok World, February 3, 1968.

²Advanced Report, Household Expenditure Survey, B.E. 2505, National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister (Bangkok, Thailand, 1964).

³Millard F. Long, "Thailand: The Northeast," Group Discussion with an introduction by Kenneth T. Young, Asia 6 (Autumn 1966), p. 18.

in kind five times as much.¹

Scarcity of natural resources, geographical isolation, and growing population pressures are the primary reasons why the Northeast has been retarded in its economic development.² As far as the subject of overpopulation is concerned, Dr. Platenius observed in 1963 that:

Considering the Northeast as a whole, population pressure has not yet become an acute problem, but the decreasing fertility of the land in combination with a rapid increase in population could cause the Northeast to become a truly depressed area within a decade.³

In addition, this population pressure is also acknowledged by Block who claimed that:

With a relatively high population growth rate of close to 3 per cent per annum, this is perhaps the greatest potential problem in the Northeast. As population pressures continue to increase and already scarce resources became more so, the economic situation of the Northeast villagers is rapidly deteriorating and food shortages in the region could become a distinct possibility within the next few years.⁴

¹Janis F. Long, et al., Economic and Social Conditions Among Farmers in Chang-wad Khonkaen, mimeo., (Bangkok: Kasetsart University Press, 1963), pp. 64-65.

²Edward Block, ARD: A Counter Insurgency Program in Northeast Thailand, unpublished M.A. Thesis, Northern Illinois University, November 1968, p. 10.

³Platenius, op. cit., p. 2.

⁴Block, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

Hence, Moerman asserted that "Northeast Thailand's contribution to the nation as a whole have been people and trouble. In geography books we are told of tobacco and cattle being raised in the Northeast, but in terms of the national economy the principal export is people."¹

Agricultural land is the principal resource in the Northeast and 93 per cent of the economically active population derives its livelihood from it, with close to 95 per cent of them owning their land.² While the situation may be gradually changing, farming in the Northeast remains for most villagers primarily a subsistence operation. The farmer is mainly concerned with producing the rice and other things his family requires, and only secondarily with the goods he hopes to sell.³ In the report of the National Statistical Office cited previously, it was estimated that at least 40 per cent of village income is derived from commodities produced and

¹Michael Moerman, "Thailand: The Northeast," Group Discussion, Asia 6 (Autumn 1966), p. 7.

²The Joint Thai-U.S. Military Research and Development Center, "Social Environment of Nakorn Phanom," vol. 2, of a provincial Handbook series prepared in Bangkok, 1967, pp. 2, 3, 10.

³During the summer of 1975, I conducted a research field trip in several Northeastern provinces, such as Udorn, Khonkaen and Nong khai. Although it was almost a decade after the USOM comprehensive field research of the area, the villagers' basic livelihood and cultural attitudes largely remain the same. Nevertheless, a greater number of Northeast peasants are now adapting their lifestyles to fit with the newly-introduced industrialization of the area. Throughout the non-cultivation period, more villagers have begun to seek temporary jobs with the newly-opened factory. Instead

consumed on the farm; and for the 78 per cent of farmers in the lowest income group the relative importance of in-kind consumption is even higher. Other sources of farm income include sale of crops (35 per cent), sale of livestock (10 per cent) and off farm work (15 per cent).¹

As in the rest of Thailand, rice is the most important crop; in most provinces of the Northeast more than 80 per cent of the arable land is devoted to its production. There in lies the region's poverty - in the years 1959-1962 - rice yields averaged only 1.03 metric tons per hectare in the Northeast compared to an average of 1.66 metric tons in the remainder of the country.²

In the Central Plain, the changes required to raise agricultural incomes are primarily improvements in rice culture, such as the introduction of improved seeds and suitable second crops, the development of pest and water controls, and the use of tractors and fertilizers. In the Northeast, however, the situation is different. Over much of the area the

of relying on rice-farming, their earnings became more substantial from non-traditional kinds of job.

¹Millard F. Long, "Economic Development in Northeast Thailand: Problems and Prospects," Symposium on Northeast Thailand, Asian Survey 6:7 (July 1966), p. 56.

²National Statistical Office, Statistical Yearbook, Thailand, no. 24, (Bangkok 1966), pp. 164-166.

soils are sandy, poorly drained and not particularly fertile.¹ As previously mentioned, total rainfall in the Northeast is somewhat below that in the Central Plain, but even more important is the concentrated distribution of rain over a short period of time and the inability of the soils to conserve moisture that makes much of the Northeastern region seem arid. A recent study done by economists at the International Rice Research Institute suggests that none of the other man-made improvements mentioned above will have much effect on rice yields unless they are combined with water control.²

Consequently, as a result of the long dry period, the gentle rolling topography, and the permeable top soil of the Northeast, it is naturally difficult to design effective irrigation systems. The majority of the diversion dams and tanks constructed did not give the expected results and only 38 out of the 132 tanks built have sufficient storage capacity to justify the construction of a farm distribution system. Emphasis has then been shifted to the building of

¹Virathep Hannarong, Kaan pat-ta-naa kaan thong-thin nai paak ta-wan-ook chieng nua khong pra-thet thai. [Local Development in Northeast Thailand], M.A. Thesis, Thammasat University, Bangkok, July 24, 1963, p. 113.

²V. W. Rutten, et al., Technological and Environmental Factors in the Growth of Rice Production in the Philippines and Thailand, mimeo., International Rice Research Institute, quoted from Long, op. cit., pp. 356-357.

medium-sized reservoirs on the tributaries of the main rivers.¹

In spite of the new efforts to improve irrigation system, only a small additional area, at most approximately 10 per cent of the arable land, can as yet be brought under irrigation. Long, hence, argued in 1966 that:

... not until the mainstream dams along the Mekong River are built will it be possible to irrigate much of the Northeast, and such dams are many years away. Thus before any substantial increase in agricultural income can occur, much of the land in the Northeast presently devoted to rice must be switched to other crops - cotton, corn, soybeans, oil crops such as peanuts, castor beans, and sesame, horticultural crops and livestock.²

The psychological, social and technological changes necessary for such a re-orientation are much greater than those that would be involved in improving the rice culture of the Central Plain.³ For a subsistence farmer to stop growing the rice his family eats and to become a commercial farmer, raising, for example, cotton for sale, requires a major change in attitude as well as learning an almost wholly new set of farm practices.

¹Platenius, op. cit., p. 10.

²Long, "Thailand: The Northeast," in the Symposium, op. cit., p. 357.

³For a detailed discussion of the problems of developing peasant agriculture, see T. W. Schultz, Transforming Traditional Agriculture (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964).

With respect to the matter of new agricultural techniques, Platenius asserts that:

... the fact that the Northeast farmer has shown little inclination to change his traditional methods of cultivation might lead the casual observer to the conclusion that the farmer is indifferent to suggested changes which might improve his situation. However, his reluctance to follow certain recommendations, such as using fertilizers, stems from the fact that he has no assurance that under present circumstances such practices would bring him economic advantages.¹

As for the notion that the peasants are not enthusiastic about the new programs and techniques introduced by government officials in order to improve the villagers' standard of living, Clark Neher observed that farmers who attended the training program reported that the program failed to achieve its goal. One farmer described the situation to Neher as follows:

Our problem is not that we don't know how to use modern agricultural equipment but that we have no money to buy it. I listened to the speakers for five days at the district offices, returned home and planted my rice in the same way I had in the past. But I did receive ten baht (about U.S. 50 cents) per day for attending the meeting.²

In spite of its relative economic backwardness of the Northeast, the most fundamental characteristic of economic development in the area has been the expansion of the

¹Platenius, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

²Clark Neher, The Dynamic of Politics and Administration in Rural Thailand, Center for International Studies, Southeast Asia Series, no. 30, Ohio University, 1974, p. 38.

area and volume of agricultural production to meet external demand. Peter Bell claimed that in the last 15 years, the Northeast has become integrated into the commercial agricultural economy with the extension of upland and fibre crops on a considerable scale.¹ However, the region itself has benefited very little from these changes. As a matter of fact, the Northeast has been consistently underallocated in the national budgets. It is clear that, until the recent "emergency" arose and external funds became available for development programs, the Bangkok elite had nothing to gain from regional redistribution of income. In practice, Northeast Thailand, according to Allen Goldstein and Roger Reifler, has received an average of only 13 per cent of total public investment during the period 1961-1966 and accounted for only 18 per cent of whole Kingdom's gross domestic product.²

Thailand's overall economic picture, especially its unequal distribution of income between its urban and rural areas is well recorded by Bell and Resnick. They noted that the impressive gains in national income in the past ten years have not been reflected in increases in rural incomes,

¹Peter Bell, "Thailand's Northeast: Regional Underdevelopment, Insurgency and Official Responses," Pacific Affairs 42:1 (Spring 1969), pp. 47-54; for details see James C. Ingram, Economic Change in Thailand since 1850 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955).

²Allen Goldstein and Roger Reifler, "Northeast Thailand: An Economic Profile", mimeo., (Bangkok: TIC/CU, February 26, 1968), p. 1.

nor in the generation of employment in the metropolis. While there has been investment in social overhead capital, much of the growth has been concentrated in Bangkok.¹ The industrial promotion policy has been indiscriminate in awarding privileges to new enterprises, regardless of their impact on generating linkages. This can be seen in the proliferation of assembly plants and the neglect of the agricultural sector.

Hence, industry does not offer an alternative to agriculture in the Northeast; industry will grow with agriculture, not in its place. In the 1960 census only 7 per cent of the labor force in the Northeast were reported as holding non-farm jobs. This undoubtedly understates the importance of the non-farm sector, for many villagers hold part time jobs and 15 per cent of their income comes from off-farm activities. But of those listed in the 1960 census as employed in manufacturing, 50 per cent were involved in the processing of agricultural commodities, and this seems likely to remain the major emphasis of industry in the future.²

¹Peter F. Bell and Stephen Resnick, "The Contradictions of Post-War Development in Southeast Asia," Journal of Contemporary Asia 1:1 (Autumn 1970), p. 42.

²Long, "Thailand: The Northeast," Symposium, op. cit., p. 158.

In the final analysis, the economic situation of the Northeast, as a contributor to the security problem, stems mainly from its low level of development, as compared with other sections of the country and to the potentially disastrous consequences of rapid population growth. The relationship between the region's relative economic deprivation and peasant discontent can, therefore, be traced to an increased awareness by Northerners of the disparity between their own standard of living and that enjoyed by other parts of the country, particularly the Central Plains and the Southern mineral-rich peninsula.¹ This has become a critical factor underlying political dissidence in the region and is best documented by Franklin Smith as follows:

It is my belief that the present security situation in the Northeast is not communist-inspired, nor Communist-fomented nor Communist-led, in the sense usually given these terms. It is my belief that the roots of the present situation lie in peasant discontent with their economic status and with the failure of their government to take forthright action to see that the peasants of the Northeast share the benefits of government alike with other regions of the country.²

Until recently, as the intellectual communities in various campuses and the majority of "educated" Thais,

¹Editorial, "Behind the Insurgency Problems: GNP," The Bangkok World, August 30, 1970, p. 6.

²Franklin L. Smith, "The Security Situation in Northeast Thailand: An Evaluation," The National War College Forum, mimeo., (Bangkok: TIC/CU, February 1967), p. 56.

particularly the journalists, search for new explanations of insurgency, they are more convinced that the real issue driving rural people to communism is the exploitation of social injustices¹ - a sense of hopelessness in a society where administration and the legal system deal differently with the rich and the poor, the privileged and the underprivileged. The social injustices also include exploitation of the people through corruption, bribes, and prebendalism, widely practiced by the ruling generals.

B) Security, Needs and Problems

The problem of security in the Northeast is largely the aspect of economic deprivation as well as its remoteness discussed earlier. As has already been noted, the area is so large, poor and remote that it would even tax the resources of a modern industrial state to raise its level of development to that of the rest of the country.² Brinton's analysis of the source of revolution in the society, especially the relationship between political and economic motives of the discontented groups seem to be applicable to the situation in Northeast Thailand. Brinton commented that

¹Editorial, "Behind the Insurgency," op. cit., p. 6.

²Girling, "Northeast Thailand: Tomorrow's Vietnam"? op. cit., p. 389.

there are two main foci for economic motives of discontent. First, and much less important, is the actual misery of certain groups in a given society. Of much greater importance, nevertheless, is the existence among a group, or groups, of a feeling that prevailing conditions limit or hinder their economic activity.

We can see that certain economic grievances usually not in the form of economic distress, but rather a feeling on the part of some of the chief enterprising groups that their opportunity for getting on in this world are unduly limited by political arrangements, would seem to be one of the symptoms of revolution.¹

Illustrative of the low standard of socio-economic development in the Northeast, an urgent problem which must be solved by the Central Government, can be found in a 1967 report drawn from the study of Nakorn Phanom Province, at the time the poorest province in the area. With the total population of over half a million, Nakorn Phanom had an average of 1,200 persons per well, a ratio of doctors to people of 1:32,000, infant mortality rates of 60 to 116 per 1,000 births (1957-1964); only 0.3 per cent of the villagers were served by electricity and many were cut off from the outside world during the rainy season.² To make matters

¹Crane Brinton, The Anatomy of Revolution (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1965), pp. 33-34.

²Changwad Handbook, Nakorn Phanom, Thailand, vol. II, Social Environment (Bangkok: Military Research and Development Center, 1967), p. 17.

worse, some villages had only one teacher to about 100 children who usually lived in the nearby town and for security purpose and there was usually one policeman to 2,000 people.¹

The health situation in the Northeast is unsatisfactory as shown by data on morbidity, mortality and the number and distribution of health services, fertilities, and manpower. In 1969 mortality in the Northeast was 730 per 100,000 population, compared with 670 for the Kingdom as a whole. However, the death rate has been declining since the mid-sixties.²

A recent World Health Organization (WHO) health survey in 15 Northeast chang-wads (plus the northern province of Chiangmai) suggest that there is hardly a healthy person in the region.³ Chronic conditions include intestinal parasites, dysentery, and inadequate diets. Near chronic conditions result from unfavorable economic conditions on the

¹Victor Anant, "Siam: The Next Domino," New Statesman (April 29, 1966), p. 601.

²Development Economic Group, Northeast Thailand Economic Development Study: Final Report, vol. I, Recommended Development Budget And Foreign Assistance Projects, 1972-1976, prepared by Louis Berger, Inc., (Bangkok 1972), p. 16.

³J. Bieddrager and Z. J. Buzo, Report on a Health Survey of the Lower Mekong Basin (New Delhi: World Health Organization Regional Office for Southeast Asia, 1968).

one hand and from a complex of social and cultural conditions on the other. According to the WHO report, for example, protein malnutrition is fairly widespread among the rural population. This syndrome results as much from food and culinary habits as from the absence of protein in the diet. Other conditions such as intestinal infections result primarily from food and sanitation practices. These conditions indicate that that health problems are in a large measure social problems, and that any strategy for the improvement of health in the Northeast must consider health education as an integral part.¹

In addition to the poor health conditions in the region, the average diet provides less than 2,000 calories.² Protein deficiency is prevalent and a major factor in the high incidence of disease. In Thailand as a whole the ratio of one doctor to 7,300 people is considered inadequate. The Northeast unfortunately has a three times greater shortage, with one doctor for every 20,000 people³, although the ratio has improved over the last years. Moreover, in rural areas of the Northeast about 24.1 per cent of the communes (a group

¹Ibid.,

²Dieticians advise 2,500 calories as basic requirements for a moderately active person of fifty-six kilograms.

³Editorial, "Northeast Thailand: Part II -"Economic Point of View," GNP, The Bangkok World, February 3, 1968.

of villages) have no health office at all. Generally speaking, the majority of those villagers who live in rural area, especially in the Northeast, are economically poor, culturally traditional, and lack modern health services. In this sense, Snit Smuckarn suggested that major basic social problems in Thailand are similar to those of other underdeveloped countries. They are (1) poverty; (2) low education; and (3) low health.¹

In the entire Northeast, there are 71 roads, with a total length of 1954 kilometres, registered as provincial roads. Some of these are in good condition, others could be rehabilitated at small cost, but a large proportion have no maintenance and, as has been pointed out, become impassable during the height of the rainy season.² Under the national provincial road program most of these roads will eventually be converted into all-weather roads, specific standards to be determined by density of traffic and local conditions. Moreover, under a different project several provincial roads are to be built near the border, mainly for security reasons, with USOM paying 50 per cent of the construction cost.

¹Snit Smuckarn, "Planned Social Change: A Case of Thailand," Thai Journal of Development Administration (Bangkok: July 1970), p. 544.

²Platenius, op. cit., p. 84.

Rural roads are another category: although they are of great important to the local people, they have received little attention in the past. The majority of these roads were constructed many years ago, nearly all of them having embankments and bridges, but for the lack of maintenance they have fallen into disrepair. In spite of their poor condition, many of the rural roads are serviced by buses which usually are overcrowded and overloaded.¹ Naturally, they became impassable for several months during the rainy season. Hence, Platenius argued that because these rural roads form an important link in the communication system, connecting thousands of villages with the highways and provincial road system, a program of rehabilitation and maintenance of rural roads deserved high priority.²

The principal benefit of an improved road system in the Northeast will be its effect on the welfare of the people. For example, any improvement in the road system will result in greater mobility of the people. It becomes possible for them to have closer contact with nearby villages

¹The most popular service vehicles in the remote areas of the Northeast are those of Japanese make, e.g., Toyota or Datsun. They are comparatively inexpensive to purchase and to maintain. Also, they have low gas consumption, and the parts are cheap and can be bought everywhere in the country.

²Platenius, op. cit., p. 85.

and towns, and to look for economic opportunities elsewhere. It will stimulate migration among the Northerners, whose prospects for better living at home are dim. Besides, government officials, such as district officers, health officers, school inspectors and police could discharge their duties more frequently and more efficiently, especially in the sensitive areas of remote Isan.

As far as educational facilities are concerned, elementary schools are of special importance to the Northeast, where 90 per cent of the population lives in rural areas and where, with few exceptions, the village school provides the only formal education for the younger generation. Education has also political implications. The Northeast is susceptible to subversive activities, and agitators take advantage of the ignorance of the people in isolated and poverty-stricken villages. Better education would certainly be an effective weapon to combat communism and to pave the way for better understanding between the Central Government and the Isan villagers.

Records show that elementary schools in the Northeast do not get their share of support from the government fairly as compared to other parts of the Kingdom. Although the region has one-third of the population, it receives only one-fifth of the funds allotted to school construction. In 1961, out of a total of 600 new primary schools built in rural districts of the entire country, only 177 were con-

structed in the Northeast.¹

Further analysis concerning village security should include the fact that much of the rest of the Northeast and other rural sections of the country have a long history of thieving and banditry. This problem still exists, and it constitutes an ever-present "threat" with which villagers must concern themselves regularly. Lee Huff observed that Thai and other Asians are bemused by Westerners who simplistically equate the behavior of the entire Buddhist population to their image of the pious, ascetic, non-worldly Buddhist monk found in school text books.² In fact, violence in Buddhist societies is not uncommon, as has so vividly pointed out by several scholars.

By the same token, Leach also claimed that the practical consequences of Buddhist ethics are greatly misunderstood by Europeans. He states that:

It is paradoxically consistent with Buddhist passivity that the exercise of ruthless power is deemed to be a demonstration of charismatic merit which justifies itself. He who succeeds is good; he who fails is evidently evil ... Statistics make it quite clear that in all countries where

¹Ibid.,

²Lee W. Huff, "Village Reactions to Local Threats: A Study in Northeast Thailand," Advanced Research Projects Agency, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Prepared for delivery at the 1966 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, (New York City: Statler-Hilton, September 6-10, 1966), mimeo., p. 2.

Therava Buddhism is the official religion, the incidence of murder and crimes of violence is quite exceptionally high.¹

Although this argument is still open to more discussion and debates as well as solid evidence to prove the point, it has provided us with new insights of the role of Buddhism in world societies. Nevertheless, crimes that take place in the Isan provincial areas are committed by different types of outlaws. As a result, villagers often distinguish between thieves (kamoy) who steal livestock, and bandits (jone) who rob stores and homes. The kamoy, who concentrates on stealing water buffaloes and oxen, are the greatest threat to the villagers. On the other hand, the bandit type of incident occurs much less often.

The majority of villagers, especially Isan peasants in remote areas, apparently have very little faith in the police. It is generally perceived that this was because the villagers rarely saw a policeman, a view which is widely shared in Bangkok. However, recent studies revealed that the anti-police sentiment among Isan villagers stems mainly from the fact that the local police force often abuses its power and rarely does its duty properly. A 1965 Pentagon

¹Edmund Leach, "The Political Future of Burma," Futuribles, Studies in Conjecture, Bertrand de Jouvenel, ed., (Geneva: Droz, 1963), pp. 131-132; see also Kenneth W. Morgan, "The Buddhists: The Problem and the Promise," Asia 4 (Winter 1966), pp. 72-84; Holmes Welch, "Asian Buddhists and China," FEER 40 (April 4, 1963), pp. 15-21.

team summed up the situation as follows:

The problem is not that the policeman never comes, but that he never comes at the right time, and that when he does come he is usually ineffective. Some villagers complained bitterly that when they informed the police of a theft, they never came out to help. Others replied laconically that the police usually came to ask questions after a crime, but merely filed the information at the amphur, and never caught anybody.¹

The Northeast villagers' attitude towards the police is very well expressed in the USOM survey report conducted by DR. Yatsushiro, who states that:

I talked with Buddhist priests who came from Amphur (district) That Phanom, Nakorn Phanom Province. They told me that they used to visit the villagers and made a speech to them from time to time in sensitive areas. Most village people complained that the police were not fair. If the police suspected some villagers as being Communists, they would arrest and mistreat them without any investigation. People were kicked, beaten and punched, according to the villagers. The village people said that persons were arrested on this charge if the police disliked them. Others were arrested if they were related to someone held on charges of being communistic.²

As far as the relationship between village security

¹The Joint Thai-U.S. Military Research and Development Center, Village Security Pilot Study: Northeast Thailand, op. cit., p. 317.

²Toshio Yatsushiro, Studies on Northeast Villages in Thailand, vol. II, "Village Meetings and Communism," (Bangkok: USOM Research Division, June 1967), pp. 9-10; The allegations are mostly confirmed when many villagers I came into contact during the course of my 1975 field trip to the Northeast complained to me about police corruption, mistreatment and abuse of power.

and insurgency is concerned, the people living near or in the areas where the Communist terrorists are most active are terrified by the ease which the CTs (Communist Terrorists) are able to roam about freely, threatening or attacking the helpless villagers. Again in a USOM report, a local village headman of Tambol Kusakam in Amphur (district) Wanonnawat "was ambushed and killed outside his village in January 1967." As a consequence of this and the worsening situation in the area in general, many leaders from different villages in the area took up nightly refuge in the nearby MDU (Mobile Development Unit) camp.¹

Therefore, according to a USOM Resident Study of villages in the Northeast, all researchers agreed that local police is one of the most important obstacles to rural development and national integration. Governor Anek Sitthiprasart, during the course of personal interview, frankly admitted to me that abuse of power and corruption by police officers in rural areas are typical, widespread and difficult to eliminate. The root of this problem lies with the chain of command in the Police Department itself. Theoretically, the governor has superior power to command every government officials, including the police, holding positions in the province. Unfortunately, in practice, only the provincial police commander has the authority to command and punish his

¹Personal interview, Governor Anek Sitthiprasart, at the Governor's mansion in the Province of Udorn, July 1975.

own police force. Governor Anek acknowledged that although he knew of many incidents in which innocent villagers were cheated or arrested with no legal course other than "personal vendetta", he could not do anything about it but report the incident to the police chief in the province. "As long as the police commanders are not willing to cooperate with me to solve the problems of police brutality, corruption and abuse of power, rural insurgency, especially in the Northeast, will remain with us and will likely become worsen in the future."¹

In some cases, the Isan villagers' bitterness towards local police turned to mistrust and serious grievances. The USOM study again disclosed that in the past, the police had caused the Northeast villagers considerable trouble. For example, when a robbery took place and the police was asked to come and investigate, usually the police stayed in the village, ate up the villagers' food supply and finally left without making arrest. This practice would naturally stir up villagers' discontent and alienation. "The villagers then have to face up with double loss: not only did they lose their property, but they lost their scarce and precious food as well."²

¹Personal interview, Governor Anek Sitthiprasart, at the governor's mansion in the province of Udorn, July 1975.

²Yatsushiro, Village Attitudes and..., op.cit., p. 43.

In order to extend the discussion of villager-official contacts, it is necessary to note that change and development in a predemocratic village area such as the Northeast of Thailand depend very much upon an external input of ideas and resources. Ralph Dakin, a USOM researcher, argued that the Thai villager tends to be cautious and ritualistic in trying to cope with a powerful force he does not fully understand and cannot control. As Dakin wrote,

Yet, he also displays a marked pragmatic-opportunistic streak and a ready willingness to try new things. But his opportunities are limited by his meager knowledge, technical skill and resources. Outside inputs are, therefore, required for significant change and development.¹

According to Dakin, the extent and character of official-villager contacts can be analyzed as the following:

- (1) Thai officials continue, generally to have infrequently contacts with villages in the Northeast.
- (2) The amount of official-villager contacts varies greatly from villages to villages. Only the village favored by the district officer is visited frequently, while the rest of villages have not been visited or visited only once during a certain period.
- (3) Negative comment on the character of official

¹Ralph Dakin, Security and Development in Northeast Thailand: Official-Villager Contacts and Villages Loyalities--General Summary, Field Research in 18 Villages of Ubol, Roi-et and Udorn during February, March and April 1968. USOM Research Division, Bangkok, Thailand, September 1968.

contacts with villagers represented the findings of most researchers.

(4) The police are clearly regarded as the worst offenders in terms of negative behavior toward villagers, according to field researchers reports. They ranked as high as any official in negligent behavior and highest of all official in abusive behavior.¹

According to the overall socio-economic and security picture of the Northeast, an attempt is also made by the USOM research team to draw up a comprehensive list of questions designed to acquire data concerning the most important "needs" and "problems" of Northeast villagers together with an estimate of their relative importance based on a 100 per cent scale.

(1)	Adequate water supply and control system	100%
(2)	Inter-village roads and bridges	80%
(3)	Increased farm crop production	80%
(4)	Adequate protection against Communist terrorists, cattle thievery and banditry	80%
(5)	Land problem (clarification of land ownership, land tax too high, desire more farm land)	80%
(6)	Elimination of Government corruption, establishment of legal justice; a drastic change in government officials' dictatorial attitude towards village people	75%
(7)	Desire more frequent visits to villages by all kinds of government officials	75%
(8)	Establishment of better system of credits, marketing; standardized weights and measures; elimination of middle man, better prices for farm products	70%

¹Ibid., p. 3.

- | | | |
|------|--|------------------|
| (9) | Elimination, relaxation, or modification of numerous restrictive government regulations, especially the ban on cutting timber trees for personal use | 70% |
| (10) | Desire medical services and health improvement | 60% |
| (11) | Desire establishment or expansion of school | 50% |
| (12) | Religious promotion, improvement of "wat" (temple) structures | 50% ¹ |

In sum, although improvements have been made, the development of infrastructure facilities is still inadequate. Obviously, money has been spent, some development has taken place, but because of the vast area and years of neglect, these benefits have not reached all parts. Less than three per cent of the cultivated land is under irrigation, compared with forty three per cent in the Central Plain. This lack of water alone is one major limiting factor in the development of the Northeast.

In the final analysis, the Northeast has, in the past, been neglected, mistreated, and refused its equal share of wealth and development, as compared to other parts of the country. However, in recent years, its strategic location, its budding war of "national liberation", and the presence of a large number of American personnel on its territory, have caused great concern to the Central Government in Bangkok. Finally, the realization has grown that the "Northeastern Problem" could develop into a large

¹Yatsushiro, Village Attitudes and ..., op.cit., pp. 15-17.

scale "civil war" of the Chinese type which would inevitably threaten the security and jeopardize the integration and independence processes of the entire nation.

C) Peasant Personality,

Political Culture and Socialization.

A Thai village is not an island in itself; it is a part of a wider network of social relationships and it is embedded in a civilization.¹

Thailand has, in the past, been regarded as a model of social and political stability in an otherwise turbulent area. The continuity of its political system, its favorable land position, reasonable economic growth and social mobility and the absence of an organized left are all as having contributed to this in the past. As far back as the early 1950's, Mary Haas observed that modern Thailand presented the picture of a rural or village society still operating in terms of the traditional value structure. Compulsory personal labor has been abolished, and limitation on land ownership are largely forgotten; the peasant, therefore, operated under few government restrictions. Hence, basic divisions of the society are seen as the classless rural population and the class-structured urban popula-

¹S. J. Tambiah, Buddhism and Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 1.

tion.¹ Nevertheless, it is also important to note that the Thai society is, and has been, undergoing a process of fundamental change for some time.

Contrary to the traditional view, Michael Williams argued that Thailand's civil or military rulers have been, for some time, incapable of reconciling in the long run in Thailand. He therefore criticized the specialists on Thailand whose main concerns are with problems such as "integration" and "subversion", claiming that they tend to subscribe to the above view because they come to share the perspective of the country's rulers rather than that of the ruled. Therefore, Williams suggested,

"the problems of the Third World should be looked at from the point of view of the great mass of the poor people of these countries. For it is taken as axiomatic that their interests are somehow the same as those of their leaders. The study of the rural masses or the urban poor is largely left to the anthropologist or sociologist. A political 'science' that does not place them at the center of its study and not the urban elite so meticulously studies, is likely to be bypassed by the march of history."²

This investigation is thus an attempt to study the development of Northeast Thailand by focusing on the vast rural mass which could be classified as an examination of

¹Mary R. Haas, "The Declining Descent Rule for Rank in Thailand," American Anthropologist 53 (1951): 585-586.

²Michael C. Williams, "Thailand: The Demise of a Traditional Society," Journal of Contemporary Asia 3:4 (April 1973): 427.

the Thai social pyramid from the bottom upward instead of from the top down to the bottom.

According to Clark Neher, rural Thailand often gives the impression of a somnolent community irrelevant, or at least peripheral, to events in Bangkok. However, behind the facade of isolated, traditional, static life is a vibrant political life every bit as fascinating as politics in the capital.¹

Nevertheless, while Thailand presents on the surface a picture of social cohesiveness, the tensions which result from both regional inequalities and the boom character of Bangkok's recent growth have severely undermined the traditional society. In Bell and Resnick's view, while the rural masses stagnate in the countryside, sharing but the crumbs of rapid development, few places in Southeast Asia have grown so dramatically as Bangkok. Like the other western-created capitals, Bangkok has become less and less a part of Thailand and more a part of the West.²

For centuries, the independence and sovereignty of a country depended on the wealth and strength of the capital

¹Clark Neher, The Dynamics of Politics and Administration in Rural Thailand, Ohio University Center for International Studies, Paper in International Studies, Southeast Asia, no. 30 (1974): 1.

²Bell and Resnick, op.cit., p. 41.

city, but from recent events it can be seen that a country's stability now depends on the primary units of the society, the villages scattered throughout the nation.¹ Thailand is no exception. This fact is also confirmed by Huntington who asserted that the support of rural element is only a precondition to the development of political institutions by a military regime.² Hence, the praetorian Thai society, greater attention should be given to the issue of rural-urban relationship and its important to the success of development and progress of the nation. Theoretically, Huntington maintained that the social roots of radical praetorianism lie in the gap between city and country and that the country will inevitably become the continuing source of political instability. Even worse, however, is the countryside turns against the political system, if the rural masses are politically mobilized against the existing order, then the "government faces not instability but revolution and fundamental change."³ Northeast Thailand's political instability and the budding Communist insurgency also represented an extreme case of the ignorance of Bangkok regimes in dealing with regional political grievances and

¹Kamsing Srinawk, "The Village Situation," Solidarity (April 1970): 31.

²Huntington, Political Order in . . ., op.cit., p. 242.

³Ibid., p. 209.

economic backwardness of the Northeast.

As has been the case, most national-level developments in Thailand have taken place in Bangkok. And although the great majority of Thai live in rural areas, it is not altogether misleading to refer to Thailand as a city-state nation. The city has always been the center of progress. Villagers must depend upon wealth, intelligence, and good will of the city elites to achieve prosperity and a share of development. As a result, while Bangkok at the present increases its material wealth, a great number of villages in the Northeast, deficient in the bare necessities of life, are slowly disintegrating. The inhabitants are beginning to emigrate, to seek other places in which to make their living. Their reason for migrating indicates that the deterioration of the villages in the Northeast is the decrease in opportunities for making a decent living.¹

In Neher's point of view, Thai villagers, including the Northerners, conform to certain patterns, i.e., they are distinguished more by their similarities than by their differences. A self-sufficient subsistence economy, irrigated rice farming, the central-village Buddhist temple, several influential kinship grouping, and common religious ceremonies (including the worship of spirits) are the most

¹Kamsing Srinawak, op.cit., p. 2.

important characteristics of almost every Thai village.¹

A similar conception is also expressed by Somdee Bunying, who contended that the vast majority of Thai, perhaps as many as 85 per cent, live in communities ranging from large to small, where they usually share similar characteristics and culture. "The most striking feature of these villages is their similarity and integral homogeneity. A Thai peasant, no matter what his geographical or family background, could move to a distant village and find that the general pattern of its social life was completely familiar. All of rural Thailand seems to have a single basic cultural pattern."²

Historically, the Thai peasantry have played a negligible role in the politics of their country. According to Prasarn Wongyai, the Thai peasants, as a whole, belong to the lower class within the Thai society. Their lives, their future are directed from above. Farming, particularly of rice, is a prestigious occupation in rural Thailand.³ The ownership of land and the associated characteristic of

¹Neher, The Dynamics of ..., op.cit., p. 2.

²Somdee Bunying, "Problems in Rural Communities Development in Thailand," Journal of Rural Community Development (Bangkok) 48 (1969): 211.

³Prasarn Wongyai, "Elites and Power Structure in Thailand," Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1974, pp. 55-56.

relative wealth serve to differentiate the rich from the poor families. Nevertheless, ownership of land is not essential for prestige and power in the village; the poorest by virtue of many years he has served as a monk may rank well above a rich farmer who has never done any temple service.¹

Traditionally, the lives of Thai peasants have been very much at the discretion of their ruling authority. In their contacts with the government bureaucracy, power and authority (Am-naat ni-yom) are perceived as "everything". Through his direct and indirect contact with the political system, every Thai learns of the overwhelming power of the bureaucracy (Khaa-rach-kaan) and its direct influence over his daily life.² Recently, with all the changes at the cabinet and parliamentary levels and the suspension of democratic processes following the October 1976 coup d'état, the majority of population in rural areas essentially remains uninvolved except for some dissident groups and the growing number of poverty-stricken villagers in the Northeast and the South.

¹Ruth Benedict, Thai Culture and Behavior, an unpublished data paper no. 4, Southeast Asia program, Cornell University (Ithaca, N.Y.: Department of Far Eastern Studies, Cornell University, 1952), p. 89-94.

²David Morrell, "Power and Parliament in Thailand: The Futile Challenge, 1968-1971," Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1974, pp. 51-52.

Elitism could, of course, never have developed to such a degree, had it not been for the inherent submissiveness of the population as a whole. Crozier claimed that so many aspects of Thai life militate in this direction: the widespread observance of Buddhism, the language in which nobody of inferior status may address a superior without expressions of due deference, the way the children are brought up in the home and in school to accept and not to question. Certainly this passivity can be seen in subsequent attitudes towards all officialdom. Even the absence of a colonial past has eliminated a potential focus of popular rebellion or resentment.¹

Generally speaking, most people, including the Thai, have experienced government action that markedly affected their lives, such as government irrigation projects, communication schemes, education, and the visible maintenance of public order; so that today few are within the realm of complete nascence. Hindley then concluded that many peasants as well as urban poor are aware of the instrumental nature of political power for effecting personal or environmental change; and many are remarkably well informed as to the operation and actors of the political system within which they live. But few believe that their own

¹Brian Crozier, ed., Thailand: The Dual Threat to stability, Conflict Studies, no. 44 (London: The Institute for the Study of Conflict, May 1974), p. 6.

political action could possibly lead to an improvement in their lot.¹

By the same token, the Thai political scientist, Tulyathep Suwannachinda, remarked that in a society like Thailand, in which social class differentiation and class consciousness are so great, most people perceive themselves to be inferior to someone else. He states that:

The crucial political problem which this strong class structure presents is whether democracy--- a governing system and way of life which emphasizes equality---and Thai political culture, which accepts inequality as not only natural but proper, are at all compatible. Or will it happen that in Thai style democracy, equality will not be considered an important element?²

In addition, it has been suggested that the notion of the "spectator role" is the basic orientation toward mass media content among the Thai, in which the Isan villagers are no exception. This means that the individual inclines to view impersonally the content of communication media, without much sense of involvement and without any impulse to act. This seems to be true in the Thai case, since the Thai culture does not approve the overt showdown of feeling in the form of hostility, extreme passion, and aggression, and so these unapproved psychological outlets

¹Donald Hindley, "Thailand: The Politics of Passivity," Pacific Affairs 41:3 (Fall 1968): 360.

²Tulyathep Suwannachinda, "As you please, Sir ... Political Culture in Thai Society," (in Thai) Social Science Review 10:3 (March 1972). Translated and quoted from Morrell, "Power and Parliament ...," op.cit., p. 52.

are released through the participation in the mass media. Thus this basic orientation toward the mass media provides the Thai people with a learning experience against taking any overt action, thereby impeding political participation.¹

An example of the lack of political participation among Thai villagers even when the issue is directly involved with their day-to-day life and basic livelihood, is displayed in the case of the farmer's cooperative. In Thailand, where farmer's cooperatives have not been a success, the government has closed its Ministry of Cooperatives and initiated another program (the Farmer Assistant Program), officially intended to assist the peasants.²

Further analysis of peasant's passivity and their lack of political and social cooperation should include the activity of political parties and the low level of peasant participation. As a matter of fact, the political party in Thailand is always weak and has never represented any substantial political force. Until late in the 1960's, its

¹James Mosel, "Communication Patterns and Political Socialization in Transitional Thailand," in Lucian Pye, ed., Communications and Political Development (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 225-226.

²Konrad Kingshill, Ku-Daeng-The Red Tomb: A Village Study in Northern Thailand (Bangkok: Bangkok Christian College, 1969), p. 108.

major activities had been largely concentrated in the urban and metropolitan areas, while the countryside has largely been neglected.

Nevertheless, an exercise of caution and restraint should accompany the analysis of peasant's passivity and its lack of cooperation and socio-political participation. Morrell warned that to push too far the direction of "loose structure" and lack of social organization is "to oversimplify, to misjudge the potential for cooperative, associational, organized behavior, a potential which does exist in Thailand. Social cohesion results from pragmatic assessment of mutual gains, and groups will stick together if each member perceives that he is better off by so doing."¹

In fact, farmers in most of the villages occasionally join together to harvest crops collectively, the so-called "long-khaek ceremony". Traditionally, the villagers help prepare the party whenever any family conducts a religious ceremony, either a wedding or a death. Traditionally, they joined forces in building new homes, though this occurs rarely at a present time. Local cooperation in sharing irrigation water is particularly strong and historically prevalent in North Thailand and also in the Northeast as well.²

¹Morrell, op. cit., p. 53.

²For details, see Michael Moerman, Agricultural Change and Peasant Choice in a Thai Village (Berkeley and

In spite of some basic social cooperation displayed by the Thai villagers, their attitudes towards politics and the desire to participate remain aloof and unattached. An example of villagers' passivity in politics is generally seen in the general election in which the degree of peasant participation has been low. The peasantry vote largely because they have been told to by village headmen and district officers. This has also been the case in the latest General Elections in 1975 and 1976 when it was reported that the government and other conservative but heavily-funded parties won the elections because the villagers in remote areas simply voted according to the order of government officials, although the degree of peasantry's compliance varied in different areas. Accordingly, Williams asserted that "the peasantry's inarticulate acquiescence in government and indifference to national politics are fundamental to the Thai political system. Without it the elite would, subject to some sort of social control, not be able to define Thailand's interests or the 'nation' as its own."¹

Marx, in his study of the peasants in preindustrial France, noted that the peasants are a social class and, at

Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967; William Klausner, "The World and Nong Khon: Continuity and Change," Journal of Social Science (Bangkok) 10 (July 1972), pp. 121-132.

²Williams, op. cit., p. 427.

the same time, are not. If they are not a social class, they form a vast mass of people "much as potatoes in a sack form a sackful of potatoes."¹ Marx goes on to say:

Insofar as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that divide their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes and put them in hostile contrast to the latter, they form a class. Insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among these small peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no unity, no national union and no political organization, they do not form a class.²

Unquestionably, we can agree with Marx that the peasants, either in preindustrial France or in present day Thailand, can be viewed as a mass of "discrete, atomized and alienated people," to follow a familiar characterization of the mass. In an attempt to elaborate the concept further, Turner and Killian maintained that:

In its simplest form, the mass is a number of separate individuals each responding independently to the aggregate, since it involves a common focus of attention and common response. But it is less than a collectivity since it lacks interaction tying the entire group together.³

As for the subject of the peasants' orientation, Marx

¹Karl Marx, "The Eighteen Brumaire of Louis Napoleon," (English translation in 1898), in Lewis A. Coser and Bernard Rosenberg, eds., Sociological Theory: A Book of Readings (N.Y.: McMillan, 1957), p. 31.

²Ibid., p. 374.

³Ralph Turner and Lewis M. Killian, Collective Behavior (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1957), p. 95.

arg ed:

(The peasants) cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an unlimited governmental power, that protects them against the other classes and sends them the rain and sunshine from above. The political influence of the peasants, therefore, finds its expression in the executive power subordinating society to itself.¹

The peasant's attitude and role in politics in John Kautsky's point of view is peaceable, submissive and obedient; he tends to be cautious and concerned with survival. He regards manual labor as his natural and inevitable lot and sees it as indistinguishable from the rest of his life, not separated from it by being carried on away from home or only during hours of the day or certain years of his life. The peasant's view of his work is therefore integrated with his view of nature and it is closely linked to his religious belief.²

Accordingly, on the basis of the Marxian conceptual scheme, Boonsanong contended that it is possible to perceive the peasants of Thailand both as a social class and as a mass of separate individuals. Hence the Thai peasants form a mass in the sense that, as residents of village "communities," their social contacts are largely confined

¹Marx, op. cit., p. 375.

²John Kautsky, The Political Consequences of Modernization (N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1972), p. 32.

to the boundaries of their own neighborhood.¹ An example of this behavior is provided by an American anthropologist, Herbert Phillips, who maintained that the majority of the Thai peasants in a Northeastern village "lives and dies within the radius of not more than fifty miles of where they were born."²

In the final analysis, Boonsanong concluded that:

Thus far, we have considered the possibilities of visualizing, in theoretical terms, the Thai peasants as a mass, a social class, and finally a status group. It has been demonstrated that theoretically an aggregation of people in society such as the peasants in Thailand can be treated on the basis of any scientific concept which maybe used as a "tool" of analysis depending on the specific objectives involved ... However, a conception of Thai peasants in terms of a status group seems most relevant and useful ... As a distinct status group, the Thai peasants share a common life situation, i.e., their mode of existence is based upon socio-cultural and socio-economic condition.³

Political Culture and Socialization of the Northeast

Gabriel Almond theoretically defines the concept of "political culture" as a particular pattern of orientations to political actions embedded in every political system.⁴

¹Boonsanong Punyodyana, "Social Structure, Social System," in Dieter-Evers, ed., op. cit., p. 89.

²Herbert Phillips, Thai Peasant Personality (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 99.

³Boonsanong Punyodyana, op. cit., p. 92.

⁴Gabriel Almond, "Comparative Political Systems," in

What Almond meant is that in any operating political system there is an ordered subjective realm of politics which gives meaning to the polity, discipline to institutions, and social relevance to individual acts. Thus, the concept of "political culture" suggests that the traditions of a society, the spirit of its public institutions, the attitudes and the collective reasoning of its citizenry, and the style and operating codes of its leaders are not just random products of historical experience but fit together as a part of a meaningful whole and constitute an intellegible web of relations.¹

Sidney Verba contended that the political culture consists of "the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place. It encompasses both the political ideals and the operating norms of a polity."² Lucian Pye added that a "political culture" is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the individuals who currently make up the

Heinz Eulau, ed., Political Behavior, A Reader in Theory and Research (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1956), p. 34.

¹Ibid.,

²Verba and Pye, eds., Political Culture and ..., op. cit., p. 8.

systems.¹

In his attempt to apply the concept of political culture to the analysis of political development, Pye contended that it is possible to throw light on the various combination of values which may be the prime causes of frustration and disappointment over the prospects of national development.²

As for the relationship between the concepts of political culture and political socialization in the modernizing process, Almond and Coleman ask,

What do we mean by the function of political socialization? We mean that all political systems tend to perpetuate their cultures and structures through time, and that they do this mainly by means of the socializing influences of the primary and secondary structures through which the young of the society pass on the process of maturation ... Political socialization, like learning in general, does not terminate at the point of maturation ... it is continuous throughout life.³

In a sense, Almond and Coleman acknowledged that the socialization experience of childhood and early adulthood, family, church, school, work group, or voluntary associations, are pre-political citizenship experiences. The individual is inducted into a sequence of decision-making systems with particular authority and participation patterns, and with particular kinds of claim or demand inputs

¹Ibid., p. 9.

²Ibid., pp. 14-16.

³Almond and Coleman, Politics of the Developing ..., op. cit., p. 26.

and policy outputs.¹

Political socialization is the process of induction into the political culture. According to Almond and Coleman,

Its end product is a set of attitudes - cognitions, value standards, and feelings - toward the political system, its various roles, and role incumbents. It also includes knowledges of, values affecting, and feelings toward the inputs of demands and claims into the system, and its authorities outputs.²

Hence, the analysis of the political socialization function in a particular society is basic to the whole field of political analysis. It actually gives us insight into the pattern of political culture and subcultures in that society. They are, in addition, essential to the understanding of the other political functions. For, if political socialization produces the basic attitudes in a society toward the political system, its various roles, and public policy, then, according to Almond and Coleman, by studying political culture and political socialization we can gain understanding of one of the essential conditions which affect the way in which these roles are performed, and the kinds of political inputs and outputs which these roles produce.³

A combination of both psychological and comparative sociological approaches suggests that the basic stability

¹Ibid., p. 27.

²Ibid., pp. 27-28.

³Ibid., p. 31.

of government institutions is strongly influenced by the degree to which socializing agents reinforce or contradict each other in forming the community's sentiment about authority. Harry Eckstein's recent researches have shown, for example, that the patterns of authority in a society outside of the narrowly political realm can affect the stability of the regime; where there is congruence in style and value, there is a higher likelihood for stable democracy than when there are discontinuities in authority patterns.¹

To begin with, Thailand's political culture at the national macro-analysis level, Daniel Wit maintained that Thailand's historic geographical involvement with the outside world has helped to produce a number of the important attitudes and traditions of its contemporary political culture. Following Wit's argument, the many Thai experiences with foreign threats to national security have contributed to (1) a basic sense of nationhood as well as a commitment to and pride in national independence (since the word "Thai" means "free"); (2) a commitment to monarchy, which has

¹For further analysis, see Harry Eckstein, Division and Cohesion in Democracy (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966); and also Eckstein, Authority Relations and Governmental Performance: A Theoretical Framework, Princeton Center for International Studies, Workshop on the Social Bases of Stable Rule, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968).

constituted the historic political form through which the national existence has been promoted successfully for 700 years; (3) a tradition of strong political leadership capable of meeting and overcoming the periodic foreign exchanges to national survival; (4) a tradition of willingness on the part of the political leadership to engage in that degree of change and of modernization, particularly of government, necessary to preserve the kingdom's independence from foreign domination.¹

Since the making of a modern man is essential to the entire process of modernization and development, and since modern man is characterized not only by his skills but also by his behavior, it is necessary to survey a people's cultural and behavioral characteristics in order to determine the extent to which they facilitate or deter modernization. In the case of Thailand, its culture and behavioral characteristics are obviously an historic distillation of centuries of continuous interaction between the people of the society, the physical location and environment of the homeland, foreign pressures and influences, and the several structural systems developed as responses to overriding societal needs. Nevertheless, Wit argued that, despite various epic events in the country's political cultural

¹Wit, Thailand: Another Vietnam?, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

history, (e.g., the thirteenth-century destruction of the Nanchao Kingdom in China's Yunnan's Province by Kublai Khan Mongols, the subsequent mass migration from the South China homeland into Southeast Asia, the fourteenth-century collapse of the Sukhothai Kingdom, the eighteenth-century destruction of the succeeding Ayuthayan Kingdom by the Burmese, the 1932 overthrow of the absolute monarchy, and in World War II, the Japanese military occupation), the nation's distinct culture has never been seriously ruptured. No complete and historic break with the past has really occurred. Instead, contemporary Thailand, as Wit has stressed,

... is heir to a relatively continuous cultural and political tradition which, although modified and adapted to changing circumstances at various times, has perpetuated and even reinforced certain outstanding behavioral characteristics through the centuries. Apart from values and attitudes reflective of environmental factors already discussed, the core of that culture is a complex of ethical, religious, and supernatural beliefs.¹

On the other hand, Morrell has suggested that Thailand's political culture is an amalgam of individualism, pragmatism and resistance to social organization on the one hand and elitist, hierarchically structured relationships on the other. He therefore identified five pre-eminent influences on the Thai political culture which are both historical and current. They are family socialization

¹Ibid., p. 55.

patterns, the monarchy, the bureaucracy, the plentiful natural environment, and Thai Buddhism. Each supports the others in a blend of social freedom and social tyranny, making it possible for a highly-organized military establishment and its civilian allies to rule and be tolerated by an unorganized, apathetic populace which considers participant political institutions suspect at worse and undignified at best.¹

A recent study on rural development and political culture of the Thai villagers was conducted by Clark Neher in 1974. His research demonstrated that the overwhelming majority of the Thai do not participate in national political activities. Indeed, a large portion of the populace has very little to do with officials or representatives from the national level. Scholars generally subscribe to the fact that authoritative decisions agreed to by the governmental leaders rarely affect the lives of the people directly.² Nevertheless, in the case of the Isan villagers, who are usually politically conscious as compared to villagers from other parts of the country, the above argument is not totally applicable. Following the 1932 coup d'etat, representatives from the Northeast proved to be the most

¹Morrell, "Power and Parliament...", op. cit., p. 47.

²Neher, The Dynamics of..., op. cit., p. 71.

politically active in representing the welfare and interests of their villagers. As for the Isan peasantry, most of them, having to face economic poverty, inequal Government development programs and even political discrimination, tend to be more attentive to the nation's political process, especially through their parliamentary representatives. Generally, throughout the period of democratic experimentation, the Northeast villagers kept close contacts with their MP's, frustrated with the Government's false promises to develop the region and subsequently made complaints about the region's economic poverty and other grievances heard in the national forum, mostly through their MP's.

For most Thais, village and local environs determine their essential political, social, religious, economic, horizons. It has been argued, nevertheless, that although the Central Government indirectly taxes the rice farmers, and although the Government is increasingly involved in developmental activities such as road, irrigation, and educational projects in the rural areas, the Thais remain an unmobilized people only slightly aware of their Government. Very few make a connection between their perceived needs and the capacity of the Central Government to meet them.¹

¹Ibid., p. 71.

In similar matter, Moerman, whose research work has been focused on the village of Ban Ping in the North, further observed that villagers rarely used governmental services.

They send and receive no letters, receive no meaningful agricultural extension, know little of public health measures, ridicule community development, and are ambivalent toward public education. Their most conspicuous contacts with the government consist of donating labor, paying taxes, fees and occasional bribes, and receiving order and vague exhortations.¹

In his attempt to relate the conception of "political culture" to the empirical world of the Northeasterners, Thomas Kirsch remarked that:

Both popular discussions of Northeast Thailand and its problems and more programmatic statements defining development aims seem to be rooted in certain conceptions about the "kind" of people with strong commitments to a particular mode of life, that of rice farmer; to a traditional set of village-based social relations and customs; and to particular localities, whether native villages or the Northeastern region in general. That is, Northeasterners are seen as "typical peasants."²

According to Charles Keyes, Northeastern Thai villagers identify with the village in which they live in much

¹Michael Moerman, "A Thai Village Headman as a Synaptic Leader," Journal of Asian Studies 28:3 (March 1969), p. 536.

²Thomas Kirsch, "Development and Mobility Among The Phu Thai of North East Thailand," in Symposium on "Thailand: The Northeast, op. cit., p. 370.

the same way as people in some other societies identify with descendant groups to which they belong. Recruitment to village membership is either through birth or marriage. An example of the lifestyle of the villagers at Baan Noong Tyun was given by Keyes. He observed that those who live here are bound together by common participation in activities associated with three village institutions: the shrine of the tutelary spirit, the temple, and the school. In addition, Keyes, acknowledged that villagers share common leaders who serve both to handle internal community interests and problems and to cope with impingements of the national Government.¹

The subject of peasant personality and political culture of the villagers in the Northeast has been summarized as the following:

A villager conceives the legitimate role of government to be very limited, but at the same time he believes it should function entirely without his assistance, participation or involvement. The four assumptions thus follow: (1) government, whether national or local, is restricted to a set of duties; (2) popular involvement with government should be minimal; (3) government, particularly village government, must concern itself with the "public interest" to retain legitimacy; and finally, (4) when confronted with a powerful person, the villager should obey to the extent demanded.²

¹Charles Keyes, Baan Noong Tyun: A Central Isan Village, mimeo., TIC/CU, (Bangkok 1967), p. 4.

²Stephen B. Young, "The Northeastern Thai Village ...", op. cit., p. 873.

Theoretically speaking, John Kautsky's argument about the political culture of peasantry could also be applied to the situation in the Northeast. Kautsky asserted that the peasant's "political culture" is parochial. He may be quite unaware of the existence of any government beyond the local level. Or he may be dimly aware of one and either stand in awe of it or vaguely dislike it because it takes his taxes or makes war, as he passively disliked his other inevitable plagues, like hunger or disease.

In no case does the peasant regard the government of the larger territory he inhabits as his own or think of that territory as his country. He expects nothing from them and does not feel that he has rights or duties toward them.¹

The political culture of the Thai-Lao or Isan ethnic population of Thailand Northeast is, in addition, thoroughly discussed by Keyes. Accordingly, it is suggested that there are three levels of loyalties which existed in the village in Northeastern Thailand.

(1) Local loyalty - there is a kind of standard model of a peasant. "He is a person attached to the soil who does not want to leave and is very unhappy if he is moved." The Isan villager generally considers his hometown vital for his life and existence either psychologically, culturally, or socially. Of course, his first loyalty is to his "local community, the people he has known and

¹Kautsky, The Political Consequence ..., op. cit., p. 35.

with whom he has grown up."¹

(2) Ethnic or regional loyalty - basically, the ethnic loyalty held by Northerners is one which distinguishes them from the Central Thai. Keyes describes it as followed:

They say they are Isan, Northerners, in comparison with the Central Thai; or they are Lao, again in comparison with the Central Thai. Saying that they are Lao does not mean they hold loyalty to that rather makeshift country Laos. Laos is not an alternative political focus for Northerners, predicated upon shared ethnic identities. To say that Northerners are like the Lao of Laos is true but more correctly that idea is that the Lao are like them ... If a Northerner goes to Vientiane, which some do for work, he finds nothing really different. There is no percentage in trying to distinguish one's self except on those occasions when it may be better to be a Thai in Laos than to be a Lao in Laos. The Northerner wants to feel his identity as a Lao mainly when he comes in contact with the Central Thai.²

(3) National loyalty - this third loyalty is basically symbolic because it is not "nationalism" in the sense the term is used by political scientists. Instead, it has been observed that the Northern villagers' feeling of being a part of Thailand is based upon a sense of identity with the King. For them, the King is a symbol. Kingship as a whole is a very important element in the world view of the Isan villagers. Hence, Keyes claimed that " the acceptance of the Thai kingship as meaningful for North-

¹Keyes, "Thailand: The Northeast," Group discussion, op. cit., p. 10.

²Ibid., pp. 10-11.

eastern peasants makes possible this acceptance of the state of Thailand as a relevant frame of reference for themselves."¹

Nevertheless, the respect for the King cannot be misunderstood as to mean the Northeastern peasants will react favorably to all the demands of the state. Villagers strongly resented one kind of national representative, the police, for example, when they made false arrests, confiscated the villagers' home-made liquors, or broke up their gambling games. Actually, it is believed that the legitimization of the national system provided by the King does nothing to ameliorate the peasants' dislike of the police. Hence, the King is, on a sort of metaphysical or philosophical level, a legitimizing element for a villager in his conception of what the nation is.²

As far as the concept of "socialization" is concerned, it is noteworthy that in most traditional social systems, in which Northeast Thailand is no exception, a prime stress in socialization is the instilling of respect and deference for authority. Children were expected to accept without question the authority of parents, and subjects were expected to defer completely to their political and social superiors. The comforts of dependency were the main rewards for being dutiful.³

¹Ibid., p. 12.

²Ibid., pp. 12-13.

³Lucian Pye, "The Legitimacy Crisis," in Leonard

In transitional societies, in which social and political institutions have been weakened and their authority undermined, it is generally true that children in the first instance are still socialized to accept the complete and unquestioned authority of parents. Dependency is still a reality, and parents continue to teach their children as they themselves were taught. The result is, according to Pye, that in many such societies people are still being taught to expect more of authority than any public authority is capable of being.¹

In Northeast Thailand, as in any society, patterns of family socialization are very important in producing the nation's political culture. It is within the confines of his family that the Thai child, including that of the Isan family, first learns about authority, discipline, responsibility, and the hierarchical-reciprocal relationships which will be so important to him later. Within the family, the child becomes cognizant of the unique combination of individualism and subordination expected of every Thai. Discipline of infants is reasonably permissive, and relations within the family, though structured in terms of the phii/noong relationship (elder/younger), permits a fair

Binder, ed., Crises and Sequences in Political Development (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 145.

¹ Ibid.,

degree of independence and individualism.¹

Further discussion of the socialization process of the Thai-Lao family includes the villagers' perception that each child as a responsibility to repay to his/her parents in some way for the care provided during childhood. Children of both sexes are expected to help with family work² from the time they have reached early adolescence until they reach full maturity. From this point on, however, the patterns for sons and daughters diverge. Ideally, although this is not universally realized, young men finish discharging their filial obligations by entering the monastic order for a short period of time, thereby being able to earn merits which are transferable to their parents. After having been in the yellow robes, a young man becomes a fully independent adult who is free to make his own future. Keyes contended that unless he chooses to be a "wanderer" from place to place or from woman to woman, a man's future is dependent upon his making a marriage which will assure him not only of having a helpmate and a mother for his children but also will provide him with access to control over

¹Morrell, "Power and Parliament . . .," op. cit., pp. 56-57.

²This is typical for almost all children from the lower-income families as contrast to those of the rich families, who are usually spoiled and well-protected by both parents and maids.

land.¹

Women, barred by the tenets of Buddhism from entering a monastic order, must conform to other patterns of filial obedience. In this respect, Kamol Somvichien argued that although all women are barred from becoming monks, their social status can be regarded as equal to that of men. In particular, Thai women are entitled to equal rights, to inheritance and to sue for a divorce, unlike those in other developing countries of Asia and Africa.²

In the Northeast, as in other parts of the country, the woman's role in the family is ideally to continue to assist her parents until they have died or until she is married and moves out with her husband. The last daughter to marry, who is usually, but not always, the youngest daughter, has the most demanding filial obligations. This daughter and her husband must look after her parents in their old age, especially when both of them are too old to be fully productive. Certainly, this couple will inherit the parent's household and most of the property in return

¹Keyes, "Baan Noong Tyun . . .," op. cit., pp. 10-13.

²Kamol Somvichien, Pra-chaa-thip-pa-tai kap sang-kom thai [Democracy and the Thai Society], (Bangkok: Thai Watana Panich Publishing Co., 1973), p. 30.

for their faithful service when it is badly needed.¹

As for the teacher's role in the socialization process of the Northeast, he/she serves an important function in providing all villagers with some knowledge of the wider socio-cultural universe in which they live. In Baan Noong Tyun, however, they do not play a very important role in village affairs outside of the school, since none of the teachers, at least in the past ten years, has resided in the village. Rather all choose to live in the tambon (commune) center, or, in one case at least, in the provincial town, and to commute to Baan Noong Tyun to carry out duties.² This practice is quite common in the villages of the Northeast which are not tambon centers.³

In the villages of the Northeast as well as in other villages throughout the country, the vital role of headman as an intermediary between national and local groups is well perceived by the peasants. Generally, he has the power

¹Keyes, "Baan Noong Tyun . . .," op. cit., p. 13.

²This practice has nevertheless been changed during the past couple of years, due to the increasing counter-insurgency measures by the Central Government. The local teachers are pressured to stay in the village so that they would have more extra time to spend with the children. Besides, recent government measures to suppress insurgency and rural violence have provided the teachers with more security and protection.

³Keyes, "Baang Noong Tyun . . .," op. cit., pp. 7-8.

to coordinate community action and is responsible for organizing village decision-making. His day-to-day duty is to direct the community self-help programs, such as the maintenance and improvement of the village property such as paths, roadways, well, etc., and to preserve peace and harmony among villagers.¹ Having been elected by the villagers but received salary from the Bangkok Government, the village headman is usually caught between the desire to appease the villagers and his sense of duty as representative of the Central Government. His frustration is usually focused upon the demands of a Government attempting to stimulate rapid development in the Northeast and the reluctance of villagers to participate in any activities which might undermine the sense of security which tradition has produced. Hence, it is obvious that the position of village headman is not an easy and rewarding one.

In addition to the headman, there also exists a group of village male elders, each of whose leadership positions is a consequence of their possessing one or more of the traits of wealth, experience in the Buddhist monkhood, skill in one of the tradition arts, or ability to intimidate other villagers. The only quality that all

¹Phaiboon Changrien, Lak-sa-na sang-kom kap kaan pok-krong khong thai [Social Characteristics and the Thai Administration], (Bangkok: Thai Wattana Panich Publishing Co., 1971), p. 123.

share in common is that of age: all are within the category of mature adults, between ages of approximately forty and sixty. This traditional respect for elders probably stems from the fact that a Thai child, including that of the Northeast, is brought up in a hierarchical-structured society. At all levels of society, these aspects of superior-inferior, seniority-juniority, and elder-younger are taught to the Thai child at an early period of life. In other words, these aspects of authority and responsibility emerge very early in the family socialization process. Morrell contended that older siblings are superior to younger ones; they can issue orders and expect compliance. In return, the parent (phuu pok-krong) or elder brother or sister (phii chaai or phii saao) is expected to care for the younger. This produces dependency; these subordinate/dependent relationships carry over directly into Thai attitudes toward politics.¹

For young men and women of the Thai-Lao villages in the Northeast, the most romantic period, which occurs between the ages of sixteen and seventeen and the mid-twenties comes to an end with the marriage of the girls or with the departure of young men for work in Bangkok or Vientiane or for a period in the yellow robes. It is generally believed, among village women, that marriage and the birth of children is their ultimate goal of life.

¹Morrell, "Power and Parliament," op. cit., p. 59.

The reason for this conception came from the fact that the Isan women, children of both sexes mean so much to them. For a son, the mother is happy to see him ordained as a monk so that she would obtain merits and religious blessings. With a daughter, she is assured that she will have a helping hand at home, especially in household work, cooking and the care for the younger children. Also when she is old, a daughter is a guarantee for her welfare until she passes away.

For young men in the Isan villages, the stages of adulthood are perceived to be more ramified. Ideally, all men should begin their adult careers by spending a period of at least one pansa (roughly three months) in the monkhood. During this short period, the Isan male usually acquires religious knowledge, meditates and spends time seeking out his own goal and identity and most of all a special status in the society. Nevertheless, Keyes suggested that an alternative or an addendum to experience in the monastic order in making the transition of a young man from dependent adolescence to adult has recently been provided in the possibility of temporary urban employment.

A period of several months or years in an urban environment matures a young man and allows him a degree of independence unimaginable within the village context. However, few temporary migrants remain away permanently. Most are drawn back to village life for the security and contentment

which it provides.¹

After having attained the status of an adult, ushered in by experience in the temple (wad) and or through temporary urban employment, a man is expected to marry and take up the life of a householder. Like the household heads in the other parts of the country, the Isan male usually devotes himself to creating a new family and providing for its needs between the ages of twenty and forty. By forty, a man of the Isan village has possibly obtained full economic independence from his parents-in-law and has established a reasonably sound position within the group of heads of kin groups. Between the ages of forty and sixty, many men play a leadership role in community matters.²

As for the role of the woman in Isan villages, throughout her adulthood, she is usually burdened with the duty to take care of the children and manage household activities as well as help in rice growing and other family

¹Keyes, "Baan Noong Tyun . . .," op. cit., p. 21.

²It should be recognized also that wealth, religious achievement, management of activities with illicit and/or immoral overtones, and, perhaps, standing within kin groups can also be translated into village leadership positions. See for details, Charles Keyes, Local Leadership in Rural Thailand, mimeographed copy at TIC/CU, (Bangkok 1970), p. 98; reprinted from Local Authority and Administration in Thailand, eds., by Fred von der Mehden and David A. Wilson (L.A. and Berkeley: University of California Press, Academic Advisory Council for Thailand, Report No. 1-1970 for USOM/Thailand, April 1, 1970.

economic matters. Therefore, although a general division of labor does exist between the sexes, it is not rigid, and there are no strong sanctions to preserve a sharp and unequivocal separation of functions. There are only a very few tasks that are exclusively the function of one sex rather than the other. The cutting of timber, the construction of houses and the throwing of fish nets are exclusively reserved for the men. On the other hand, the exclusive duties of women include the care of silf worms, spinning, and weaving, aside from household work and the care of the children. Aside from these tasks, Klausner suggested that although a general division of labor is maintained,

... both men and women will interchange work tasks when necessary. Both the men and women are familiar with each other's tasks, and, in most cases, can do them equally well, though in some instance, such as plowing, with greater difficulty. The need to carry out a job usually performed by the other sex arises when there is sickness in the family or when either male or female members of the family have been lost to the labor force through death, seeking work in the town or capital and the like. It should be emphasized that there is no loss of prestige or loss of face involved in doing a job usually performed by the other sex. If the necessity arises, the work will be done by any one who is available.¹

In their old age, the Isan villagers, men and women alike, are generally expected to turn away from the concerns of this life in order to think more about the next existence. Comparatively speaking, the majority of the Northeasterners

¹Klausner, "NAK AW BAO SU ... ," op. cit., p. 11.

are politically conscious when they are young, due to the intolerable economic situation at home as well as constant maltreatment by the Central Government. Hence, in some instances, the leders are also involved, either as individuals or collectively, in a variety of contexts. As has already been indicated, in most Northeast villages, elders are usually involved in management of certain community affairs or called on to mediate disputes, while in some areas they may also help organize "home guard" or village security groups.¹

In the final stage of life cycle of the Isan villagers, they are considered to be politically passive and immobilized. Concern for merit-making has never been absent at any time in a person's life in the Northeast, but the periodic merit-making ceremonies have been viewed by all but the elderly as opportunities for enjoyment as well as for other-worldly thoughts. After sixty, if a person should be so fortunate to reach the age of a fifth twelve year cycle, consideration of one's status in the next life is uppermost in an individual's mind. Consequently, it is the group of elders who visit the temple (wat) frequently. They are largely responsible for keeping the precepts of the Buddhist faith as well as carrying on the basic political culture and socialization of the Northeast villages.

¹Keyes, "Baan Noong Tyun . . .," op. cit., p. 21.

In conclusion, some aspects of the Northeast development, such as the peasants' livelihood, attitudes, personality, political culture and socialization, have been thoroughly analyzed. Further discussions of the processes of political development and modernization of the Northeast include several factors which constitute the "Northeastern Problem," which subsequently became the main obstacle to future economic reforms and the political development of the region. Basically, they consist of the several characteristics which distinguished the Northeast from the other regions of the Kingdom, i.e., geographical isolation, remoteness, economic backwardness, population pressures, water shortages, poor communications, the lack of significant natural resources, and finally the Bangkok Government's neglect and maladministration of the Northeast. An attempt has also been made to analyze the country's social and economic problems from the bottom up and from the perspective of the mass political culture instead of from the top down and from the standpoint of the elite culture, as has been traditionally done in the past. In the following chapter, the analysis will focus on another crucial aspect of the process of political development and modernization of the Northeast; that is the integration of the region with the rest of the Thai Kingdom. Of course, ethnic problems usually accompany the integration process in nation-state and, in our case, Northeast Thailand proves

to be no exception.

CHAPTER V

ETHNICITY AND INTEGRATION

A) Theoretical Analysis of Ethnicity
and Political Development

Development theory postulates a peculiar image of human nature, usually only tacitly expressed. Basically, development theorists presume that men are highly malleable, not like puppets but capable of willfully altering their values, allegiances, and even self-identities. When this potential is untapped, as often is the case, a society is destined for perpetual underdevelopment. National leaders must fashion institutions and policies that can exploit this human potential, thereby prompting individual citizens to redefine their roles, aspirations, and associations. Therefore, Cynthia Enloe asserted that it is a handicap, even a danger, when certain human circumstances stubbornly persist despite their dysfunction to modern life and mobile man. Religion, superstition, fatalism, are obstacles that development theorists must analyze so that public officials can reduce their negative influence. Ethnic loyalties fall into a similar category. Like religion and passion, they can be useful in the short run, but eventually they curb progress and blind individuals to their true capacities.

Enloe, therefore, contended that groups founded on ethnic allegiance "compete with the nation-state. Such competition is intolerable because the nation-state is the principal vehicle for development."¹ According to many developmental theorists, ethnic groups are not acceptable if they siphon off emotions and energies crucial for national planners.

Multinationalism has had both its detractors and supporters among scholars. John Stuart Mill, in the remark published in 1861 in Consideration on Representative Government, maintained that "it is in general a necessary condition of free institutions that the boundaries of government should coincide in the main with those of nationality."² This conclusion is apparently predicated upon his fear of despotic government, for he believed that a multinational population would invite authoritarianism, by lending itself to a divide-and-rule techniques. He feared that the mutual antipathies and jealousies of the nationalities would prove greater than any distrust of government power.

In the following year, Lord Acton presented in his article a contrasting view to that of Mill's. Walker

¹Cynthia H. Enloe, Ethnic Conflict and Political Development (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Co., 1973), p. 261.

²John Stuart Mill, Considerations on Representative Government (New York: n.p., 1873), p. 313.

Connors contended that the contrast between the two men's antithetical conclusions are the more remarkable because of the identity of goals. In spite of the common desire to prevent absolutism, Acton, like Mill, envisaged the homogeneous population advocated by Mill as the natural ally of authoritarianism.¹ Accordingly, Acton maintained that the presence of different nations under the same sovereignty provides protection against the servility which flourishes under the shadow of a single authority, by balancing interests, multiplying associations and giving the subject citizens restraints and supports of combined opinions. According to Acton:

That intolerance of social freedom which is natural to absolutism is sure to find a corrective in the national diversities, which no other force could so efficiently provide. The coexistence of several nations under the same state is a test as well as the best security of its freedom.²

Should such demands for self-determination be met? According to Connor , who is an expert on this subject, the question can be viewed within two quite distinct contexts, the one moral, the other practical. If the question means whether each nationality, simply because it is a self-defined cultural group, has a right to self-rule, then

¹Walker Connor , "Self-Determination: The New Phase," *World Politics* 20:1 (October 1967), p. 32.

²Lord Acton, "Nationality," *Home and Foreign Review* (July 1862), reprinted in Acton, *History and Freedom*

the question defines a provable conclusion. Connor maintains the examples of the axioms, such as "the right of self-determination, "appear as moral imperatives until countered with opposing maxims." A "principle of self-determination" can be countered by other "principles" such as the right of states to preserve themselves, to protect their territorial integrity, to maintain internal order, to legislate against treasonable acts and so forth.¹

In recent years, there is a large and growing body of evidence among nations of the world that ethnic groups are increasingly unwilling to settle for anything less than total political independence. In Connor's point of view,² there are several overlapping factors which appear to account for this development. The first is that modernity results in -- and probably requires -- much greater integration of all of the parts of the state. A modernizing state is therefore one in which the threat to the survival of the lifeways of the minority ethnic groups is much greater than was the case in traditional states and colonies.

A second factor which is closely related to the first is that advances in the quality and quantity of communi-

¹Connor, "Self-Determination . . .," op.cit., p. 46.

²Walker Connor, "Ethnic Nationalism As a Political Force," World Affairs 133:2 (September 1970), pp. 93-94.

cation and transportation media have progressively curtailed the cultural immunity from the perverting influences of other cultures within the same state.

A third factor, in Connor's analysis, is that the same advances in communications and transportation have tended to increase national awareness by making members more aware of the distinctions between themselves and non-members.

A fourth factor is based on the conception that as the nation came to be viewed as the single most important division of mankind, there was an increasing tendency to ascribe to it, in addition to the essentially negative role of preserving the cultural uniqueness of the group, a number of positive goals such as the economic well-being of its members. Such goals can best be assured by making the nation politically independent.

A fifth factor, according to Connor, is the increasingly broad-scale acceptance of a philosophical justification for the political independence of all nations. The so-called "right of all nations to self-determination" means simply that "each nation should, if it so desire, rule itself. Although its early espousers never envisaged its application on a truly global scale, self-determination has become a worldwide slogan and both a moral justification and a catalyst for demands that political borders be redrawn

so as to accord with ethnic distributions."¹

Further discussion of so-called ethnicity and nation-building has to include the analysis of the concept of integration, since in the real world these three terminologies coexist and their relationships are inseparable. Basically, "integration is a concept which refers to the condition of making whole or complete by bringing together parts."² Political integration, then, is the condition of making politically whole or complete by bringing together political parts. It is the uniting of the distinct parts of a polity into a workable and viable whole.

Generally speaking, "political integration" implies a relationship of community among people within the same political entity. That is, they are held together by mutual ties of one kind or another which give the group a feeling of identity and self-awareness. Integration, therefore, is based on strong cohesiveness within a social group; and political integration is present when a political-governmental unit of some sort is cohesive.³

¹Ibid., p. 94.

²C. L. Barmhart, ed., The American College Dictionary (N.Y.: Random House, 1956), p. 632.

³Philip E. Jacob and Henry Teune, "The Integrative Process: Guidelines for Analysis of the Bases of Political Community," in Philip E. Jacob and James V. Toscano, eds., The Integration of Political Communities (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1964), pp. 1-45.

In this respect, Jacob and Teune suggested that there may be a very close connection between cohesion of a political community and the effectiveness of its government in meeting demands and expectations of its citizens. Essentially, the hypothesis is that government effectiveness is a necessary to retain the loyalty of the members of the community and such loyalty is necessary to maintain internal integration in the community. Governmental ineffectiveness, on the other hand, will endanger pressures for new, different, or external forms of integration. Citizens will look outward and pitch their loyalties to new forms of political organization or to other larger units of community.¹

In addition, Jackson and Stein summed up the defining characteristics of political integration as: (1) the relationship joins political parts into a political whole in a political system; (2) this relationship describes both an evolving process and a condition, namely one involving greater unity or oneness.² Nevertheless, they maintained that this definition applies not only to the process or condition of political integration within a single national political system. Political integration may also occur between two or more polities which may or may not

¹Ibid., pp. 42-43.

²Robert J. Jackson and Michael B. Stein, Issues in Comparative Politics (N.Y.: St.Martin's Press, 1971), p. 115.

ultimately result in the formation of some new supranational union or federation. Also, political integration may occur between two or more subdivisions or component parts of a national political system.¹

Political integration has been a subject of study by political analysts at least since Aristotle. The most notable early contributions to contemporary theory on political integration were eventually made by several famous nineteenth-century social theorists such as Marx, Weber, Spencer and Durkheim. Nevertheless, Marx and Weber dealt with the subject of "integration" only in an indirect way. While Marx contended that the forms of production and social relations in capitalist and earlier societies produce alienation which is antithetical to a proper integration of the individual into society, Weber, on the other hand, argued that modern bureaucratic society is more effective in achieving compliance with political directives, and is therefore more highly integrated than earlier societies, because its system of authority is legitimized by rational-legal values.²

A further definition of national integration is given by Coleman and Rosbeurg who noted that:

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 116; also see Claude Ake, A Theory of Political Integration (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1967), chapter 3.

For our purposes national integration is regarded as a broad, subsuming process, whose two major dimensions are (1) political integration, which refers to the progressive bridging of the elite-mass gap on the vertical plane in the course of developing an integrated political process and a participant political community, and (2) territorial integration, which refers to the progressive reduction of cultures and regional tensions and discontinuities on the horizontal plane in the process of creating a homogeneous territorial political community.¹

Looking to the future, there are obviously two directions in which a society can go in terms of integration along either of the above dimensions: it can become more integrated, leading to a state of affairs in which loyalties toward the nation are taken for granted and the gaps between elite and mass have diminished, or it can become less integrated, leading to a state of affairs in which civil disorder, secessionist movement or smoldering rebellions are the order of the day and it becomes impossible for the national government to pursue any goals beyond that of attempting to secure the physical survival of the nation. For the future of the new state, then, the critical question is, what are the conditions under which these polities are likely to become more or less integrated?²

¹James S. Coleman and Carl Rosbeurg, Jr., eds., Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1964), pp. 8-9.

²William R. Liddle, Ethnicity, Party, and National Integration: An Indonesian Case Study (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 4.

Myron Weiner, a well-known scholar in integration theory, suggested that the integration problems faced by new nations should be viewed as part of an historical process of political development through which Western political systems have gone as well. "It is during the transitional phase of political development, as government begin to assume or attempt to assume more functions, that integration problems become most acute."¹

Hence, Weiner proceeded to define the concept of "integration" as follows:²

(1) Integration may refer to the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity. National integration thus refers specifically to the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties.

(2) Territorial integration is an attempt by the central government to establish national central authority over subordinate political units of regions which may or may not coincide with distinct culture which central authority has over the entire territory under its claimed

¹Myron Weiner, "Political Integration and Political Development," The Annals 358 (March 1965), p. 42.

²Myron Weiner, "Political Integration and Political Development," In Welch, ed., op.cit., pp. 180-181.

jurisdiction.

(3) It represents an attempt to bridge the gaps between elite and mass, whose aspirations and values often are different, if the masses are beginning to become organized and concerned with exercising influence, while the elite responds with attempts to coerce, persuade, or control the masses. It is under these conflicts and often internal war that we certainly speak of "disintegration".

(4) Integration is sometimes used to refer to the minimum value consensus necessary to maintain a social order. These may be end values concerning justice and equality, the desirability of economic development as a goal, the sharing of common history, heroes, and symbols, and, in general, an agreement as to what constitutes desirable and undesirable social ends. Here the concern is with the legitimacy of the constitutional framework and the procedures by which it should operate -- in short, on desirable conduct.

(5) Finally, we may speak of "integrative behavior", referring to the capacity of people in a society to organize for some common purposes. At the most elementary level, all societies have the capacity to create some kind of kinship organization -- a device whereby societies propagate themselves and care for and socialize their young.¹

¹Ibid., pp. 53-54.

Consequently, the term "integration" as discussed by Weiner obviously covers a vast range of human relationships and attitudes, the integration of diverse and discrete cultural loyalties and the development of a sense of nationality; the integration of political units into a common territorial framework with a government which can exercise authority; the integration of the rulers and the ruled; the integration of the citizen into a common political process; and, finally, the integration of the individuals into organizations for activities.¹

Therefore, problems of national integration in the new states are derived not only from the threat posed by the renewed strength and assertiveness of subnational loyalties, but also from the confrontations between the new national elite and the rest of the population. Edward Shils, then, respectively analyzed the matter as followed:

In almost every aspect of their social structure, the societies on which the new states must be based are characterized by a "gap". It is the gap between the few, very rich and the mass of the poor, between the modern and the traditional. It is the "gap" between a small group of active, aspiring, relatively well-off, educated and influential persons in the big towns and an inert or indifferent, impoverished, uneducated and relatively powerless peasantry.²

Further analysis of the integration crisis of new

¹Ibid., pp. 182-183.

²Edward Shils, "Political Development in the New States," Part I, Comparative Studies in Society and History 2 (1959), p. 281.

states is given by Coleman, who remarked that with few exceptions none of the developing countries is or ever has been an integrated whole. Indeed, their integration problems are four-dimensional:

(1) primordial differentiation, that is, the original as yet unbridged - indeed, frequently intensified - lines of cleavage (ethnic, tribal, religious, linguistic, sectional, and so forth) with which they commenced their existence as a political entity;

(2) modernizing differentiation, that is, the fragmentation into subsystems straining toward autonomy within the modern sector as a result of pluralizing (i.e., differentiating) impact of economic and social modernization;

(3) compounded differentiation, as manifested in those explosive situations where the lines of cleavage of (1) and (2) coincide and are mutually reinforcing; and

(4) uneven differentiation, as reflected particularly in the wide gap between the highly differentiated politico-administrative superstructure imported from the West on the one hand, and the medley of fragmented elements in the society over which it has been placed, on the other.¹

This leads us to consider the relationship between ethnicity and integration and its effect on the process of

¹James S. Coleman, "The Development Syndrome: Differentiation-Equality-Capacity," in Leonard Binder, ed., Crises and Sequences in Political Development (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 86.

political development of the nation-states. Enloe has so far conducted excellent research on this subject. It is perceived that of all the groups that men attach themselves to, ethnic groups seem the most encompassing and enduring. Their capacity to survive amid radical change and even under direct attack has attracted the attention of modernizing elites as well as social scientists.¹

Therefore, Enloe argued that ethnicity has both a communal and a personal dimension. It "refers to a peculiar bond among persons that causes them to consider themselves a group distinguishable from other." Cultural bonds grow out of men's recognition of the distinctiveness of their own standards of behavior and the valuing of those standards to the extent that they feel most comfortable and secure when among persons sharing them. On the personal level, ethnicity equips an individual with a sense of belonging; it positions him in the society. Enloe thus asserted that "as social relations become complex and impersonal, ethnic identity may be grasped tenaciously. It is a familiar and reassuring anchor in a climate of turbulence and uncertainty."²

Finally, it is fair to suggest that scholars who are associated with theories of "nation-building" have tended,

¹Enloe, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²Ibid.

perhaps more in the recent past, either to ignore the question of ethnic diversity or to treat the matter of ethnic identity as merely one of a number of minor impediments to effective state-integration. To the degree that ethnic identity is given recognition, Connor states that:

It is apt to be seen as a somewhat unimportant and ephemeral nuisance that will unquestionably give way to a common identity uniting all inhabitants of the state, regardless of ethnic heritage, as modern communication and transportation networks link the state's various parts more closely. Both tendencies are at sharp variance with the facts, and have contributed to the undue optimism that has characterized so much of the literature of "nation-building."¹

B) Bangkok Centralization Schemes
and the Emergence of Isan Regionalism

Political and ethnic boundaries rarely coincide completely, even in an age of nation-states. Yet the attractions of an ideal union between nation and state have long led various nationalists to take up the cry for their "unredeemed brethen" beyond the border. Irredentism - a policy of incorporating remaining ethnic groups within the mother country - has become common to the contemporary political vocabulary.²

Comparatively speaking, Thailand is usually regarded as having quite a homogeneous population compared with

¹Walker Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?" World Politics 24 (April 1972), p. 319.

²Astri Suhrke, "Irredentism Contained: The Thai Muslim," Comparative Politics 7:2 (January 1975), p. 187.

other countries in the ethnic patchwork of Southeast Asia. Wit observed that throughout its long history, nation-building in Thailand has been greatly facilitated by the fact that there is an ethnic, cultural and religious majority which, at its outer limits, constitutes about eighty-five per cent of the total population. This greater Thai group, however, is effectively integrated only in the case of that sixty per cent of the total population which belongs to three of its four ethnic Thai subgroups: the "central" Thai, "northern" Thai, and northeastern "Khorat" Thai. Wit states that:

Collectively, these three subgroups form the country's strategic cultural core. Among them, the fifteen million central Thai (half the nation's total population) - most of whom inhabit the Chao Phraya Basin and Central Plain, in which Bangkok is located - provide not only cultural but also political, economic, and social leadership. It is these central Thai to which the nation and the country are anchored ... It is upon the central Thai, therefore, that Thailand's unity and integrity most depend.¹

Nevertheless, it has become increasingly apparent in the contemporary era that when major gaps do exist in the effective socialization of important segments of the resident population under current international conditions, these gaps may threaten national security. The alienation which is usually derived from these gaps does prevent large numbers of people from making appropriate contributions to the total national policy development and defense through

¹Wit, op. cit., p. 65.

effective participation in the primary structural systems of the society.

As a matter of fact, it has become increasingly clear to the Thai Government in Bangkok that the ethnic Thai-Lao, who comprise one-third of the total Thai population, has not been well integrated and therefore has become a source of concern for national security reasons. Unfortunately, it is a well-known fact that the Thai Government until recently has paid little attention to the problem of the Northeastern region and of the grievances among the Thai-Lao or Isan population as a whole. Problems of the Northeast, ther, are well illustrated in the comment made by Hindley who wrote:

There is however, a long history of government neglect of the Northeast, a pressing land-hunger in several provinces, a lower average standard of living in the Central Plain, due in part to the poorer natural resources, and an unequal distribution of the available wealth, in addition to a higher level of political consciousness than is usual elsewhere in Thailand. Most of these conditions are traditional, in the sense that they have existed from time immemorial, and even combined they do not appear the sort of factors that produce instant and widespread oppositional political action at the first whisper of communist propaganda. Time may be on the side of the communists, especially in view of the long and porous boundary with Laos and Cambodia, but this is by no means certain.¹

An influential Southeast Asia weekly newspaper, the

¹Hindley, "Thailand: The Politics of . . .," op. cit., p. 369.

Far Eastern Economic Review, has from the first carried substantial articles analyzing the "Northeastern Problem" of Thailand. In its editorial of June 27, 1975, the Journal again focuses on the problem of ethnicity and integration in the Northeast. It states:

... in fact, at least one-third of the population comprises non-Thais, many of them living apart in a separate community, often the object of discrimination and in the past treated with condescension and even cruelty by government officials sent out from Bangkok. It is no coincidence that Thailand's communist insurgency is concentrated largely in the outlying areas of the country, where these minority people live. In the current period of growing Thai nationalism, it seems unlikely that existing tensions between the different racial groups can be reduced.¹

The same racial problems and their relationship to Thai national security was also discussed earlier in another journal, The Eastern World, which noted editorially that:

Generally speaking, Communist insurrection in Thailand has acquired some success through the anti-Thai resentment harbored by many of the country's minorities. It has gained ground in areas largely ignored by the Thai Government which has so far done little to improve the status of the minorities or to take into account their basic requirements. For years, Communism has been used as an excuse for this neglect with the result that Thailand is now faced with a real communist problem.

Communism in Thailand is unlikely to be solved through repressive measures but rather through solving the minority problem.

The minority issue must be treated as a social

¹"Thailand's Search for Unity," FEER 88:26 (June 27, 1975); p. 27.

problem instead of a political one.¹

Historically speaking, one of the earliest and most consistent themes in Thailand's history, noted by David Wyatt, has been the steady process by which cultural and linguistic minorities have been integrated into the national society.² As early as the Sukhothai and the Ayuthayan periods between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the kings had been successfully absorbed large Mon and Khmer populations and later came to incorporate substantial numbers of captives taken in wars with the Khmers, Chams, Vietnamese, Malays, Mons and Burmese into the Thai kingdoms. By the same token, their successor kingdom at Bangkok, was able to assimilate large numbers of Chinese as late as the beginning of the current century.³

The integration of the ethnic Thai minority is, on the other hand, a relatively more recent feature of history. Comparatively speaking, the substantial Thai minorities of the North, the South, and the Northeast, unlike the distinctive Mons, Khmers, Chinese and other war captives, do share essentially a common culture and language, though marked by differences in dialects, with the

¹Editorial, "Communism and Minority Groups in Thailand," Eastern World, mimeo., (November/December 1970), TIC/CU, Bangkok, Thailand.

²David Wyatt, "Northeast Thailand: An Historical Perspective," in Northeast Thailand, Symposium, op. cit., p. 353.

³Ibid.,

Thai of the Central Plains. More important in Wyatt's point of view is the fact that the areas in which they live were brought fully within the range of national policy only within the past century. Hence, Wyatt argued that:

The pressures and techniques which served earlier to move non-Thai minorities into the national culture have by these very facts been much less effective in their operation on the Thai minorities: the people of the North, South, and Northeast have not been subject to the same linguistic and social pressure, either qualitatively or quantitatively; they have not lived nor have they been forced to operate in close proximity to the Central Thai; intermarriage has been much less frequent; and they have much deeper-rooted and better-developed local and regional sentiments.¹

Since early 1960's, the Northeast region of Thailand has been viewed as a crucial factor in the determination of Thailand's future. The Thai Government itself believes it possible that the region's economic and political problems could seriously compromise its efforts to effect stable and enduring national integration. The fears of Thai officials and their Western advisers, mostly Americans, stem in part from a belief that elements opposed to the present Thai Government might use ethnic ties between the populace of northeastern Thailand and the dominant community in Laos to undermine Thai influence and control over the one-third of the Kingdom's population who live in the Northeast region. The common assumption upon which such fears are predicated is that the Northerners share a common

¹Ibid.

ethnic identity with the Lao of the Kingdom of Laos.¹

What Michael Moerman has described of the Lue who inhabit northern Thailand, northern Laos, and southern China could equally as well be applied to the people of Northeast Thailand in relationship to neighboring T'ai-speaking groups:

Dialect divisions and trait distribution, the conventional tools of cultural areas and analysis, are of limited usefulness for demarcating and identifying the Lue and other Thai "tribes." Between each valley system and its neighbors, there is a pattern of continuous and trivial local diversity within a large area of essential ethno-linguistic homogeneity.²

The above assumption, although it largely represents a true picture of the characteristics of villages in Thailand, is nevertheless questioned by Keyes. He argued, instead that even if one were to take such evidence as could be mustered to show that the Northeasterners and the Lao share a culture which differs from that of the Central Thai, such differences would "pale beside comparisons" which could be made of the Karen or Shans to the Burmese or the Minangkhabau or Batak to the Javanese."³

¹Charles Keyes, "Ethnic Identity and Loyalty of Villagers in Northeast Thailand," *Northeast Thailand, Symposium*, op. cit., p. 362.

²Michael Moerman, "Ethnic Identification in a Complex Civilization: Who are the Lue?" *American Anthropologist* 67:5 (October 1965), p. 1218.

³Keyes, "Ethnic Identity . . .," in *Symposium*, op. cit., p. 362.

Yet questions of ethnic identity and loyalty remain important for understanding the relationship of the Northeast to the rest of the Kingdom of Thailand. The relevant approach to such identities and loyalties, however, is not through some objective comparison of linguistic, cultural or social criteria, but through examination of self-perception of ethnic identity and uses of such self-perceptions as basis for certain types of action. As Skinner has noted, "Ethnic awareness is intensified by inter-ethnic contact, and ethnic loyalties come to the fore only when the members of the group recognize common interests vis-à-vis others."¹

How do minorities become involved with politics in a quest for cultural identity, or in an effort to preserve that identity? If minorities assume that they are being economically or politically deprived because of the cultural or racial differences between themselves and the larger society, they can become involved in politics because they believe that the exertion of influence on government is necessary to achieve their objectives. Because effective political action requires unity among people suffering from the same deprivations, minorities can become concerned with a need to define their distinctive claims

¹G. William Skinner, The Nature of Loyalties in Rural Indonesia: A Symposium (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, Southeast Asia studies, 1959), p. 7.

to status. Unity can be engendered by reminding people of, and infusing with value, the cultural characteristics which they share.¹

An understanding of the evolution of the Northeast-erners' quest for political identity cannot be achieved without careful analysis of the changing patterns of Thai control of the Northeast beginning with the reign of King Taksin and lasting until the successful administrative and cultural reforms of King Chulalongkorn. Cyril Black's comment on the dynamics and role of modernization seems relevant to the Thai context. Black contends that:

Man is not a captive of history, despite the undeniable persistence of historically evolved traditions, and at many critical stages individual or group leadership has been dramatic. It is not so much a question of the accelerating or delaying effect that leaders may exert on the adoption of modern ideas and standards, but rather of the strong imprint that they stamp on the manner in which change takes place ... Leaders are limited by their own origins and by the skills and resources at their command, but within these limits differences of vital significance depend on the particular policies adopted.²

In historical perspective, the Thai Government's administrative control over its subjects as well as its vassals varied from period to period. As for the Ayuthayan

¹Henry J. Tobias, and Charles E. Woodhouse, eds., Minorities and Politics (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), pp. 5-6.

²Black, The Dynamics of Modernization, op. cit., p. 157.

period, it can be characterized politically by the attempt of Siamese rulers to consolidate and maintain control over the people living within the Central Plains of present-day Thailand. However, the collapse of the Burmese Empire and the dissolution of the Kingdom of Lan Chang, occurring at a time when Siam had acquired a dynamic new dynasty, radically changed the traditional political equation. Keyes had carefully observed that Siamese policy towards T'ai speaking peoples living to the northeast and to the north at this point "shifted from one of seeking vassals of alliances to one of attempting to incorporate these peoples into Siam proper."¹

The imposition of Siamese control over these areas was brought about rather gradually, beginning in the early nineteenth century. It was characterized by the indirect control and the dispersal of power among a large number of semi-autonomous principalities. Essentially, this pattern of administration had resulted in the perpetuation of local autonomy, which had great effect upon the political expression and localism of Northeasterners at a later period.

The development of Isan regionalism during this period was well recorded by Keyes.

However, more crucial in the formation of Isan regionalism were the events at the end of the century.

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism in . . ., op. cit., p. 14.

Under the pressure and stimulus of Western colonialism, King Chulalongkorn introduced a number of reforms, partially based upon Western ideas and technology, which aimed at more direct Siamese control over these areas. With these reforms and the demarcation of the boundary between Laos and Thailand established in the Franco-Siamese treaties of 1893 and 1904, the destiny of Northerners was cast with Thailand. After these events, any search for common identity among Northerners would be carried out within the context of the Thai state.¹

King Chulalongkorn's Administrative Reforms

Under the Administrative Reforms of King Chulalongkorn² all the districts in the Northeast with traditions of local ruling families going back to the end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth centuries were replaced by Central Thai officials. Michael Vickery contended that this does not need to be uncritically accepted as historical fact, any more than the tradition of a long period of desertion after the destruction of the old Khmer cities.

What is significant for our study of local elites is that in the minds of the people of these areas

¹Ibid., pp. 14-15.

²In 1873, King Chulalongkorn, or Rama V, began a series of governmental and administrative reforms aiming at reorganizing the provincial administration in a European manner in the interests of greater central control and national unity. By 1892, King Chulalongkorn established a twelve-ministry government in which several of the posts were given to his brothers, including Prince Damrong Rachanuphap in the Ministry of the Interior. In the aftermath of these reforms and of the conclusion of Franco-Siamese treaties of 1893 and 1904 in which the demarcation of the boundary between Thailand and Laos was established, the Northeast villagers had experienced direct Siamese control.

their traditions and ruling families were at least as old as the Chakri dynasty and in many cases were linked to the left bank of the Mekong rather than to central Thailand.¹

As a first step in provincial reorganization, it was decided to establish the monthon (circle) as an administrative area comprising several of the old provinces. The purpose of the new monthon was to tighten central control over the provinces by sending out Royal Commissioner to coordinate the administration of several provinces and report directly to the Ministry of the Interior.² The status of the province thus changed from a principal to a secondary unit of territorial administration within the monthon. The new Royal Commissioners had to be picked with great care to be certain that they not only governed efficiently, but always in the interests of the capital.³ Their salaries came from the Central Government rather than from a portion of tribute money as had heretofore been the case. As for the Northeast, historical records showed that in 1890 Lao huamuang (vassal towns) were grouped into four divisions, each

From then on, the destiny and future of Northeast region were cast with Thailand.

¹Vickery, "Thai Regional Elites ... ," op. cit., p. 870.

²Toem Singhatthit, Fang khwaa menaam ..., op. cit., p. 464.

³Vickery, op. cit., p. 873.

with its own royal commissioner.¹

The reason cited for King Chulalongkorn's decision to transform the Kingdom from a partially centralized, partially decentralized system into a unified system was the fear expressed in the Thai court of the British and French colonial expansion and their presence in the adjoining areas of Burma, Malaya and the whole of Indochina. As has been discussed earlier, the 1893 Franco-Siamese Treaty, which put into effect the cession of territories on the left bank of the Mekong by the Thai Government to the French was, in fact, viewed by Thai leaders as a direct threat to the administration and security of Thailand and step which would inevitably enhance French power in the area. King Chulalongkorn and his Interior Minister, Prince Damrong thus became convinced that the continuation of local autonomy and the absence of Thai representatives from Bangkok along with the poor communications and transportation systems between Bangkok and Laotian provinces (the Northeast) would facilitate the local leaders' 'desire for self-interest'. Regardless of the wishes of Bangkok, the local Laotian rulers could at any time endanger the Thai national security and territorial integration by switching their loyalty to the French authorities in the nearby

¹Bunchuai Atthakorn, Pra-wat saat haeng paak i-saan ..., op. cit., p. 69.

areas. Therefore, the administrative reforms would serve to replace the old "chao muang" (local rulers) with an official loyal to Bangkok who would be trustworthy and promote Bangkok's interests in the Lao areas.¹

Whatever the magnitude of the displacement of traditional rulers in the Northeast may have been, the administrative reforms did result in a shift of the locus of all important political powers from the huamuang (vassal towns) to Bangkok. The new system was then very successful in its purpose of unifying the country and consolidating central control. Taxes were taken out of the hands of local officials, and revenues increased from year to year.² The hereditary rulers of the vassal states were outflanked and those of the provinces were replaced by Central Government officials.³ Consequently, the centralization of the bureaucracy had the effect of downing the

¹Ibid., p. 75.

²Kingdom of Siam, Statistical Year Book (Bangkok: n.p., 1919), p. 31.

³This practice, which had been pursued by successive Thai regimes, including the post 1932 governments, had caused great discontent and alienation among the Isan villagers and especially the local leaders themselves. As we have noted, officials sent from Bangkok usually mistreated or neglected the villagers, not to mention their arrogance and snobbish gestures resented by the local people. Nevertheless, in recent years, especially after the emergence of the Communist liberation movement in the area, the Thai Government has started to send the native-born officials to station in his own villages or towns in order to create better understanding which would lead to improve administration.

separation between the rulers and local villagers, the ruled, with an ethnic overtone. Northeast villagers who came into contact with Bangkok officials began to feel that political power and authority no longer resided with their own leaders and that they were the prerogative of the "Thai" rather than of their own Laotian leaders.¹

King Chulalongkorn's administrative reforms, in which administration and bureaucratic centralization became solely associated with Bangkok officials, had a great impact upon local development of the Northeast. This later developed into open resistance and a desire for regional identity. Charles Keyes suggested the possible relationship between the Administrative Reforms and the emergence of Isan regionalism as follows:

Northeasterners experienced for the first time the subordination of local political interests to Central Thai objectives. The fact that some of the dispossessed members of the traditional northeastern aristocracies later sought to re-establish their power positions through election as provincial representatives in the parliamentary period indicates that at least some manifestations of political discontent can be traced to the thwarting of the political ambitions of local Isan leaders as a consequence of the extension of Thai control.²

Legitimate cause for discontent and even misgivings by Isan regional elites towards Bangkok regimes possibly

¹Vickery, op. cit., p. 877.

²Keyes, Isan Regionalism in ..., op. cit., p. 17.

stemmed from the fact that under the reform system, they were almost totally excluded from high office, in contrast to the relative success of other local families from the North and the South who appeared to achieve great integration into the new bureaucracy. Apparently, none of the identifiable northeast elites were appointed monthon Royal Commissioners or governors after their families had lost their hereditary positions. Hence, Vickery maintained that the difference in origins and traditions of the Northeast elites and those of the North and South was perhaps one of the reasons for differences in treatment by Bangkok. Whereas the Northeast families were native Thai or Lao with very old historical or mythical traditions and attachment to rival trans-Mekong dynasties, three of the Southern families were founded by entrepreneurs who owed their rise to royal favoritism; and while the expected conservatism of the Northeastern group was probably compounded by its relative isolation, the peninsula had been a center of trade and contact with outside world since ancient times.¹

Therefore, the unequal treatment and bias practiced by Bangkok against the Northeastern elites to the point of excluding them from the newly emerged bureaucratic system could be summed up as a result of the region's long history of political independence well short of genuine Bangkok

¹Vickery, *op. cit.*, p. 879.

control, its strong local traditions, its powerful local elites, its distinctive dialect and its close tie with people in the opposite bank of the Mekong River. In addition, the decision not to make any allowances for the local particularism of the Isan region seemed to have derived from Prince Damrong's attitude and strong prejudice against any kind of regionalism in the Northeast. Phraya Rachsenā, citing Prince Damrong's remark, in his article in THESA-PHIBAN dealing with the use of the name "Lao" for the northeastern and Eastern provinces, made the following observation,

The writer has heard his Royal Highness (Prince Damrong) relate the history of Thai Isan (the Northeast) and Phayap (the North), and he said they were Thai, not Lao ... but spoke with a brogue ... and thus people from other districts who didn't know the history, called them Lao. His Royal Highness forbade the use of the word "Lao" in census reports.¹

The argument is confirmed in Prince Damrong's later writing. Admitting that the people of the Northeast had certain common cultural traits, he nevertheless expressed objection to the use of the word "Lao" , and preferred to call them Thai Lan Chang, as those of the North were called Thai Lan Na.²

In the final analysis, Huntington's theory of

¹THESAPHIBAN [Local Administration], (Bangkok 1960), part II, p. 83.

²Damrong Rachanuphap, Prince, Ni-thaan bo-raan-khaa-dee [Ancient Tales], (Bangkok 1944), no. 16, pp. 394-397.

modernization and the role of traditional monarchs in launching the reforms for development proved to be very useful and applicable to the experience of Northeast Thailand in relation to King Chulalongkorn's administrative reforms.

For the traditional monarchies of the twentieth century, security considerations have undoubtedly also loomed large. Perhaps even more important, however, has been the recognition of the need for modernization for domestic reasons. The principal threat to the stability of a traditional society comes not from invasion by foreign armies but from invasion by foreign ideas. The stability of twentieth century traditional monarchies is endangered from within rather from without. The monarch is forced to modernize and to attempt to change his society by the fear that if he does not, someone else will.¹

C) Isan's Quest for Identity
and the Northerners' Attitudes
towards Bangkok and the Kingdom of Laos

Political development is incomplete if it halts with the stimulation of ethnic awareness and group pride. Such new consciousness has to be channeled to influence the rest of society or the part of society impinging on the group's well-being. Policy is the sphere of social life in which public issues and goals are defined and authoritative policies to deal with areas of public concern are formulated. An ethnic community increases its control

¹Huntington, Political Order in ..., op. cit., p.155.

over its own welfare to the extent that it shapes the perception of issues and the assignment and management of priorities. Some ethnic groups are only marginally affected by most public decision. They need to develop far less power than does an ethnic group whose affairs are constantly affected by public policy. Still, it can be extremely difficult for even a marginal community to obtain the leverage it needs.¹

As a matter of fact, Thailand's problems with ethnic minorities seem relatively unimportant when compared with those of some of her neighbors, such as Burma, Malaysia, and Indonesia, or with those of many other plural societies. Toward the overseas Chinese, the Thai Government, as has been recognized by Keyes, has evolved a policy of simultaneous toleration and assimilation which is envied by any other country with a large Chinese minority. However, Keyes observed that there does exist another people within the Kingdom of Thailand, in some senses ethnically defined, in others regionally, who appear to present the Thai Government with a far graver threat to national integration than do the more easily identifiable ethnic minorities. "Today, imminent or potential problems of the Thai Northeast region dominate the thoughts of those most concerned with building and preserving a unified national

¹Enloe, op. cit., p. 187.

system."¹

All Thai recognize themselves as belonging to a unified culture, of which the religious, political, and social and economic capital is Bangkok. All parts of Thailand stand in various degrees of subordination to Bangkok. From the point of view of a unified national social structure, all Thai would agree that, in general, people who live in Bangkok have higher social status than people of similar wealth and occupation who live elsewhere.²

According to Prasarn Wongyai, the lower class is perhaps the most complex group in Bangkok society. Made up of unskilled laborers, domestic servants, samlo drivers or pedicab drivers³, vendors, as a group it tends to have few of the values that are important to the rest of Bangkok society. The prime concern of its members seems to be self-preservation, but there are some signs that the seeds of class consciousness are germinating.⁴ Still only in a rudimentary stage, this class identification among the Thai

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism in ..., op. cit., p. VII.

²Wendell Blanchard, Thailand: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture (New Haven, Conn.: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1958), pp. 13-133; see also Walter Berrigan, "Bangkok Social Structure," Journal of the Siam Society 61 (September 1968), pp. 237-240.

³The majority of the 'pedicab driver' generally came from the Isan villages.

⁴Prasarn Wongyai, op. cit., p. 49.

takes the form of loosely organized associations; for instance, the samlo drivers have informally banded together, as also have domestic servants. Many of the Thai who belong to such associations are recent migrants from rural areas, and it is quite possible that the groupings are more an expression of their common rural or original background than one of class consciousness.¹

Questions of ethnic identity and loyalty obviously remain important for understanding the relationship of the Northeast to the rest of the Kingdom of Thailand. Skinner observed that "ethnic awareness is intensified by inter-ethnic contact, and ethnic loyalties come to the fore only when the members of the group recognized common interests vis-a-vis others."²

Theoretically speaking, political change and political development add a new dimension to the issue of identity, whether or not the members of a political system have a strong and positive identification with their nation becomes important. In Pye's and Verba's account, for many of the new nations, where central political symbols vie with tribal and other local affiliations, the problem is

¹Berrigan, op. cit., p. 63.

²G. William Skinner, ed., Local, Ethnic and National Loyalties ..., op. cit., p. 7.

particularly acute. The loyalty to some subnational unit is the major source of cultural conflict within state.¹ Pye and Verba, in addition, acknowledged that perhaps the most interesting type of uncertainty in political identity occurs when there is some lack of self-confidence or self-esteem associated with people's political identity. It is significant to note that whether or not a nation has a well-defined and ego-satisfying identity has important consequences for its politics.²

As has been discussed earlier, Northeast Thailand has a history of poverty, dissidence, banditry and differences. Access to the Northeast from Laos, Vietnam or China is easier, for the Northeast has no natural defense barriers and its frontier is porous and permeable. For all these reasons the Northeast has a theoretical and actual susceptibility to external subversion and other external pressures. But having related insurgency in the Northeast to the total context of Thailand, Kenneth Young maintained that it is equally necessary to point out that the distinctive characteristics make the Northeast a region also make it a prospective area or a potential resource for attempting to unravel and separate it from the central core of Thailand. "Other things being equal,"

¹Pye and Verba, eds., op. cit., p. 331.

²Ibid., pp. 532-533.

noted Young, "and if the Government of Thailand together with the people in the Northeast did nothing to deter a theoretical tendency toward regional alienation, parts or all of this region in time might possibly be subverted and turned into a base for an insurgent movement against Central Thailand and Bangkok."¹

Having disagreed with the view held by other Western observers that Northeast Thailand shared more similar characteristics, culturally and economically, with the Kingdom of Laos than with Thailand,² Young, nevertheless, admitted that the peoples living in the Northeast are different in some ways from the Thais in other areas. "The crux of the question for us is how solidly the people in this area will associate themselves with the rest of Thailand and how satisfactorily the government and people of Bangkok and central Thailand will accept the Northeasterners and the Northeast as a live and vital part of the whole

¹Young, "Introduction", in "Thailand: The Northeast," Group discussion, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

²My own experience in interviewing some Northeast villagers confirmed Young's argument. Most of the villagers indicated to me that although they practice Lao culture, they are Khon Thai (Thai people) and not Khon Lao. Besides, they considered themselves more sophisticated than their relatives living across the Mekong River. Some villagers even looked down upon the Lao whom they considered culturally inferior and economically backward.

Kingdom."¹

According to Keyes, the villagers' identification with the majority of the inhabitants of the Northeast was epitomized in the use of the word "isan" to refer to the one's ethnic identity. Although "isan" is a generic term which simply means "northeast", it has come to connote for both the Central Thai and the Northeasterners that which is associated with the dominant ethnic group of Northeast Thailand. Through the experience of temporary migrants, radio listening, contacts with books published in "isan" language, and the pronouncements of Northeast politicians and Central Thai Government officials, villagers in the Northeast were beginning to become aware of a common cause and a common tradition which ramified throughout the region.²

Other experiences which also stimulated villagers in developing a sense of identity with larger groups included political campaigns and, ironically, government-sponsored programs. In the 1956-1958 period and later in the period from October 1973 to October 1976, after the student-led demonstrations which temporarily brought back

¹Young, "Thailand: The Northeast," op. cit., pp. 4-5.

²Charles F. Keyes, "Ethnic Identity and Loyalty of Villages in Northeastern Thailand," in "Northeast Thailand," Symposium, op. cit., p. 366.

democratic practices to Thai politics, Northeast politicians had emphasized to villagers throughout these regions that they all shared problems and common interests vis-à-vis those of other peoples of the Kingdom. Furthermore, when Government officials visited the villages, they often remind the villagers that they themselves have to help improve the condition of their regions to levels comparable to the rest of the country. Hence, villagers learned that both politicians and Thai Government officials considered that they shared problems in common with others in the Northeast as compared with peoples living in others areas of the Kingdom.¹

An attempt to analyze the Northeast villagers' identity is well illustrated in a USOM report conducted by Yatsushiro. In this respect, Yatsushiro observed that the Northeast villager "earnestly wishes to be identified as a 'Thai' citizen, not a Lao. Although he has no objection whatsoever to being referred to as a "northeasterner" (khon phaak i-saan) by the non-Northeastern Thai, the term is never employed by the Northeasterners among themselves." The term "Thai-Lao" applies to a large majority of the people living in the 15 provinces comprising the Northeast. However, there are other ethnic groups whose combined total population is comparatively small. Among themselves

¹Ibid.,

the Northeasterners generally identify themselves according to their locality and ethnic affiliation.¹

Generally speaking, the vast majority of the Northeast villagers are loyal Thai subjects. This loyalty, however, is more passive than active and relates more to the country and the Northeast region in particular than to the Government in power. In the USOM study, it is pointed out that,

...although the Central Plains Thai refers to him as being Lao, because of his distinctive Lao cultural background, the typical Northeasterners resents this identity and retorts that he is 'Thai' not 'Lao'. This apparent duality of identity, a phenomenon that has been in existence for a long time, has been partially resolved with the Northeast villager regarding himself, in dealing with the Central Plains Thai, as a 'Northeasterner'.²

The author's personal interview with Thai officials of Isan ethnic origins as well as with Isan local residents also confirmed this view. For example, in an interview with Kasemsak Saenpoj, a deputy district officer of the district of Kumpwapi, in the Province of Udorn Thani, he indicated that, although he was born of Isan parents and was brought up in the Isan villages, he regards himself as a Thai citizen and a Thai civil servant. As for the villagers subjected to random interviews, the majority of them expressed their loyalty and concern towards the Thai

¹Yatsushiro, Village Attitudes and ..., op. cit., pp. 6-7.

²Ibid., p. 6.

King and the Thai nation as a whole. Besides, since the Isan villagers enjoy relatively a better standard of living and higher education, as well as a superior and civilized way of life, some tend to look down upon their Laotian relatives across the Mekong River.¹

Nevertheless, although the Northeasterner preferred to be regarded as Thai citizen, the USOM research has revealed the fact that at the same time "he is fully cognizant and generally proud of his Lao culture heritage, and this forms part of his identity. He is addicted to glutinous rice, raw or cooked minced meat (larp), and fermented minced fish. He naturally prefers his Lao dialect to other language dialects. He is fond of molam (folk opera). However, of all the practices and beliefs characterizing his present village culture, that which gives him the greatest pride and satisfaction relates to merit-making. Moreover, the Northeast villagers, on the one hand, admire certain traits characterizing the Central Plains

¹Personal interviews with local officials and villagers at the district of Kumpwapi, Province of Udorn Thani. This field research was conducted during the months of July and August of 1975. For a comparative discussion of the relative economic development of the Kingdoms of Thailand and Laos, see Catherine McDole, A Report on Socio-Cultural Conditions in the Yang Study Area of Roi-et in Northeast Thailand (Bangkok: USOM Research Division, December 13, 1968).

Thai¹, such as the advanced education the latter have, the greater facility and sophistication in the use of the Thai language, modern dress, and generally good manners. On the other hand, he deplors the arrogance and air of superiority that the Central Plains Thai tend to display.²

Localism, although important for almost every villager in varying degrees was first being replaced by wider ethnic orientations as villagers participated more extensively and intensively in interethnic situations. By far the most important of such experiences came about as a result of the growing pattern of temporary migration of north-eastern villagers to Bangkok. Theoretically, Binder perceived that:

... greater social mobility is another characteristic of a developed society. Movement between the various strata is more frequent, more rapid, and freer in both directions. Geographical mobility is also greater. Actually, the type of mobility generally associated with development is not exactly random, for there is some general expectation that the main direction of movement is upward socially

¹Isan villagers' admiration towards certain modes of life (clothes, movies, food, etc.,) is obvious to even casual observers who passed through the areas. For example, when they go to the village restaurant, they usually order soft drinks instead of local iced-coffee. Perhaps, they are convinced that drinking a soft drink is sophisticated and should be imitated to show to their friends who have never been to Bangkok their superior mode of life. Of course, the practice may be different elsewhere.

²Yatsushiro, Villages Attitudes and ..., op. cit., p. 7.

and toward cities and industrial centers geographically.¹

The Bangkok-Northeast Relationships

In traditional thinking, the relations between Bangkok and its "Northeast" can be characteristically described as between the "superior" and the "inferior". No matter where they are, the Northeasterners unfortunately confront the "superior" Bangkokians. At home, the Northeasterners have to obey and practice the laws and regulations implemented by the authority in Bangkok and also are subjected to and controlled administratively, socially and economically by Bangkok officials. Even worse, in the extreme situation that the Northeast villagers have to migrate to Bangkok seeking temporary jobs following troubles at home, the Northeasterners inevitably confronted the "superior" Bangkok boss and greedy and authoritative Bangkok policemen.

Robert Textor gave solid reasons for the migrations of Northeast villagers to Bangkok as follows:

The Northeasterner migrates to Bangkok primarily not for adventure or to lift himself out of the working class, but rather, to earn money to feed, clothe and otherwise help his family whose agricultural economy is poor. Employment opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled workers in Bangkok are limited largely to service and construction occupations rather than industrial.²

¹Binder, Crises and Sequences ..., op. cit., p. 30.

²Robert B. Textor, From Peasant to Pedicab Driver, A Social Study of Northeastern Thai Farmer Who Periodically Migrated to Bangkok and Became Pedicab Drivers, Cul-

Migration from the Northeast has been going on for quite a few decades. It is not entirely a new phenomenon, as one is often led to believe. Consequently, what is new is the mass migration of young people from the area. All these new facets of the migration pattern have only appeared on the scene in the last seven or eight years. Klausner asserted that previously Northeasterners came to the Central Plain area principally for wage labor. In the period going back to the time before the Bangkok-Northeast Railway line was built, it was always the men over thirty who came almost exclusively to Bangkok for a few months time.

Bangkok and its environs was to them another country, another world, and the Northeasterner inevitably returned home, quite content to return to his families and secure village environments.¹

Hence, Klausner noticed that since 1960 a change has slowly but surely been occurring in the Northeast migration pattern. The young village boys and girls from the ages of 14 and upwards have been leaving the village to seek wage labor beyond the Northeast area. The reasons for this sudden shift, according to Klausner, are diverse. In the early 1960, Thailand with aid and loans from the U.S. and international organizations started on a variety

turally Report Series, no. 6, Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, (New Haven, Connecticut, 1961), p. 1.

¹William Klausner, The Northeast Migration Problem (Bangkok: Department of Public Welfare, Ministry of the Interior, May 1960), p. 125.

of development programs. Private business firm sprouted up or expanded. Demands for cheap labor grew, and the relatively depressed Northeast area was the obvious source for such a labor force. Meanwhile, in the village, cash needs, while still minimal, were expanding slowly but surely and prices were constantly rising, so there was a felt need to supplement the family nest egg. "The children saw the cash jobs in Bangkok as not only a way to partake of the attractions of city life but as a means, through their salary, to pay respect to their parents and repay them for all the care given to the children in years gone by."¹

Patterns of migration of the Northeastern villagers, young and old, to seek jobs in Bangkok can be theoretically explained in Black's analysis of political development and modernization. He classified the integration of society as the fourth phase in his analysis of the stages of development. It is reflected by the great movement of peoples from the countryside to the city which transforms the structure of society from one of relatively autonomous regional, organizational, and occupational groupings to one that is highly fragmented and in which the individual is relatively isolated. This shift in relationships means in particular that the individual's ties with local, regional

¹Ibid., p. 127.

and other intermediate structures are reduced. It also deprives him not only of the support and consolation offered by membership in a more autonomous community but also of the relative stability of employment and social relations that agrarian life provides in normal times. The urban environment offers the ultimate hope of a greatly enriched way of life, but the agrarian provided the reality of social warmth and personal security.¹

Upon his migration to Bangkok, Keyes observed that:

...the Northeast villager was thrown into constant contact with central Thai in general and urbanized Thai in particular. A common reaction of all such temporary migrants was the feeling that Bangkokians are looking down upon him as a rustic bumpkin who cannot even speak proper Thai. All about him, the migrant was confronted with the strange aspects of urban Thai environment -- a world new, multi-colored, multifaceted, and vastly different from the way of life in which he has been raised.²

In this respect, Textor argued that life problems of the Northeasterners in Bangkok are primarily the problems of adjustment to an urban way of life with its bewildering complexities and insecurities. It usually happens that, as the Northeast migrant meets new situations and problems, his own ideas and values change. "He often

¹Black, The Dynamics of ..., op. cit., pp. 67-68. Black's 4 phases of modernization are (1) the challenge of modernity, (2) the consolidation of modernizing leaders, (3) economic and social transformation, (4) the integration of society.

²Keyes, "Ethnic Identity," in "Northeast Thailand," Symposium, op. cit., pp. 364-365.

takes on a more 'modern' and rational outlook and develops an appetite for modern goods and services."¹

An advantage which the Isan villagers usually acquired while staying in Bangkok mostly consists of the acquisition of new values, attitudes, skills and habits which in many cases have a significant bearing on the social and economic problems of the Northeast.

When the driver returns to his native village ... as almost all of them do ... he returns with relative affluence and prestige. He is, then, a potentially important agent of social and cultural change, and thus can play a part, perhaps unwittingly, in raising the standards of economy and health of the 8 million citizens of this most depressed and neglected region in the Kingdom.²

As a result, the pattern of migration to seek temporary jobs in Bangkok is becoming very widespread throughout the Northeast. Keyes asserted that most of the so-called proletariat in Bangkok are Northerners. One can almost call the Northerners the new Chinese, because they have taken over the work of the unskilled laborer formerly performed by Chinese, including jobs in Chinese factories.³

¹Textor, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

²Ibid., p. 2.

³Keyes, "Ethnic Identity...", in Symposium, op. cit. p. 11; also see Neher, The Dynamics of Politics ..., op. cit., p. 77.

The attitude of the Northeastern villagers toward the Central Plains Thai is also discussed by Mai Chuepaeng, a USOM researcher doing field research in the Northeast. He discovered that the village people of Baan Khuun Phuum disliked the Central Plains Thai,

... because the Central Plains people look down upon them. They said they found the Bangkok people unfriendly when they visited that city. They observed that the houses of Bangkok people are close to each other but that their occupants do not know their neighbors. Bangkok people never talk to each other when they ride the bus, they added. Most of the Khun Phum villagers feel uncomfortable and uneasy when they associate with Bangkok people.¹

Bantorn Ondam, another USOM researcher, found out the attitudes of the Isan villagers toward other amphur (district) officials as followed:

Because the villagers rarely see their Amphur and Changwad (province) officials, there is no identity with them ... When officials do come to Inplaeng village (in the Province of Sakol Nakorn in the Northeast) it is with a 'chao nai' (master) attitude ... Village people want more visits with government officials. This will help to offset their neglected feeling which could be a prime target for communist propaganda.²

Even when away from home, the thoughts of Northeast villagers remained in the Northeast. In Klausner's account, it is fair to paraphrase a much used saying you can

¹Mai Chuepaeng, "Some Pertinent Village Attitudes in Northeast Thailand," in Yatsushiro, ed., Village Meetings and Communism, "vol. II (Bangkok: USOM Research Division, June 1967), pp. 11-12.

²Bantorn Ondam, "Summary of Village Attitudes and ...," op. cit., pp. 53-54.

take the villagers out of the Northeast, but you can't take the Northeast out of the villagers. As might be expected, the Northerners reacted to this new environment by withdrawing into themselves. They found an emotional security and solace in being together: often they found jobs together.¹

In establishing contacts with other people in Bangkok, the Northeast migrant rarely found his closest association with people from Bangkok or the Central Plains. Rather he would attach himself to others with whom he could speak in the same, or nearly the same, dialect, he would live in temples known for being "Northeastern", and he would seek out places where he felt less strange. In Bangkok, Keyes observed that local differences between the migrant and other Northerners became relatively insignificant as he recognized his common interests with all who shared the same background.²

Theoretically speaking, Cynthia Enloe has made a point concerning ethnic characteristics which could be applied to the attitudes of the Northeast migrants of Thailand. According to Enloe, ethnic groups commonly live close together, clustered in one region or concentrated in several separate towns. They experience discrimination

¹Klausner, The Northeast Migration . . . , op. cit., p. 128.

²Keyes, "Ethnic Identity," in Symposium, op. cit., p. 365.

and frustration in specific and concrete ways, thus their protests aim at immediate amelioration rather than at abstract transformation. Members of ethnic groups, more than members of most other social groups, have an explicit sense of brotherhood, which proves helpful in mobilizing protest in the absence of entrenched leadership, and formal political platforms.¹

The factors determining a Northeasterner's length of stay in Bangkok, in Textor's point of view, are economic and psychological. If it is bad farming year and his wife, parents, and relatives have sufficient labor power to harvest the meagrw crop, he is likely to remain in Bangkok during the harvest season. If the harvest is heavy, he is more likely to return and give a hand. He is also likely to help during planting time. On the psychological side, Textor noted that the most frequently mentioned factor is that of loneliness. The great majority of married Northeasterners leave their wives and families behind. Frequently, they go back home to visit the families and sometimes bring them back to stay together in Bangkok.² This practice of going back home during the harvest and/or planting seasons has been established by the majority of Northeast migrants. Some risk losing their old and secure jobs

¹Enloe, op. cit., p. 223.

²Textor, op. cit., p. 12.

after spending some time back in the Northeast, since their employers tend to hire a replacement during their absence.

Consequently, it must be admitted that the Northeast villager's commitment was to his home back in the Northeast, even though he spent most of the years in Bangkok. The Northerners did not consider Bangkok their home. They came to get money to send home and not to become part of the cash economy of Bangkok. They did not feel responsible to their jobs nor obligated to their employers. Neither the job nor the employers were within their traditional frame of knowledge and experience. Duties, responsibility, and social control which operated in well defined patterns in their familiar village society were not transferred to the strange city and cash world outside the village boundaries. The cash job for the villager usually meant a chance to make a good sum of money in village terms in a short time. When the amount of cash planned had been saved, the Northerner would have no qualms about leaving the job to return home.¹

As a result of the temporary migration and relations between Bangkok and the Northeast, there emerge among the Northeast migrants three different groups of people. The first group includes the Northerners who go to Bangkok, work, collect enough money to support the family and later return home. The second group consists of those who go to

¹Klausner, The Northeast Migration, op. cit., p. 129.

Bangkok and completely assimilate themselves to the Bangkok culture and Bangkok way-of-life in the same sense that Chinese become Thai. These Northerners no longer identify themselves as "Isan", do not speak the Northeast dialect and perhaps become Bangkok officials. The third group are the Northerners who go to Bangkok, partly assimilate themselves to the Bangkok culture, but still maintain an "Isan" identity in order to capture political leadership in the Northeast. It has been observed by David Wilson that regional people preferred this kind of leadership because they knew these leaders were and are fully capable of acting in Bangkok the way they ought to act and therefore were able to accomplish something.¹

In spite of their remoteness, resentment and bitterness towards the Bangkok Government, the Northerners do have the sense of "nationalism" towards the country as a whole. It is obvious that the Northeast villagers' feeling of being a part of Thailand is based upon a sense of identity with the King. In this respect, Keyes suggested that it is the sense of the King as a symbol. The kingship, but not necessarily any particular King, is a very important element in the world view of the Northeast peasant.² This is particularly true because the King

¹Wilson, "Thailand: The Northeast," in Group discussion, op. cit., p. 16.

²Keyes, "Thailand: The Northeast," in Group discussion, op. cit., p. 12.

represents the supreme example of what a Buddhist layman can be. The villagers believed that the King can make so much merit because he has so much status and so much wealth, and he is King because he has achieved so much merit in past existence. Besides, the King is relevant in the North-east worldview because he is also a source of supernatural power. Keyes, therefore, concluded that:

... the acceptance of the Thai kingship as meaningful for Northeast peasants makes possible this acceptance of the state of Thailand as a relevant frame of reference for themselves.¹

Northeastern "Isan" Villagers' Attitude
towards the Kingdom of Laos

For centuries, the Mekong River, which separates from Thailand, has been more of a highway than a border. In the early postwar years, when the Laos Issara revolted against the return of the French colonialists, the rebel forces eventually sought both supplies and sanctuary in the Thai Northeast. Furthermore, when the situation in Laos became critical, the hard-pressed Lao Issara and later the Pathet Lao forces could always cross into Thailand and find shelter in villages among friends and relatives.²

The intimate relationship among villagers residing in both banks of the Mekong River is also recognized

¹Ibid.

²Dennis Warner, "Aggression by Seepage in Northeast Thailand," The Reporter 27:1 (October 25, 1962), p. 33.

by Block who contended that for centuries the Mekong River, which is the political border separating Laos from North-east Thailand, has served as a unifying cultural and commercial bridge for the people living on its opposite shores.¹ Hence, there is no doubt that the relationship of the people on both sides of the Mekong River is very close in terms of family and ethnic backgrounds. People travel back and forth for business and personal visit. There are some who work for or serve in the civil service under the Lao Government.²

Generally speaking, the Northerners everywhere have a warm feeling towards the Laotians and Laos as a country. After all, for most of them, Laos is their ancestral home. Up until late in 1975 when the Kingdom of Laos collapsed under the attacks of the Pathet Lao forces, relations between the peoples on the left and right banks of the Mekong River are maintained by trade and migration, often seasonal in nature. Migration has been mostly across the Mekong out of Laos, partly as a consequence of former Siamese conquest and population raids but also as part of

¹Edward M. Block, "ARD: A Counter Insurgency Program ...," op.cit., p. 17.

²Office of the Governor, Changwad Nakorn Phanom, Administrative Report on Nakorn Phanom (Bangkok: Philco-Document, no. 704, cited by Block, op.cit., p. 17.

the historic movement of T'ai peoples southward.¹

Since there are blood relatives on both sides of the Mekong River, inter-marriages occur very frequently. However, the Northeast villagers are too strongly attached to their present home to want to give it up and return to their ancestral home. In addition, although some Northeast villagers referred to themselves as "Lao", primarily because "being Lao" distinguished such villagers from the Central Thai. According to Keyes, "it might be said that Northeast villagers considered Laotians as "being like us" rather than "our being like them."² In fact, Laotians might be similar, but Laos was not a relevant context in which ethnic loyalties came to the fore. Villagers did not look to Laos as the main focus of the ethnic group of which they were a part, and they had good reason not to do so. In Laos there are only about one million people who belong to the dominant Laos ethnic group, whereas in Northeast Thailand there are at least seven and a half to eight million people who share the same broad features of culture and languages.³

Identification as a "Lao", in Keyes' judgement, is

¹Frank M. Lebar, Gerald C. Hichery, and John K. Musgrave, eds., Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia (New Haven, Conn.: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1964), p. 215.

²Keyes, "Ethnic Identity," op. cit., p. 367.

³Thailand, Central Statistical Office, National Economic Development Board, Thailand Population Census, 1960: Whole Kingdom (Bangkok 1962), p. 2.

a fact which should not be dismissed. In addition to the villagers who lived temporarily in Bangkok, some villagers also migrated to Vientiane in search of temporary work. Although the number of villagers who went to Laos is comparatively much smaller than those who went to Bangkok, the returned Isan villagers brought back with them a sense of common identity with the Laotians. Vientiane did not create the kinds of problems which the Northeast migrant found in Bangkok, for the culture, society, and language of Laos were little different from that which he knew back home. For those Northerners who had experienced intensive interpersonal relations with the Laotians, who had made the connection between Laotians and Northerners demonstrated by the radio, or who simply were familiar with the term "Lao", with its long historical background, pen phu lao, "being Lao" was indeed a possible ethnic identification.¹

The USOM research team has significantly considered the Northeast villagers' attitude toward the Laotians as a crucial element in its analysis of village attitudes and their relationship to national security. Mai Chuepaeng commented during his survey that the people in the Province of Sakol Nakorn:

... feel a kinship with the Laotians when they went to Vientiane, they were comfortable and much at ease. They would speak the Lao dialect and associate

¹Keyes, "Ethnic Identity, op. cit., p. 366.

with Lao people easily. When they went to Bangkok the people in Bangkok called them "Lao". To them this means the Bangkok people do not accept them as Thai. On the other hand, they did not like Laotians who live in Laos because the Laotian Government is not firm, soldiers are out of order, the power is on the top of the gun, the economy is very poor, and there is no outlet to any ocean. At the same time, the villagers are satisfied with the Thai Government because it is stronger than the Laotian Government and has developed better communications. Thailand's economy and its educational system are better, they concluded.¹

Further, and perhaps more importantly, Northeastern villagers whose horizons extended beyond local boundaries recognized themselves as living within a Thai state. As one villager remarked to Keyes, "we are Lao people, but Thai citizens (pen phu Lao tae sat Thai). Hence, Keyes contended that "another old village man was not even certain whether the Lao of Laos were Thai citizens or not, but he knew that he was." The perception of being within a social system dominated by members of a different ethnic group was the most significant feature of both ethnic identity and ethnic loyalties among the Northeastern peasants.²

In the past decades and even during the height of the conflict in Indochina, the traditional trade and social intercourse between villagers across the River has gone on

¹Mai Chuepaeng, "Some Pertinent Village Attitudes. . .," op. cit., p. 14.

²Keyes, "Ethnic Identity," op. cit., p. 367; Also see Yatsushiro, Village Attitudes and Conditions . . ., op. cit., p. 21.

as usual, at least up until the Pathet Lao takeover of the Kingdom of Laos in December 1975. Dennis Warner has very well described the relationship between peoples who live across the Mekong River as followed:

In the mornings, just after sunrise, fleets of slender Thai canoes speed across the Mekong filled with pigs, chickens, and vegetables for the markets in Laos. All along the river, the Northeasterners would rather take a boat across to Laos than attempt the long, difficult and sometimes impossible trip over the rough trails that connect with inland Thai centers.¹

Although a few villagers did make the attempt to leave their communities and begin the process of becoming "Thai", most villager still viewed local and Isan/Lao identities as something worthwhile and valuable in view of increasing impingement by a Thai-dominated world. Through such pressures as the primary educational programs, Community Development, local administration by the Government, and national impingement upon the religion, villagers have increasingly been faced with challenges to their traditional way of life. Without experience in interethnic contexts, the villagers' reactions would be predominantly those of protecting local interests against pressures from above. Nevertheless, in protecting their ethnic interests, villagers did not perceive of themselves as choosing identity with Laos over identity with Thailand. In brief, ethnic identity and national identity were not equated in the

¹Dennis Warner, "Aggression By Seepage . . .," op. cit., p. 33.

self-perceptions of Northeast villagers.¹

Keyes, therefore, claimed that it should be apparent that it would be grossly misleading "to assume a priori that the ethnic identities and loyalties of Northeast villagers means that if given the opportunity, Northerners would prefer to be under a Government located in Laos rather than one located in Thailand."² Above and beyond the localism which is characteristic of every peasant society, villagers in Northeast Thailand taken an Isan/Lao identity for purposes of expressing feelings of distrust, resentment, and antipathy towards the Central Thai, and particularly Central Thai officials. Indigenous political leaders have in the past employed a dimly perceived sense of ethnic solidarity among Northeastern problems to the attention of the dominant elite of Bangkok. The potential for such mobility is greater today due to the increased experience of Northeast villagers in interethnic situations involving themselves and Central Thai. Northeast ethnic loyalties could potentially be used to sharpen regional feelings of economic deprivation relative to the rest of the Kingdom.³

¹Keyes, "Ethnic Identity," op. cit., p. 368.

²Ibid., p. 369.

³Ibid.

In a similar vein, Lee Huff pointed out that it should be stressed that the "Lao-ness" displayed by villagers in the Northeast is essentially a matter of cultural feeling and kingship bonds rather than a particular associated with the Government of Laos.¹ After all, it is apparent that the Northeast villagers' loyalty and attachment to the Thai King are extraordinary strong. In comparative perspective, while the Thai King represents no practical alternative. To the Isan villagers, the Lao King is but the successor to the throne of the principality of Luang Prabang. In this respect, Keyes maintained that he has seen more pictures of the Thai King than of the Lao King in the Northeast villages he has visited.²

In brief, the make-up of the Northeast villager's basic identity could be summed up as the following:

- (1) He is a Thai citizen who is proud of his Lao cultural background.
- (2) He is a member of a distinctive ethnic group.
- (3) He is a farmer for whom land and rice cultivation are two of the most important things in life.
- (4) He is a Buddhist for whom merit-making is one of the greatest activities in life.

¹Lee W. Huff, "The Thai Mobile Development Unit Program," in Peter Kunstadter, ed., Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities and Nations, vol. I, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 432.

²Keyes, "Ethnic Identity," op. cit., p. 13.

(5) He is a villager at heart and in outlook; he prefers to live the major portion of his life in his own village to which he is economically, socially, and emotionally attached.

(6) Although basically conservative by nature, he admires modernism, and aspires to improve his lot, economically, socially and politically.

Hence, it is fair to assume that the rural Northeast peasant is still basically a villager at heart and in outlook. He admires modernization and aspires to be modern. For example, he would like to visit Bangkok and even work and live there for a period. But he definitely wants to return to his village where he prefers to spend most of the remaining years of his life.¹

In the final analysis, the prospect for future assimilation and integration of Isan population into Thai state seems optimistic. The reason for this lies with the fact that the Isan/Lao identity does not genuinely imply rigid distinctiveness between Northeasterners and the Central Thais. There is ample evidence to show that the "Thai way", acquired through the rapid process of modernization, has its attractions for Northeastern peasants and especially the ones who migrate to Bangkok for temporary jobs. This attraction also increases as villagers have

¹Yatsushiro, Village Attitudes and ..., op. cit., p. 7.

greater experience in Thai-defined situations. In some respects, however, an increase in contact and relationship between Northerners and the people in Bangkok has resulted in further alienation and disillusionment on the part of Northeast migrants as earlier suggested by Walker Connor. Nevertheless, these practices have been lessening and are expected to disappear totally in the near future. Moreover, Northeast villagers have come to accept the "Thai way" as characterizing the elite of the nation to which they belong and recognize that it is possible for them to rise in class and to become "thai" if they so wish. Keyes, however, has argued that this should not be interpreted to mean that a "Thai" identity and loyalty could be imposed upon the whole population in the Northeast. In his words,

Rather, recognition and respect should be accorded to Isan/Lao identity as representing attachments to value of traditions by individuals from the Northeastern region, even as Northern identity is recognized and respected. The goal of the Thai Government should not be one of ethnic imperialism, but rather, one of providing contexts in which the northerners can partake of both Isan/Lao and Thai traditions.¹

Hence, judging from the recent developmental patterns of the Northeast in relation to the Bangkok power structure, i.e., the centralization of administrative control of the Central Government throughout the Northeast, the improve-

¹Keyes, "Ethnic Identity," op.cit., p. 369.

ment of communications and transportation systems between Bangkok and the Northeast villages, Bangkok's recent growth and the mass migration of impoverished Northeast villagers to seek temporary employments in Bangkok, - it is fair to conclude that these aspects of modernization and social mobilization which, in effect, stimulate more contacts between different ethnic groups have caused further disruption in the integration process of Northeast Thailand. Instead of promoting better understanding and relationship between Bangkok people and Isan peasants, their closer contacts, in which the villagers are generally discriminated against and are looked down upon as though they are of inferior race and culture, coupled with the occasional abuses of power by Government officials both in the capital and in the rural areas, have resulted in the growing sense of Isan regionalism, alienation and the "we and they" feeling.

In the next chapter, an attempt will be made to link the growing sense of "Isan regionalism" with the overall political change of the Kingdom. The coup of 1932 and the creation of National Assembly have for the first time provided the Isan elites with an opportunity to voice their grievances and their regional demands in the national forum. The introduction of the military supremacy in Thai politics in the subsequent period, which is, in fact, but one

aspect of the process of political development in modernizing countries, has, in effect, undermined the legislative vis-à-vis the administrative power. Hence, it disrupts the development and integration of the Northeast as well.

CHAPTER VI

DILEMMAS OF CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY
AND THE ROLE OF ISAN ELITES IN
OPPOSING MILITARY DICTATORSHIPA) Praetorianism and Civil-Military Relations:A Theoretical Analysis

One of the most striking political developments in the post World War II era was the emergence of the so-called "juntas", military regimes, "coups" and "military revolts" in the Third World nations. Aside from their frequency, military interventions became an inseparable part of the process of political change and modernization whatever the continent and whatever the country in this category.

As far back as the nineteenth century, Gaetano Mosca, an Italian political scientist, had acknowledged that military dominance in politics was far from an unusual phenomenon. He remarked that:

... the class that bears the lance or holds the musket regularly forces its rule upon the class that handles the spade or pushes the shutter.¹

From a historical point of view, the term "military intervention" in politics is derived and developed from the

¹Gaetano Mosca, The Ruling Class, edited by Arthur Lington, (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1939), p. 228.

concept of "militarism", a concept employed to define the role of the military in pre-industrial Western societies.¹ Although the term itself has never been clearly defined, it designated the role of the military as the "reaction" or an affiliation with "right" which tries to restore the traditional order. Nevertheless, definition of the term "militarism" varies from one author to another. For example, the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, defines "militarism" as "an attitude towards public affairs which conceived war and the preparation for war as the chief instrument of foreign policy and the highest form of public services."² Since the main emphasis of this definition is focused on the concept of expansionism and protectionism, it is regarded as too narrow to cover the role of the military as a whole. On the other hand, Van Dyke viewed the term "militarism" as "the use of armed forces for other than military purpose."³ This term is, however, broadly defined to the extent that it becomes meaningless if it has to be tested with empirical data.

A clearer view of "militarism" is provided by Vagts

¹Morris Janowitz, The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: An Essay in Comparative Analysis (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1964)

²Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (N.Y.:MacMillan Co., 1950), vol. X, p. 122.

³Vernon Van Dyke, International Politics (N.Y.: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1957), p. 122.

who adds to the idea a consideration and prevailing attitude toward war. "Militarism", according to Vagts, means: "A domination of the military man over the civilian, an undue preponderance of military demands, an emphasis on military considerations, spirits, ideals, and scales or value, in the life of states."¹ Hence Jin Vibhatakarasa broadly asserts the meaning of "militarism" to be "the over-emphasis of military institution and ways of life over that of the civilian."²

As a result of this broad definition of "militarism", a new term of "military intervention" has been developed and is widely-used in the study of political science. Military intervention refers therefore to the substitution of military policies and/or personnel for those of existing, recognized civilian authorities.³ Therefore, military intervention in politics, as contrasted with military influence in politics, characterizes political systems which we deem praetorian.⁴ Welch and Smith, in addition, contended

¹ Alfred Vagts, A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military (N.Y.: Meridan Books, 1959), p. 14.

² Jin Vibhatakarasa, "The Military in Politics: A Study of Military Leadership in Thailand," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1966, p. 8.

³ Lyle N. McAlister, "The Military," in John J. Johnson, ed., Continuity and Change in Latin America (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1964), p. 152.

⁴ David C. Rapoport, "A Comparative Theory of Military and Political Types," Samuel P. Huntington, ed., Changing Patterns of Military Politics (N.Y.: Free Press, 1962), p.72.

that the praetorian condition exists before intervention occurs; thus "it is necessary to understand the overall framework of a praetorian system in order to understand the rationale for and mechanics of military intervention. Praetorianism exists in a state in which institutions are weak and the basis for legitimizing political authority is uncertain."¹

In addition, Huntington maintained that, in a praetorian system, social forces confront each other nakedly. No political institutions, no corps of professional leaders are recognized or accepted as the legitimate intermediaries to moderate group conflict. The absence of effective political institutions in a praetorian society means that power is fragmented. As a result, Huntington asserted that in this type of society, authority over the system is transitory. The weakness of political institutions means that authority and office are easily acquired and easily lost.²

In an attempt to expand the subject of "praetorianism" to a wider perspective, Rapoport's argument is valuable to our discussion. The term "Praetorianism" has come to have several meanings. It refers to soldiers hired by

¹Claude E. Welch, Jr., and Arthur K. Smith, Military Role and Rule: Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1974), p. 34.

²Huntington, Political Order in ..., op.cit., p. 196.

a government to police an unruly population, but it also suggests that the loyalties of these soldiers are not fixed, for they have often overturned governments they were hired to defend. The term finally is associated with venality, corruption, and military incapacity or cowardice. In effect, Rapoport regards a praetorian state not simply a system in which there is a presence of military-based regime, but rather as one where private ambitions are rarely restrained by a sense of public authority or common purpose; the role power (i.e., wealth and force) is maximized.¹

A praetorian society, as in the case of Thailand, has a small, extremely wealthy oligarchy and a large, poverty-sticken mass -- a sociological condition which both highlights and intensifies the ineffectiveness of state policy. Whether the state proclaims democratic or despotic principles, Rapoport believes that it must promise some measures of equality and cannot legitimize the existing distribution of wealth. The rich man, therefore, must attempt to protect his property by subverting the integrity of the state's administrative agents. On the other hand, the hatred of the poor lacks true moral fervor, for the mass cynically

¹David C. Rapoport, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

²*Ibid.*, p. 73.

distrusts all public authority and will not submit to the restraint and sacrifices necessary for fundamental reform.¹

Given the fact that the role of force and violence in politics have been one of the distinctive political phenomena in the Third World, it is justified to place a majority of countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the category of praetorian societies. Stated simply, it has been no myth that in many of these developing countries the general pattern for taking, holding and transferring of political power is manifested in the use of force and violence. Indeed, it is an unfortunate fact that most of these countries have experienced military interventions at one time or another and that the prospects of coups and violence seem promising and inevitable. Dankward Rustow has also pointed out that military interference becomes possible wherever distinct civilian and military organizations have emerged within the structures of government. In modernizing societies, civilian and military functions become necessarily distinct.² Nevertheless, Rustow asserted that what turns the possibility of interference into a probability is not the strength of the military but the

¹Ibid., p. 73.

²Dankwart A. Rustow, A World of Nations: Problems of Political Modernization (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1967), p. 175.

weakness of the civilian structure.¹

Analyses of the motivations by military junta to launch the coup "are mainly centered on the so-called 'institutional vacuums', pulling a sometimes reluctant, somestimes eager, modernizing military elite into political action in the alternative names of anticorruption, reform, revolution on behalf of a new or middle-aged middle class or to preserve the valuable status quo." ² According to Thompson, whatever the alleged rallying banner, political actors, at least as long as they wear uniforms, are viewed as obediently enacting the roles assigned to them by vague and impersonal systemic forces. "Not only does one feel uncomfortable with a heavy reliance on systemic pulls; but the predominant explanatory modes simply are not in full accord with available empirical data."³

B) The Thai Political Climate
and Successive Military Interventions

Modernity entails democracy, and democracy in the new states, even where it is not representative, must above all be egalitarian. To the elites of the new states,

¹Ibid., p. 170.

²William R. Thompson, "Regime Vulnerability and the Military Coup," Comparative Politics 7:4 (July 1975), p. 459.

³Ibid., p. 460

modernity therefore entails the dethronement of rich and the traditionally privileged. To be a "modern" democracy implies, according to the prevailing conception in the new states, that the rulers should be answerable to the people for their actions. When the rulers are not in fact so answerable, though a legislature which is popularly and periodically elected, then they allege that they are answerable to the collective will of their people.¹

Historically speaking, the Thai political system during the past hundred of years has been viewed as largely autocratic in form and authoritarian spirit.² As a result of Western impacts and royal initiatives triggered by the fear of colonial expansion, political change and modernization have been systematically introduced to the Thai society beginning with the reign of King Mongkut (1851-1869) of the Chakkri dynasty. The great Transformation especially in administrative and educational reforms was later brought about in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1869-1910).³ Nevertheless, radical changes had been achieved in June 1932 when a group of young civilian bureaucrats

¹Edward Shils, "Political Development of the New States," in J. J. Johnson, ed., The Role of..., op.cit., p. 9.

²Jin Vibhatakarasa, op.cit., p. 83.

³Walter Vella, The Impact of the Western Government in Thailand (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1955).

and military officers successfully transformed the Thai political system from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional democracy. After the revolution, absolute monarchy was abolished; the King would become the national figurehead. The real political power would rest with the new groups of commoners, but the authoritarian pattern of political relationship would be allowed to persist. Hence, from 1932 on absolute and abusive power have been successively exercised by small group of military oligarchy with the full cooperation of civilian bureaucrats.¹

Thailand presents one of the best example of states in which there is a close cooperation between military and civilian factions of government, i.e., of so-called "bureaucratic politics."² Having characterized the Thai political system as "predatory military rule", Welch and Smith argued that despite occasional forays back to civilian rule, Thailand is a praetorian political system, in which military factions and personal rivalries constitute the crucial factors in government change.³ Hence, various shortlived

¹Sawai Sutthiphithak, Dr. Pridi Phanomyong kap kaan pa-thi-wat [Dr. Pridi Phanomyong and the Revolution] (Bangkok: Sirithamnakorn, n.d.), p. 96.

²For further discussions, see Fred Riggs, Thailand: The Modernization of ..., op.cit.

³Although throughout a short history of democratic experimentation, military leadership has played a dominant role in the Thai political process, its role has not gone unchallenged but also experienced its ups and downs. For details see Sanguan Maneechote, "Soldiers in Thai Politics,"

civilian governments have failed to change the political primacy of the armed forces. "Government in Thailand is a combination of military power, self-serving bureaucracies, and traditional authority -- which form a distinctive pattern of predatory military rule."¹

According to Lucian Pye, "modern armies are somewhat easier to create in transitional societies than are most other forms of modern social structure."² Thus, the capacity and advantages of the military for intervention in domestic politics stem from its size, skills, equipment, weapons, disciplines and cohesive organizations. These political resources have given them the military capacity for forcible intervention in the politics of virtually every state in Asia.³

By the same token, Janowitz acknowledged that the unique character of the military derives from the requirement that its key members be specialists in the use of violence. Nevertheless, he cautioned that some qualities will limit the ability of the military to rule effectively.

Journal of the Siam Society 51 (January 1968), p. 96.

¹Welch and Smith, op.cit., p. 81.

²Lucian Pye, Armies in the Process of Political Modernization (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1969), p. 1.

³John P. Lovell, and Eugene Kim, "Military and Political Change in Asia," Pacific Affairs 11:1 (Spring/Summer 1976), p. 115.

"Once political power has been achieved, the military must develop mass political organizations of a civilian type, or it must work out viable relations with civilian political groups. In short, while it is relatively easy for the military to seize power in a new nation, it is much more difficult for it to govern."¹

The Thai political system, with respect to Janowitz's model of civil-military relations, is characteristically described as one of a military oligarchy, under which the military sets itself up to become the ruling group and civilian political activity is transformed, constricted and repressed.² During the past four and a half decades since the 1932 coup, the dominant role of military leaders in Thai political life has been overwhelming. Although its supremacy has not gone unchallenged and its power has experienced both ups and downs, its rule has mostly been absolute in pointing the pattern and style of Thai politics towards praetorian society and mild fascist dictatorship for almost half a century.

Technically the potential strength of any nation's military establishment is dependent primarily on its size, its share of the national budget, the extent and variety

¹Morris Janowitz, The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: An Essay in Comparative Analysis (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 5.

of the coercive resources it controls, and the organizational effectiveness with which it can apply these resources under different circumstances.¹ Nevertheless, it would be a grave mistake to explain military intervention in politics solely by reference to the internal structure of the military or the social background of the officers participating in the coups.

In fact, the military's strength as a political actor is affected by several other crucial factors such as the political culture, the tolerance of people towards authoritarianism, the social stratification patterns and value system of the society, the prevailing levels of political institutionalization and participation in the society as well as the military role and mission in historical-traditional perspectives.²

In modern Thailand, military officers can proudly and legitimately claim that their roots have long been established in the ancient bureaucratic tradition. Although there was no such group as a "warrior class" in the social setting of historical stratification. There is no evidence suggesting that there existed any other group comparable to

¹Harold D. Lasswell, "The Garrison-State Hypothesis Today," in Samuel Huntington, ed., Changing Patterns of Military Politics..., op.cit., pp. 51-70.

²Samuel S. Finer, The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics (N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1962), pp. 80-83.

the military organization. Hence, all political leaders had to be experts in warfare and the martial arts in some sense of the word. Moreover, there was little distinction, in structural-functional terms, between military and civil officials; both were subordinated to the throne. Nevertheless, some distinctions which differentiated the military officers from civilian bureaucrats concerning their title and paraphernalia¹ existed even as far back as practice of military officers' holding high political positions; as example which still practices in today-Thai political system.²

As has earlier been indicated, the ability of the military to intervene in politics derives from its organizational format, skill structure and career lines, social recruitment and education, professional and political ideology, social cohesion and political intervention. In the case of Thailand, a class of professional military officers

¹In the Thai bureaucratic system, government officials have traditionally been given ranks and titles according to the position they were holding at that time. For example, the name of Phraya Phai-ree-phi-naj, literally means "ennemy defeated", is exclusively the title of military officers. On the contrary, civilian officials who were in charge of the King's library and education of the princes and princesses would generally hold the title of Phraya-ak-sorn-vi-chit, literally meaning "beautiful letter". Therefore, there is at least clearly a distinction between civilian and military officials in the Thai traditional political system.

²David A. Wilson, "The Military in Thai Politics," in John J. Johnson, ed., The Role of ..., op.cit., p. 254.

was created during the period of national reorganization, 1851-1932, in which the military became a separate political institution for the first time in Thailand's history. From then on, Wilson maintained, its outstanding characteristics were centralized organization, professionalization, institutional pride, and a dedication to nationalism.¹

It has generally been recognized that the Thais are typically subservient and are accustomed to absolutist but patrimonial rule; they understand social organization only when patterned in subordinate-superordinate terms. This attitude resulted in a social-psychological taste for hierarchy,² as well as mass tolerance of dictatorial and illegitimate displays of force. In fact, the organization of Thai military follows the rigid line of power structure and strict discipline and a willingness to promote programs to preserve the so-called political order. In comparison with other types of political organizations such as political parties which seek to follow more egalitarian

¹David A. Wilson, "The Military in . . .," op. cit., p. 255. Col. Prapote Sunthornwan, Military Education in Thailand (Bangkok: Traimitr kaan Pim Co., 1966), pp. 18-22; Sir Henry Stevens, Thailand: Development of the Royal Army (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 29; Charles Le May, Military Government in Thailand (Brussels: International Institute for Administrative Science, 1968), pp. 321-329; and Colonel Pong Senapote, The History of Royal Thai Army (Bangkok: The Royal Military Academy, 1957), p. 19.

²Lucian M. Hanks, Jr., and Herbert P. Phillips, "A Young Thai From the Countryside: A Psychological Analysis," in B. Kaplan, ed., Studying Personality Cross Culturally

principles, the military organization of Thailand tends to have pronounced advantages in launching a decisive action.

Military leaders, when in power, have exercised their authority in the name of the King. Civilian career officials who consider themselves the King's servants, appeared to have accepted without resentment the dominance of military men in the major executive position of control. As Kasem Boonyapong once stated: "The Thai army has learned not only how to build a throne of bayonets, but also to sit on it."¹

June 1932 and the Emergence
of Pseudo-Democratic Rule

It is rather superficial to consider military intervention in politics primarily by studying the historical background and organizational structures of the Thai military establishment, while excluding an examination of political change and behavior of the society. In fact, the effort to answer the question, "what characteristics of the military establishment of a new nation facilitate its involvement in domestic politics?" is misdirected in the judgment of Huntington. "The most important causes of military intervention in politics are not military but

(Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1961).

¹Kasem Boonyapong, "Military in Thai Politics," Thai Journal of Sociology (August 1969), p. 863.

political and reflect not the social and organizational characteristics of the military establishment but the political and institutional structure of the society."¹

The Thai military is obviously endowed with the generally accepted right to lead and rule the nation. People accept the concept that "might makes right", and evidence a continuing desire for strong decisive leadership,² except for small groups of students, professors and other members of the intellectual community such as the press and lawyers. Nevertheless, historical evidence indicates that the prime attempt to modernize Thailand along constitutional line in 1932 did not come from the leadership and initiatives of military leaders. In fact, it was a group of civilian intellectuals, led by Dr. Pridi Phanomyong, who had been studying and trained abroad, who planned and launched the 1932 coup overthrowing the absolute monarchy.³ Yet, the civilian attempt to modernize Thailand would become much more difficult if it had not received enthusiastic support from its officer friends. Thus, it has been asserted that the Thai military did not clearly dominate the first government following the 1932 coup. Actually civilians

¹Huntington, Political Order in ..., op.cit., p. 194.

²Morrell, "Power and Parliament ...," op.cit., p. 113.

³St Clair McKelway, "Thailand Tries a People's Party," Asia 32 (November 1932), p. 555.

comprised 54 out of 70 members of the Assembly, holding the Premiership and controlling the Council of Ministers.¹

Increasingly, however, at least until 1963, and especially in the period of the seventies, the key posts were given to army generals in return for military support in capturing power.² Nevertheless it would be mistaken to suppose that influence in the army is the only key to power, since wealth and influence in the bureaucracy are also important.

The decision of military leaders to join the 1932 coup was clearly stated by Colonel Phahol Phonphayahasena,³ a military leader of 1932 and 1933 coups and the Prime Minister between 1933-1938.

At the very base (of my reasons for joining the coup) was the birth of the feeling that in the government at the time, high officials and princes acted according to their whim and were not willing to pay heed to smaller people even though there were reasons for believing them. The big boys mostly felt that the soundness of the opinion of lesser people was not

¹Welch and Smith, op.cit., pp. 88-89. D. A. Strain, Politics in Thailand (N.Y.: MacMillan Co., 1962), p. 94.

²Richard O. Smith, Bureaucratic Transition in Thailand (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 18.

³David Wilson gave among other details of Colonel Phahol's background the fact that he had received advanced military education in Germany and had risen to the level dominated by the Royal Family. The reason for him to join the coup was that, although he felt himself well qualified in technical matters, the prince in command of the army did not see fit to consider his advice. David A. Wilson, "Thailand," in George McT. Kahin, ed., Government and Politics of Southeast Asia (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1959), p. 16.

important, what was important was whether or not is pleased them.¹

Military support of the initial coup of 1932 marked the beginning of military officers' intervening role in the history of Thai political development. In fact, the intervention of military officers into politics was not new. What was new was the intervention of non-royal military officers into politics. Of the first coup group, there were thirty-one army officers, seventeen naval officers, and sixty-three civilians.²

Initially, the military officers involved in the coup, mainly Col. Phahol and Col. Song, were convinced that their role was one of support and that the country should be led by civilians.³ Support by some members of the military promoters of the coup for the civilian rule under Phraya Mano Administration wavered some months later. Yet evidences showed that even in 1932 the military supporters were not unified in their support. As a matter of fact, the supporters of the military coup had already become divided into factions and cliques. Thompson noted that the

¹Kularp Saipradit, Buang-lang kaan pa-thi-wat 2475 [Behind the Revolution of 1932], Bangkok: n.p., 1947), p. 110.

²James P. Thompson, Jr., "The Thai Military: An Analysis of Its Role in the Thai Nation," Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1974, p. 38.

³Somsak Rakwichit, "The Military in Southeast Asian Politics," Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1966, p. 128.

political division of military officers which began during the early part of the Constitutional period was a major determinant of the character of the government.¹

The emergence of radical praetorianism is a long and complicated process. It usually involves succession of coups and other changes as different groups struggle up over each other's backs into positions of political power. The actual coup itself often proceeded by years of discussion and preparation. The Thai "Promoteurs" of 1932 grew out of the organized discussions of civilian students and younger military officers in Paris in the 1920's. Huntington described the events surrounding the 1932 coup as follows:

The overthrow of the Thai absolute monarchy followed somewhat similar lines. Thailand's first coup occurred in June 1932, when a group of civil and military individuals seized power ... and persuaded the king to accept a limited monarchy.²

The revolution of 1932 confirmed but did not create a more basic transformation in the structure of the Thai Government, which had already taken place. Thus in 1930,

¹Ibid., pp. 38-39.

²Huntington, Political Order in ..., op.cit., p. 205. For further discussion of the 1932 revolution and its consequence to the Thai society, see McKelway, op.cit., p. 55; Fred Riggs, Thailand: The Modernization ..., op.cit., p. 16; Jan Pluvier, Southeast Asia From Colonialism to Independence (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 90; Frank C. Darling, "Marshal Sarit and the Absolutist Rule in Thailand," Pacific Affairs 33:4 (December 1960), p. 349.

while the absolute monarchy persisted in name, Wales claimed that the "'masses' had no real understanding of the rites of tonsure, coronation, and cremation, but they had an innate love and respect for all forms of royal pageantry, and it is the magnificence of the state procession that impresses them that their king was a great king."¹

Tradition and conservatism were therefore still powerful trends in Thai politics. It was equally logical to assert that the Thai governmental system did not deviate from the essentially conservative character of society. In fact, parliamentary democracy, Western style, was not introduced in 1932.² The constitution, written by members of the People's Party, provided for a National Assembly, of which half the members were elected and the other half appointed by the coup leaders of the People's Party. This provision was announced as a transitional solution for a period of ten years, but due to political developments, it was speculated even then that it would probably be of a permanent nature.³

¹H. G. Quaritch Wales, Siamese State Ceremonies: Their History and Functions (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1931), p. 166; see also Brian Crozier, ed., Thailand: The Dual Threat to Stability, Conflict Studies no. 44 (London: The Institute for the Studies of Conflict, May 1974), p. 2.

²Thomas Johnson, Thailand: Behind the Revolution of 1932 (London: Hill Publishing Co., 1968), p. 36.

³Pluvier, Southeast Asia From Colonialism . . ., op.cit., pp. 90-91.

Another factor which contributed to the failure of democracy in Thailand from the start was the fact that the People's Party, formed by Dr. Pridi Phanomyong, a civilian intellectual, was not really a party in strict sense. It was scarcely more than a political club.¹ Hence, its members had failed to develop an extra-bureaucratic power base capable of imposing control over the Government. "As bureaucrats, they conceived of political power in terms of official positions. Still, had they remained unified with the king as their ally, Dr. Pridi's civilian group might have become the dominant force in the new government."²

From 1932 through World War II, there were obviously no genuine political parties in Thailand in the Western sense. Apparently, the initial intention of the "Promoteurs" was to form a large but exclusive party organization to support their own position, but they soon abandoned the idea. It would be perhaps justified to claim that the Thai "Promoteurs" who became the inner core of the People's Party followed a line of strategy relatively quite similar line to that practiced by Lenin and his Bolshevik comrades. Following Lenin's "conspiracy" and "elite" theories, Dr. Pridi and his associates secretly planned the coup,

¹Riggs, Thailand: The Modernization ..., op.cit., p. 158.

²Welch and Smith, op.cit., pp. 88-89. Also Riggs, Thailand: The Modernization ..., op.cit., pp. 161-162.

restricted membership to only few trusted friends and considered themselves the rightful leaders of the unpolitical masses of the Thai people.

According to Lenin, "a small compact core, consisting of reliable, experienced, and hardened workers," with responsible agents in the principle districts and connected by all the rules of strict secrecy with the organizations of revolutionaries can, with the wide support of the masses and without an elaborate set of rules, perform all functions of a trade-union organization, and perform them, moreover, "in the manner social-democrats desire."

The more to be drawn from this is a simple one. If we begin with the solid foundation of a strong organization of revolutionaries, we can guarantee the stability of the movement as a whole, and carry out the aims of both social-democracy and of trade unionism.¹

As a result, it is evident from historical records that the "vanguard" theme advocated by Lenin rather than by the typical Western democracy, to some extent received priority in the minds of the Thai "Promoteurs" of 1932. Shortly after the establishment of the constitutional Government, it became public policy not to permit the organization of parties, and the People's Party became the People's Association. The Association appears to have

¹V. I. Lenin, "What Is To Be Done?", in Betty B. Burch, ed., Dictatorship and Totalitarianism: Selected Readings (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1964), pp. 67-68.

combined social activities with some general political education. Wilson noted that the usage is somewhat confused, however, since the ruling group continued to refer to themselves as the People's Party. In this sense, the term refers to the ruling group associated with the 1932 coup.¹

The first genuine military coup d'etat in Thailand, led by Col. Phahol Phonphayahasena, took place in June 1933. The event was recounted by Thompson who wrote that:

Another coup group occurred in June 1933 which brought military officers to the leadership of the government for the first time in the constitutional period when Mano was replaced by coup promoter Col. Phahol as Prime Minister.²

Nevertheless, the coup, led by Western-educated Phahol and to a lesser extent Phibun, could be regarded as less repressive, because some forms of democratic practices were still allowed to function. Unlike that of Sarit and Thanom, Col. Phahol's coup was launched with the intention of eliminating conservative forces advocating the return of the absolute monarchy. In comparative perspective, Phahol's coup was intended to bring into practice political modernization and some forms of parliamentary rule as advocated by Dr. Pridi and his civilian elites, whose parliamentary support also came from the majority of the Northeastern politicians. On the contrary, the successive military

¹Wilson, Politics in Thailand .., op.cit., p. 233.

²James Thompson, op.cit., p. 39.

regimes, which took power on 1938, 1947, 1958, 1971 and most recently in October 1976, launched the coups for the purposes of restoring military supremacy in politics, halting progressive reforms and democratic development introduced by civilian politicians. Parliamentary rule which encouraged criticism of government corruption, administrative malfunctions with the focus on rural development and basic human rights proved untenable to the intolerant generals whose political and economic power expanded with their absolutist rule and the silencing of the political opposition.

Rustow's analysis of the four essential functions in the military bid for power could very well be applied to successive military coups in Thailand. The four functions are listed as followed:

- (1) announcement that power already is in the hands of the new rulers;
- (2) details of the composition of the new ruling groups;
- (3) later pronouncements give the citizenry an idea of the program and aims of the new military rulers. The old government's inefficiency, corruption and unpopularity will be duly castigated. Positive measures for the immediate restoration of tranquility, for the rooting out of subversion, for the speedy reform of the administration, for friendly relations with foreign powers will be promised;
- (4) the sponsors of the coup will protest that they did not wish to seize power, but acted in a moment of national emergency.¹

The 1933 coup was largely attributed to the rivalry

¹Dankwart Rustow, A World of Nations, op. cit., p. 154.

for power among the civilian group of the original "Promoteurs", as well as disagreement over the controversial "Economic Plan" drafted by Pridi. Wilson observed that almost immediately following the (1932) coup, however, the unity of Pridi's civilian group was sundered. The younger, more radical promoters chafed under the leadership of the older, more established civil servants who had been brought in to lend an aura of respectability to the regime.¹

Similarly, Riggs also acknowledged that it was a power play between a clique of older military officials that led to a crisis. The cause of the coup, in his view, is not as important as an "understanding that the leadership had not passed from military to civilian leaders but from one clique to another."² Hence, Wilson argued that, with the publication of Pridi's controversial "Economic Plan" of 1933, a document calling for the nationalization of all land and industry, which immediately "gave rise to crisis of Bolshevism, the growing schism between the civilian radicals and Col. Phahol's group of conservative senior military officers finally led to a crisis."³

Jack Brimmell recorded a full summary account of political change in Thailand during 1932-1933 as followed:

¹Wilson, "The Military in Thai Politics," op. cit., p. 154.

²Riggs, Thailand: The Modernization ..., op. cit., p. 259.

³Wilson, Politics in Thailand, op. cit., pp. 16-17;

The new Constitution was eventually promulgated in December 1932, but by then the conservative elements in the government had succeeded in greatly modifying Pridi's original views. In 1933, these elements obtained the dissolution of the People's Party, which was transformed into a club. The next move was the declaration by Phya Manopakorn and his followers that Pridi's National Economic policy - which had not yet been published - was 'communistic'. Pridi was thereupon forced into exile.¹

In September 1933, Pridi returned to Thailand. A commission was set up in March 1934 to clear Pridi of the allegation of Communism. This was obviously a form of pressure from Pridi's civilian group and his followers from the Northeast who obtained a majority in the Assembly following a general election of November 1933. After the abortive royalist coup led by Prince Baworadet, former Defense Minister, was suppressed by Phibun and his military clique, rivalry then developed between two opposing groups of Pridi and Phibun. By employing the old tactics, Phibun began an anti-Pridi campaign, resurrecting for the purpose the old charges that Pridi was Communistic. The abdication of King Prachathiphok, Rama VII, led to the restoration of

Also see Kenneth McFarland, Thailand: The First Year of Constitutional Government (Cambridge, England: W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd., 1958), pp. 37-40.

¹Jack Henry Brimmell, Communism in South-Asia: A Political Analysis (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 113; Also Thawat Makrapong, The June Revolution of 1932 in Thailand: A Study in Political Behavior, Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1962).

the ten-year-old Prince Mahidol to the throne of Thailand. Throughout this period, Phibun's power and influence began to grow and the army came to control more and more posts in the administration.¹

Under Phahol's Government during 1933 to 1938, competition among the various armed forces developed to a serious level. The army, however, remained the dominant group. Somsak Rakwichit asserted that military officers were increasingly assigned to formerly civilian posts. For example, Col. Phahol was appointed Minister of Defense and Admiral Luang Thamrong was assigned to replace Luang Pradit (an official title of Dr. Pridi) as Minister of the Interior "because of Pradit's radical policies and because he opposed plans to replace some 200 civilian provincial and district officials with military officers in the border areas."²

The "takeover" by Phibun in 1938 with the full consent by Premier Phahol further reflected signs of constitutional decay and an increase in dictatorial power under military rule. With Phahol's retirement, Phibun became Prime Minister, while retaining the posts of Minister of Defense and Interior. Meanwhile Dr. Pridi was assigned to head the powerless Ministry of Finance with a much unrewarded responsibility. Having used the armed

¹Brimmell, op. cit., p. 113.

²Somsak Rakwichit, op. cit., pp. 135-136.

forces as a means of promoting nationalism, Phibun had promoted the status and influence of the Thai armed forces to a great extent.¹ Brimmell, therefore, commented that from December 1938 on, a policy of intense nationalism, directed chiefly against the Chinese, but also against European economic interests, was pursued.²

These manoeuvres was naturally accompanied by a great deal of anti-Communist rhetoric and by repressive actions against the Government's opponents in the name of counter-ing Communism. As a result of the increasing role and the influence of the military faction of Thai Government during that period, the defense budget increased from 15 million baht in the 1933-1934 budget to 26 million baht in 1937-1938 period.³

The declaration of war by the Japanese Government under Tojo against the Allied Powers and the occupation of French Indochina by the Japanese army made it possible for Thailand to retaliate and gain revenge the French for its bullying policy against Thailand during the colonial era half a decade earlier. Taking advantage of the Japanese victory in Indochina, Thailand marched against the French

¹James Thompson, op. cit., p. 39.

²Brimmell, op. cit., p. 113.

³Somsak Rakwichit, op. cit., p. 136.

in Laos and Cambodia in January, 1941 in order to recover the territory lost to the French under the unequal treaties of 1904 and 1907.¹

Basically, Phibun's philosophy was antidemocratic: he believed that authoritarian government based on military strength was the most efficient way to achieve progress in an underdeveloped nation such as Thailand. Like Pridi and other younger officials who had studies in the West, Phibun was determined that Siam (Thailand) must break out of its backwardness and achieve a larger role in Asian affairs.² However, the dissimilarity between Phibun and Pridi stemmed from Phibun's conviction that Thailand should follow the example of Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy to become powerful and the greatest nation in Southeast Asia. Contrary to Phibun's fascist admiration, Dr. Pridi tended to favor Western democracy particularly the French social-democratic but with some mixtures of the Leninist style of revolutionary model and elitist disciplines.

¹Ibid., p. 141; see also William Jordan, Thailand: Phibun and the World War II (London: McMillan Co., 1955), pp. 29-33.

²Donald Nuecterlein, Thailand and the Struggle . . ., op. cit., p. 43.

C) Bangkok Power Struggles
and the Dedication of Northeastern Politicians
to Democratic Reforms and Parliamentary Rule

When certain individuals in a society are comfortable under a certain political regime, any proposed change is apt to be seen as a threat. The proponents of such a change are called radicals. If some members of the satisfied society are not quite as satisfied as others and see some possible benefits in some change, they are called liberals. Both they and the stable group regard themselves as conservatives. But the radicals, on the other hand, who very much desires some kind of change, because it may benefit the many, including themselves, regard those who oppose it as more than conservative, as reactionaries fighting the proposed progress.¹

In any political systems, there is an attempt to justify rule in terms of political values. One of these persuasive values in the modern world is parliamentary democracy. That is, regimes are considered legitimate because they derive their powers from the consent of the governed. Although the precise meaning of "democracy" is still regarded as controversial among social scientists, some degree of consensus and agreement has been reached.

¹William R. Thompson, The Grievances of Military Coup-Makers (London/Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1973), p. 40.

The merit of "democracy" which is widely accepted is that the people can choose and change their government. The role of the public is to intervene from time to time in order to decide which set of leaders shall be vested with state power.

Democracy cannot exist unless it "establishes basic civil liberties (freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of criticism) through which the people are able to express their views for or against policies and leaders. The right to criticize, if it is to be effective, must include the right to organize opposition. The dominant Western view of democracy is thus procedural. It is characterized by free elections, free expression, and free parties. The existence of these procedures serves to legitimize the actions of the state in the eyes of the citizenry.¹

The conditions described above are vital to the survival of "democracy" in any political system. First, if a political system is not characterized by a value system allowing the peaceful "play" of power - the adherence by "outs" to decisions made by "ins" and by the recognition

¹Macridis and Brown, eds., Comparative Politics, op. cit., p. 123; Seymour M. Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy," in Macridis and Brown, op. cit., p. 125; Joseph Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy (N.Y.: Harper & Brothers, 1947), pp. 232-302; Max Weber, Essays in Sociology (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 226.

by "ins" of the rights of the "outs", there can be no stable democracy. Secondly, if the outcome of the political game is not the periodic awarding of effective authority to one group, a party or stable coalition, then unstable and irresponsible government rather than democracy will result. This state of affairs existed in pre-Fascist Italy, and for much, though not all, of the history of the Third and Fourth French Republics, which were characterized by weak coalition governments, often formed among parties which had major conflicts of interest and values with each other. Thirdly, if the conditions facilitating the perpetuation of an effective opposition do not exist, then the authority of officials will be maximized, and popular influence on policy will be at a minimum. This is the situation on all one-party states; and by general agreement, at least in the West, these are dictatorships.¹ Unfortunately, with some slight differences, Thailand and its military dominated political system fall into this category.

Undoubtedly, the coup d'etat of 1932 was the main factor in creating the sense of political identity among the Northeastern "Isan" elites through the formation of the National Assembly. It was the first time that leaders from the Northeast were given an opportunity to express themselves in a national forum on issues affecting the

¹Lipset, "Some Social Requisites . . .," op. cit., p. 125.

future of both their region and the nation as a whole. Within this context, representatives from the Northeast were to assume particularly significant roles. Hence, Keyes assumed that, even before the experiment in parliamentary democracy was begun, however, "the coup against the throne ushered in a brief period of political uncertainty about the political future of Thailand which affected Northerners as well as the other peoples of the Kingdom. Some events in the Northeast during this period suggest, although not very strongly, the first stirrings of regional dissent."¹

As far as politics is concerned, Textor maintained that the Northerner seems considerably more interested in politics and governmental administrative affairs than his brothers from other regions. The main reason for this is doubtless the extreme poverty of the Northeast and a feeling that only political and administrative mechanism is powerful enough to bring about economic improvement.²

From the Central Government point of view, the Northeast or "Isan" has long been a problem to them. The area is also regarded as an area of "trouble" and a source of dissident complaining voices. Following the abortive coup d'etat of 1933 led by Prince Baworadet, it had begun

¹Keyes, "Isan- In A Thai State," op. cit., p. 30.

²Textor, "From Peasant to Pedicab Driver," op. cit., p. 43.

the first occurrence of suppression of Northeastern political elites by the Central Government for alleged left-wing activities took place.

Peter Bell examined the "northeastern" issue as follows:

The Northeast has a strong history of regional dissent, and regional identity was more firmly established after the creation of the National Assembly in 1932, which gave the region a voice in national politics. In the 1940's Isan representatives created a lobby against alleged economic and political discrimination by the Central Government. This dissenting tradition remains an important element in the present situation, although its most prominent spokesmen are for the moment largely underground or in exile.¹

The Royalsit Coup of October 1933 had special relationship with the Northeast region because Prince Baworadet, the leader of the coup, plotted and started the whole episode in the Isan province of Khorat. From the garrison at Khorat, Prince Baworadet marched his troops southward to attack the Government in Bangkok, although he received little help from some Northeastern leaders.² It was believed that Prince Baworadet planned the coup partly because he wanted to restore absolute monarchy and that he was disappointed at not being asked to become Thailand's first prime minister after the coup of June 1932.³

¹Bell, "Notes and Comments," op. cit., p. 49.

²"Kham-khaat baworadet," [The Baworadet Ultimatum] in Thai, The Social Science Review, June 1970; Wilson, Politics in Thailand, op. cit., p. 223.

³Withet Korani (pseud.), Khwaam-pen-maa haeng ra-bob pra-chaa-thip-pa-tai khong thai [The Evolution of Democratic System of Thailand], (Bangkok 1968), pp. 364-366.

In the course of events, Phibun led the Bangkok troops to fight the rebellious forces around Saraburi area and was able to suppress them completely with little effort. Prince Baworadet fled safely to Saigon on October 25, 1933 after Khorat had to surrender to the Bangkok troops.¹ Throughout the fighting, the majority of the Northeast officials, both indigenous and Bangkok-born, were still loyal to the Central Government under Phraya Mano and the "Promoteurs" of 1932. For the most part, Northeastern officials provided police and boy scouts to help the Government in rounding up the ragtag remnants of Baworadet's troops which had been dispersed in the Isan countryside.²

Following the abortive royalist rebellion, the Mano Government in Bangkok began to make a large number of arrests of people suspected of supporting the rebellion and being involved in an attempt to overthrow the new democratic Government. A large number of Northeast leaders were arrested, charged with plotting with the rebellious Prince Baworadet; and as they had hostile attitudes towards the Government, they were also branded as Communists. Keyes commented that "whatever the reason for the 'communist' charges, they do reflect, insofar as I have been able to determine, the first occurrence of suppression of Northeast political leaders by the central government for

¹Ibid., p. 388.

²Wilson, Politics in Thailand, op. cit., pp. 222-23.

alleged left-wing activities."¹

Prior to an analysis of the involvement of Isan elites in the National Assembly, the indigenous leaders have to be divided into two groups. Both groups had distinguished themselves during their involvement in the struggle for power right after the coup of June 1932. The first group of Isan politicians consisted of the descendants of old "chao muang" (governor) families who sought elections as a means of perpetuating their influence in their home areas and to seek access to power which had been denied them after the administrative reforms of King Chulalongkorn were implemented.² The Northeast representatives who belonged to this category were, for example, Thongdi na Kalasin, (MP from Kalasin), and Thong-muan Attakorn, (MP from Mahasarakham).³

For the most part, these Isan representatives tended to be conservative, since their own way of life was rooted in the traditional past. For them, any radical changes were unacceptable and would be likely to undermine their traditional privileges, which had already been curtailed following King Chulalongkorn's centralization policy.

¹Keyes, "Isan In A Thai State," op. cit., p. 32.

²Vickery, op. cit., pp. 863-881.

³Atthakorn, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

Many of these representatives became government supporters, joining the government's political parties and seeking patrons who could enhance their power, influence and financial position. It is obvious that they did not seem to hold any specific ideology and did not preserve ties with the villagers back home.

An example of the attitude of this group of Isan elites could be drawn from the events during the Administration of Phibun in 1939. At that time, there has been an attempt by Phibun to prolong the absolute powers of Government from ten to twenty years. While the majority of Northeast MP's objected the proposal on the ground that it would destroy the future of democratic Thailand, and popular self-government would have been delayed for another twenty years with no necessary cause, it was a group of conservative Isan MP's, such as Thongdi na Kalasin and Thong-muan Atthakorn, who supported this proposal.¹

The second category of Northeastern elites who were elected to the parliament were the leaders who came from common Isan families and humble backgrounds. These MP's such as Thong-ind Phuriphat (MP from Udorn), Tiang Siri-khan (MP from Sakol Nakorn), Thawin Udon (MP from Roi-et), generally developed strong relationships and ties with their constituents, although they associated themselves with the left-wing and radical changes. Within this

¹Withet Korani, op. cit., p. 682.

context, one of the reasons why such men committed themselves to the liberal faction stemmed from the fact that they had less of an investment in the traditional Thai social system than did MP's from the Central Plains or representatives who belonged to the old provincial or national aristocracies.¹ This second group of Northeast representatives, who were products of more humble rural origins, constituted a genuine opposition to the Bangkok regimes, especially the ones dominated by dictatorial military juntas.

Since these MP's had much to gain by the greater democratization of the political system, they were mostly active in voicing local demands as the way to expand their bases of support among their rural Isan constituents. Keyes has consequently observed that their political strength did not lie with whom they knew in Bangkok, at least not initially, but with the peasantry who had elected them. In order to strengthen their power and positions they needed to espouse, dramatically if possible, programs and policies which would both increase their popularity in the countryside and bring them to the attention of the national leadership.²

The December 1932 "permanent constitution," which received enthusiastic support from the Isan elites,

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism in . . ., op. cit., pp. 26-27, and pp. 34-35.

²Ibid.

especially the ones who closely associated with Dr. Fridi, reflected a compromise between the Cabinet and the Assembly groups. The new constitution provided for a unicameral National Assembly composed equally of appointed and elected representatives, with the former to assist in "guided democracy" for a ten-year period of tutelage.¹

In an attempt to strengthen their control over the Isan region, the Mano Government had pursued the administrative and bureaucratic centralization initiated by King Chulalongkorn. As a result, the eighteen monthon (administrative regions) of Thailand were reduced to ten and in 1933 the monthon system was abolished.² A significant point in this abrupt transformation was an attempt by the Bangkok Government to eliminate the traditional power of royalty in the provinces. It also signified that the provinces of Thailand were then sufficiently integrated within a national administrative system to obviate the need for an intermediate level of government between nation and province. For the Northeast, it is obvious that the last vestiges of huamuang (province) political autonomy had been eliminated.

¹Wan Waithayakorn, Prince, Pa-tha-kha-thaa ruang kaan luak tang [Lecture on Elections], in Khuu-mua ra-bob mai [Handbook on the New System] (Bangkok: Bunthong Lekhakun, 1934), pp. 97-111.

²Kenneth P. Landon, Siam in Transition (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 45.

One incident which occurred in the Isan province of Mahasarakham at roughly the same time as the Baworadet rebellion was another indication of political confusion following the 1932 coup. Molam Noi, who was a traveling folk opera singer, had attempted to set up a new kingdom that would be independent of Bangkok. Having claimed to be a phuu wiset (magic maker), Molam noi was successful in stirring up the Isan populace against the Bangkok Government and in advocating provocative policies such as non-payment of taxes, non-conformance with regulations requiring children to attend school, and a cessation of paying tribute to the monks (sangha) because "the sangha of today is not composed of real priests."¹

Molan Noi's glorious dream to resurrect the Kingdom of Vientiane, of which he would become King, came to an abrupt end in 1933, when he was arrested and was unable to escape from jail as he previously boasted that he could. "He was but a minor example of a type of political leaders who appeared several times in the history of Thai-Lao during the period of political unrest."²

The few sporadic manifestations of real or apparent political dissent that appeared in the Northeast following the coup of 1932 probably reflected more the instability in the country as a whole than they did an emerging

¹Atthakorn, op. cit., p. 95.

²Keyes, "Isan In A Thai State," op. cit., p. 95; Maha Sila Viravong, op. cit., pp. 144-145.

nationalism. This instability was short-lived, as the government in Bangkok quickly restored order throughout the Kingdom and moved on to defined the new directions which the state would take under its aegis.¹

In the eyes of Isan leaders, the most important innovation and merit of the June 1932 revolution was the creation of a national parliament which gave an opportunity to elected representatives from all over the country to voice the constituents' needs in the national forum. The National Parliament is thought to have provided the first mechanism in Thai history in which local and regional interests of the country could be represented at the political center of the Kingdom. The Thai Parliament has had somewhat of a chequered history since its founding in 1933. It has been disbanded and re-organized, used and abused by successive prime ministers. However, when functioning it has assured a special significance for the representatives from the Northeast which will be discussed in further details in the following pages.²

Perhaps one of the best analyses of the role of Thai legislature in relation to the overall political change of the country was made by David Morrell who stated that:

Although Thai legislatures have never seldom been institutionally powerful, neither have they been

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism in ..., op. cit., p.24.

²Ibid.

minimal. Their members have wielded direct influence over political decisions and government policies, challenging the bureaucratic elite to the point of annoyance and counteraction. They have attracted outspoken, individualistic politicians, men who took seriously their constitutional mandate to represent the Thai people at the national level and control the bureaucracy. Friction between Thai parliamentarians and the nation's bureaucratic leaders has emerged time and again, always with the eventual result that the generals again dispense with the parliamentary form.¹

The first general election in Thailand took place in November-December of 1933 followed by the second in 1937 and the third in 1938. During this initial period half of the parliament was to be appointed by the government, and political parties were kept illegal throughout these elections. At the time, however, parliament was little more than the various feeble councils which from time to time the throne had appointed.²

Consequently, it is generally recognized that there has never been a genuine "Western-type" political party in Thailand, one which reaches out to the electorate and effects changes in national political leadership. The first attempt to create a "political party" institution in Thailand by Dr. Pridi subsequent to the "Great Revolution" was an utter failure from the beginning. Due to the

¹Morrell, "Power and Parliament," op. cit., pp. 934-935; James Mosel, "Thai Administrative Behavior," in William J. Siffin, ed., Toward A Comparative Study of Public Administration (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 310.

²Duan Bunnak and Phairot Chaiyanam, Explanation of the Constitution Together with the Law on Election (Bang-1935), p. 9.

relative newness of the so-called "people's democracy" in the Thai society, it was announced that, although the People's Party (Khanarat) would be formed, there would be a tutelage period of ten years under the rule and guidance of the military.¹

In his attempt to transform backward Thailand into a prosperous democratic nation, Dr. Pridi recognized that the creation of political parties which would represent the genuine wishes of the people had to be formed. Immediately after the People's Party was founded, he proposed the establishment of the provincial branch offices of an "Association of the People's Party" in order to recruit a broad-based membership from Government officials in the provinces. Unfortunately, a rival faction emerged in January 1933 to form the "Khana Chat" (National) Party. Having to face pressures from both the King and the conservatives, the "Promoteurs" became so alarmed that they decided to prohibit any political parties rather than risk the chance of disunity and "confusion" inherent in open party competition. Morrell has commented on this particular episode as follows:

Had two competitive parties emerged in 1933, legitimizing a role for the political opposition, Thailand

¹Chaowat Sudlapha, Phak kaan muang [Political Party] (Bangkok:Chalermnit Publishers, 1974), pp. 134-35; Preecha Hongkraiters, "The Political Parties: A Critique," in Thai Journal of Social Sciences 12:1 (January 1975), p. 310.

²Morrell, "Power and Parliament," op. cit., p. 947.

might have had the chance to develop a real party system. But the leaders instead chose the option of abolishing all parties, foreclosing this possibility and leaving the door open for military dominance of the political process.¹

In the formation of a political party in Thailand, personality not ideology is important to acquire support. In Fifield's words, "although changes of government by forceful means make headlines, it should be stressed that personalities in Thailand are far more important than issues."² This "beauty contest" politics characteristic of the Thai political system means, therefore, as Morrell observed, that with the few exception of a few small leftist parties and the clandestine Communist Party, Thai parties have been basically programmatic and non-ideological, corresponding well with Thai political culture.³ Unsurprisingly, major party leaders have seen no need to emphasize popular political education.

The inability of Thai leaders to tolerate any types of political opposition, ranging from minor complaints to large-scale rebellions, has been manipulated from the start of democratic experimentation in 1932 until the present time.⁴ For example, in the aftermath of the unsuccessful

¹Morrell, "Power and Parliament," op. cit., p. 947

²Russell H. Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, 1945-1958 (N.Y.: Archon Books, 1968), p. 234; Suraphong Chaiyanam, "Thai Ideology's Dilemma," Social Science Review (March 1973), p. 49.

³Morell, "Power and Parliament," op. cit., p. 172.

⁴Events following the "Savage Coup" of October 6, 1976 were discussed in Thai News Weekly, November 8 & 15,

Baworadet Rebellion of October 1933, a large number of arrests of persons especially from the Northeast, suspected of being involved in anti-government activities, were carried out by the Bangkok Government. "Some of those arrested in the Northeast were accused somewhat paradoxically, of being 'communist'."¹ Wilson cited the example of Yuang Iamsila, later an MP from Udorn, who was charged with being Communist but maintained that he did not even know at that time what Communism was.² By using the issue of national unity to prevent the representation of particularistic groupings, the political class generally weakens the coherence of the nation and produces tensions that in turn seem to justify authoritarian practices. In some instances the pattern is that of direct suppression of opposition elements and potentially dissident groupings.³

Thompson and Adloff have advanced the not very plausible hypothesis that governmental fears of "Communist" activities among the Northerners at that time has arisen because of the involvement of some Northerners in the

1976, published by The Royal Thai Embassy, Washington, D.C.; The New York Times, November 22, 1976; D. Garreth Porter, "C.I.A. Responsible for Growth of Fascism in Thailand - Bloody Wednesday in Bangkok," Counterspy, November 1976, mimeo.; E.T. Flood, The U.S. and the Military Coup in Thailand: A Background Study, Department of History, University of Santa Clara, California, November 1976, mimeo.

¹Wilson, Politics in Thailand, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

²Ibid.

³Pye, Aspect of Political ..., op. cit., p. 26.

embryonic revolutionary activities of Vietnamese refugees in Northeast Thailand. They suggested that:

By early May 1934 a leaflet distributed on the part of a group calling its members the 'Committee of Young Siam' began to be circulated in the Northeast Provinces. It was there that political refugees from Indochina were grouped, and the cells formed in Sakol Nakorn and Pichit were supposed to be closely allied to similar Cantonese and Tonkinese groups.¹

Keyes has commented that, to some extent, it is true that Vietnamese refugees in the Northeast were then wooed by an anti-colonial revolutionary cause. "That this cause was then also 'Communist' is more questionable."²

Historical records showed that during the 1930's, political cadres had followed the Vietnamese refugees into the Northeast and had joined them in their centers in various Isan provinces, i.e., Udorn, Sakol Nakorn, Nakorn Phanom, Nongkhai, Mukdaharn and That Phanom.³ Ho Chi Minh himself was alleged to have spent from 1928-1930 working among these Vietnamese refugees, particularly in Udorn and Sakol Nakorn.⁴ In addition, Ho reportedly told the Viet-

¹Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, The Left Wing in Southeast Asia (N.Y.: William Sloane Associates, for the International Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1950), p. 56.

²Keyes, "Isan In A Thai State," op. cit., p. 31.

³Le Manh Trinh, "In Canton and Thailand," in Days With Ho Chi Minh (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962), p. 118.

⁴Kanala Sukhabanij Eksaengsri, "Ho Chi Minh phu-nam phu-piam dua baa-ra-mii," [Ho Chi Minh: The Charismatic Leader], Journal of Social Sciences 12:2 (April 1975), pp. 10-15.

namese in Udorn:

Vietnam is a colony, Thailand is a semi-colony. Vietnam is oppressed by the French. Thailand has been bullied by the French into signing several unequal treaties. We detest the French, the Thai do not like them either. Moreover, Thailand and Vietnam are neighboring countries. It's certain that the Thais have sympathy for the anti-French movement of the Vietnamese.¹

Thailand's first general election, which took place in November 1933, was directly linked to the emerging regionalism in the Northeast. The first group of MP's, which included several prominent Isan leaders, such as Tiang Sirikhan (Sakol Nakorn), Fong Sitthitham (Ubol), Chamlong Daoruang (Kalason), Thim Phuriphat (Ubol), and Thawin Udon (Roi-et), - soon became the principal opposition to the governments of Prime Minister Phahol (1933-1938) and Prime Minister Phibun (1938-1943). The incidents finally led to the suppression and execution of some of these leaders by special order from Police General Phao Sriyanond, Phibun's right-hand man. Morrell contended that these MP's:

... took their parliamentary responses seriously and were eager to express their opinion on the issues of the day, check abuses of power by cabinet leaders, and demand more attention for their constituents. The cabinet and its military sponsors, heavily oriented toward Bangkok and dependent on the new power elite for support, were generally incapable of understanding such rural demands. In this sense, Thai politics has changed little between 1933 and the 1970's. The military in 1933 and in 1971 regarded the activities of elected provincial representatives as a threat to government stability and "freedom of action", not as complementary inputs to an open

¹Le Tran Minh, "In Canton and ...," op. cit., pp. 121-122.

political process.¹

During the period between 1932 and 1948, Thai politics was marked by the competition and struggle for power between the civilian and military groups of the original 1932 "Promoteurs". Political allegiances and activities of all elected representatives also tended to coalesce around one of the other of these leaders, especially following Pridi's controversial "Economic Plan" of 1933, -even while Premier Phahol still remained the head of the Government until handed it over to Phibun in 1938. It appeared by now that both Phibun and Pridi had re-established themselves as major political leaders to whom the civilian and military officials as well as Northeast MP's chose to group themselves.²

A comparative analysis of the political philosophy of Pridi and Phibun is significant to our understanding of Thai politics. It would provide us with logical explanations of successive political changes of the nation and perhaps of the reasons why the Isan MP's chose to support Pridi rather than Phibun; their close association proved valuable to the cause of parliamentary development in Thailand although only for a short period. Perhaps, one of the best assessments of Pridi can be found in the memoirs of Nai Thawee Bunyaketu, the postwar Prime Minister

¹Morrell, "Power and Parliament," op. cit., pp. 949-50.

²Sawang Lanlua, Saam sip chet pii haeng kaan pa-ti-wat [37 Years of the Revolution] (Bangkok: Ramkhamhaeng University Press, 1972), pp. 5-29.

of Thailand and a man of intelligence and high integrity.

He assterted that:

Pridi was a statesman of exceptional calibre. Various sectors of national life felt the impact of his refromist policies. He furthered the cause of education and local self-government in Thailand ... Codification of laws and the resultant enhancement of Thailand's international status are credited to Pridi by Thai experts.¹

As for Pridi's educational background and political attitudes, Edwin Stanton, the former U.S. Ambassador to Thailand remarked that:

In the course of his studies, he (Pridi) sampled a number of isms, including socialism. Being an idealistic young man, he was eager to bring the blessings and benefits of these new Western doctrines to the people of his country and to introduce various reforms. He felt that the absolute monarchy, which had been a feature of Thai rule for many centuries, must be replaced by a more representative type of government.²

Following Col. Phahol's "takeover" in June 1933, Pridi was persuaded to return to Thailand and took up various powerful cabinet positions. The charge that he had been a communist was soon forgotten. Nonetheless, his "Economic Plan" was never formally proposed again, but some of the socializing ideas in terms of economic development were later to re-emerge.³ Apparently, many of Pridi's

¹Thawee Bunyaketu, "Memoirs", op. cit., pp. 4-5.

²Edwin Stanton, Brief Authority (N.Y.: Harper &Brothers, 1956), p. 181.

³Pridi's "Economic Plan" was discussed in details in Landon, Siam in Transition, op. cit., pp. 260-293. In the opinion of western scholars as well as Thai intellectuals, the Plan was merely straightforward state socialism. In Singapore, Pridi, during his temporary exile in

supporters happened to be MP's from Isan provinces who saw Pridi's "Economic Plan" as a probable solution to the economic backwardness and political difficulties of the region.

An attempt by Dr. Pridi to launch too soon full scale land and economic reforms after a sudden political reform in which the absolute monarchy and feudalism were replaced by the more egalitarian system of parliamentary democracy proved to be too much of a threat to the traditional privileged groups of aristocrats. Contrary to his original desire to rid the country of backwardness and embark it on the road to development and democracy, Dr. Pridi's "Economic Plan" caused him and the nation great damage. One can apply Huntington's theory of political reforms, the "Blitzkrieg" and the "Fabian" approaches to this particular situation. An establishment of National Assembly, the creation of People's Party, the proposed plan to establish provincial branches of the Party and finally the proposed "Economic Plan" introducing land and economic reforms, all proved too sudden and sought to implement too many changes in a short period of time, a similar line of strategy similar to that laid out in Huntington's "Blitzkrieg" reform.

early 1933, gave an interview to the Strait Times, denying the charge that he was a Communist. Besides, Pridi pointed out that his aim was similar to that of the British Labor Party but acknowledged that his idea was democratic socialism, aimed at raising the standard of living of the people. See Withet Korani, op. cit., pp. 179-180.

Of course, the result was a failure and a total disappointment as pointed out by Huntington:

... an attempt to push a large number of reforms on a wide variety of fronts, in order to change comprehensively the existing traditional order, will be likely to fall because the effort mobilized so many opponents. Since social groups and political forces with a stake in the existing society felt themselves threatened, the 'blitzkrieg' or an all-out attack simply served to alert and to activate the political opposition. This is the reason why comprehensive reform in the sense of a dramatic and rapid 'revolution from above' never succeeds. It mobilizes into politics the wrong groups at the wrong time on the wrong issues.¹

As for the political philosophy of Phibun, his military orientation, philosophy and ambitions were the main basis and inspiration for the approach he adopted towards the type of Government which he felt Thailand should have. In Kruger's interpretation, Phibun began to identify the national welfare with his own, since he had acted as the vital go-between for the 1932 revolution. Phibun reportedly kept a copy of Malaparita's "Technique du coup d'état." "Using a voice and manner persuasive enough for people to call him golden-tongued, he it was who, professing friendship here and sowing suspicion there, manipulated the tortuous events behind the coup which brought Col. Phahon to power and incidentally restored Pridi."²

Thawee Bunyaketu's memoir also drew a comparison

¹Huntington, Political Order ..., op. cit., p. 347.

²Rayne Kruger, The Devil's Discus (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1964), p. 30.

between the attitudes of Phibun and Pridi. Even before Phibun took over the Government from Premier Phahol in 1938, Thawee observed that Phibun's grudge against Pridi had intensified. Their ideas and attitudes were so different that conflict between them was inevitable.

Pridi was a convinced democrat, while Phibun was a believer in personal dictatorship. Pridi was active and took measures benefiting the people and making him more and more popular ... When Phibun received the rank of the Field Marshal, Pridi did not suffer from jealousy, although Phibun thought that Pridi became jealous, for Pridi opposed Phibun's attempt to use the baton of King Rama VI, after he became the Field Marshal. Pridi argued that this baton was meant only for the King, and not for ordinary persons ... Perhaps Pridi was alarmed by the aura of royalty Phibun wanted to build around himself.¹

After Phahol's retirement in 1938, Phibun emerged as the undisputed, unchallengable overlord of Siam. By using tactics of persuasion as well as brute force, Phibun achieved not only complete control of the army but, by his final humiliation of the royalists, silenced any rallying cry for defection. His anti-democratic attitude finally brought him into constant conflict, not only with Pridi, but with a group of Isan MP's whose role in the National Assembly was to establish an egalitarian democratic system in which the Northeast region would get an equal share of national development and full integration.

Throughout Phibun's first regime (1938-1943), although Pridi and some of his civilian supporters were not

¹Thawee Bunyaketu, op. cit., pp. 73-74.

excluded entirely from the cabinet positions, they felt dismayed at Phibun's tendency towards military dictatorship and ultranationalism. Thawee maintained that:

Prime Minister Phibun ruled the country as a dictator. He used the military and the police freely to buttress his dictatorship. He was very fond of reading books about Napoleon. He liked to compare himself to Napoleon. Probably he dreamt of becoming a Napoleon one day ... Phibun did whatever he wanted, not always concerned about the means employed. He did not care to initiate large-scale reforms and welfare measures for the people.¹

Pre-War Political Conflicts
between the Isan Politicians
and Phahol-Phibun Military Regimes

The political struggle between Pridi and Phibun was, from the early period of constitutional development, projected against the backdrop of the National Assembly. Nevertheless, tensions between Phibun and his military supporters against Pridi and his civilian supporters, including Isan elites, occurred much later than the conflict between the Mano conservative group and the progressive coalition of the original "Promoteurs". Hence, throughout the administrations of both Phahol and Phibun, Pridi was kept in the Government "solely by grace of the man who once looked to him for leadership." Kruger further noted that:

It was an ironical outcome of a revolution fermented by Pridi's passion for democracy; and seemingly the final destruction of his hopes. Yet he accepted the

¹Ibid., pp. 75-76.

situation with stupendous calm and no bitterness. As inscrutably patient as ever, he did his work in the government, taught at his University of Moral and Political Science, and bided his time ... By an oversight rare for a Siamese politician he had acquired no wealth in six years of almost continuous office.¹

Constitutionalism in Thailand, according to Riggs' point of view, was not designed so much to constrain the rulers as to facilitate their rule. The Charters, in other words, did not prescribe the effective norms of political behavior, but were used to cast a cloak of legitimacy over the operations of succeeding rulers and to set the stage for a play to be enacted by the extrabureaucratic actors-parliaments and political parties in their elections.²

Political confrontation between the legislative and executive branches of the Government during the period between 1933-1938 clearly demonstrated that, even with half the Assembly appointed, the ruling military leaders were unable to devise an effective guarantee against parliamentary activism and political opposition. Unwilling to permit the representatives to be full participants in Government, and unable to completely buy them off with patronage, perquisites and profits, the elite remained vulnerable to

¹Kruger, op. cit., p. 59.

²Riggs, Thailand: A Modernization of ..., op. cit., p. 53; Sawang Lanlua, op. cit., pp. 4-5; Chaowat Sudlapa, op. cit., pp. 142-143.

parliamentary attack.¹

In all these legislative-executive interactions, the Isan MP's emerged as the most influential, vocal and dedicated group of representatives, who stood out as ready to combat the suspected corruption and maladministration of the Government. This group of Northeastern politicians became loyal supporters of Dr. Pridi and his socialist Economic Plan, proposed to improve the economic conditions and welfare of the people, especially the poverty-stricken Northeastern villagers. This group of deputies consisted of many prominent Isan elites who later became cabinet ministers but were finally executed because of their strong opposition to military dictatorship, corruption, abuses of power, and the Government's continued rejection of equal development of the Isan region. They were, for example, Thong-ind and Tim Phuriphat, Liang Chaiyakarn, Thawin Udon, Tiang Sirikhan, Krong Chandawong, Chamlong Daoruang, and Thep Chotinuchit.²

Throughout this critical period, Thong-ind Phuriphat, an MP from Ubon, established himself as the most persistent critic of the Government. In 1935 Thong-ind and two other members of the Assembly filed a vote of no confidence in

¹Morrell, "Power and Parliament," *op. cit.*, p. 950.

²For details and pictures of these Isan elites, see Withet Korani, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-137.

the State Council over a combination of issues, including the increased military involvement in civil government, an opium scandal and the alleged inefficiency of the Minister of Economic Affairs.¹

Again in 1937 Thong-ind led a parliamentary protest over the inadequacy of funds allocated for education and public works as compared with the defense budget.² In the same year he also demanded from the Government an explanation of a speech by a young military officer who had demeaned the elected MP's.³ Shortly thereafter he requested permission to found a political party which would have branches throughout the country.⁴ However, the Council of Ministers rejected Thong-ind's request on the basis that the time was not yet suitable for such an action.⁵

A stable democracy requires relatively moderate tension among the contending political forces. And political moderation is facilitated by the capacity of a system to resolve key divisive issues before new ones arise. To the extent that the cleavages of religion, citizenship, and

¹Bangkok Times, October 16, 1935.

²Thompson, "The Thai Military...", op. cit., p. 93.

³Landon, Siam in Transition, op. cit., p. 50; Withet Korani, op. cit., p. 544.

⁴Landon, Siam in Transition, op. cit., p. 50.

⁵Kenneth P. Landon, "Thailand's Quarrel with France in Perspective," Far Eastern Survey 1 (1941), pp. 25-42; Siam Chronicle, May 20, 1941.

"collective bargaining" have been allowed to accumulate and reinforce each other as stimulants of partisan hostility, the system is weakened. The more reinforced and correlated the sources of cleavage, the less likelihood for political tolerance.¹

In the case of Thailand, while isolated individual military figures in the early period of constitutional development wanted to strengthen their own power and thus produced intolerant tendencies in the parliamentary system, they were still unable to dominate the country's political scene. Despite its newness and numerous operational restraints on its, the Thai Parliament was victorious in its confrontation with the executive branch of the Government in three separate occasions under the Phahol's regime.

Prime Minister Phahol's first resignation at the insistence of the Assembly came in 1934, when the legislative body refused to ratify the proposed Siamese participation in an International Rubber Cartel. The majority of MP's objected to price controls and quota restrictions on rubber exports. After the House had voted 73-25 not to ratify the Government's proposal, Phahol had to resign on spot. Although he was later reelected, Phahol was forced to drop two ministers involved in the incident.²

¹Lipset, in Macridis and Ward, op. cit., p. 137.

²Minutes of the Meetings of the House of Representatives, in Thai, 2nd Session Ordinary, March 30, 1934, vol. 4, #65/2477, (Bangkok: Teachers' Council Press, 1943),

The second major confrontation between civilian representatives of the Assembly, mostly from the Northeast region, and the military backed executive branch of the Government occurred in July 1937. The clash revolved around charges of official corruption and irregular conduct in a case known as the "Royal Land Scandal". On July 24, 1937 Liang Chaiyakarn, a prominent MP from the Isan province of Ubon, posed an urgent interpellation in the House. Liang apparently wanted to investigate the charges that members of the Cabinet had been suspected of acquiring royal land at very low prices through a nominal sale.¹

In addition, Thong-ind Phuriphat, MP from Ubon, who, together with Liang had learned about the transactions and objected them, proposed a general debate of the Assembly on this "Royal Land Scandal." Aside from arguing that the handling of royal property should be carried out according to the Constitutional law and regulations, Thong-ind criticized Phahol of neglecting his duty and had allowed his aide to corruption and rob the country and Thai people.² The pressure was so great that Phahol had to resign and although

pp. 4617-4628; see also Vichai Tunsiri, "The Social Background and Legislative Recruitment of the Thai Members of Parliament and Their Political Consequences," Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1971, pp. 92-95.

¹Withet Korani, op. cit., pp. 546-560.

²Ibid., pp. 565-568.

he was later re-elected, he had to leave out the two cabinet ministers directly implicated in the scandal from his newly-formed cabinet.

One interesting incident illustrating the Government's attempt to silence and humiliate the political opposition in the Assembly took place during this period. It directly involved the activity and attempts of Isan leaders to reveal executive corruption and abuse of power. The story was that, while Liang Chaiyakarn (Ubon), Thawin Udon (Roi-et), Chamlong Daoruang (Kalasin), and Thong-ind Phuriphat (Ubon), were having dinner at the restaurant near the Assembly, a group of Government officials led by Khun Nirand, the Director of the Royal Property Organization, came to see them. Instead of solving the problem peacefully, Khun Nirand and his associates grabbed Liang, wrapped him up in the table cloth, carried him over to the other side of the Assembly, and threw him into the pond.¹

In the first general election of November 7, 1937, 91 representatives were elected, 88 percent of whom were newcomers to the Assembly.² Again, many Northeast politicians were directly elected to represent their regions in the national forum.³ Prominent Isan members of the elite

¹Kiat (pseud.), Sanim kaan muang[Political Rust] , (Bangkok: n.d.), p. 41.

²Tunsiri, op. cit., p. 96.

³This election was the first genuine general election in Thailand, in which the country was divided into electoral districts where one MP represented 200,000 inhabitants.

who were re-elected to the Assembly were, for example, Thep Chotinuchit (Srisaket), Thawin Udon (Roi-et), Tiang Sirikhan (Sakol Nakorn), Thong-ind and Tim Phuriphat (Ubon), Fong Sitthitham and Liang Chaiyakarn (Ubon).¹

The 1937 Assembly soon became a great annoyance to the Government due to its increased parliamentary pressure on the Phahol cabinet. On December 28, 1937, which was the first Assembly meeting, Thep Chotinuchit, a 30-year old MP from Srisaket and leader of the leftist party, proposed that the Assembly rules be altered to permit a group of thirty or more representatives to initiate financial legislation on their own, which then required the prior approval of the Prime Minister.²

In the House debate, Thep asserted that:

I have made this proposal to remind the government that the people are suffering financial distress. They have to pay high taxes ... The government's announced policy is that taxes cannot be reduced ... But there are other taxes which would not adversely affect the poor. However, the government refuses to recognize this fact. Therefore, we feel that if the government will not take action, we will solve the tax problem in our own way.³

Thep's proposal was defeated, 80-33, after extended debate in the Assembly.

Another example of the intervention of the Northeast

¹Withet Korani, op. cit., pp. 594-598.

²Minutes of the Meetings, 2nd Session-Ordinary, op. cit., vol. I, (1937), pp. 174-223.

³Ibid.

in the executive process took place in 1938. The aim was to establish social justice and racial assimilation between the overseas Chinese living in the country and the Thai population by preventing discrimination against the former by the Government. On July 15, 1938, Luang Vichit Vatakarn, Director of the Fine Arts Department and Minister without Portfolio, delivered a speech comparing Thailand's minority problems with the situation of the Jews in Germany. Vichit even implied that the Nazi "solution" could very well be applied in Thailand.¹ The implications of this speech for Government policy were questioned in the Assembly by Ubon representative, Liang Chaiyakarn, and others.²

Again in September 13, 1938, the representatives, mostly from the Northeast, forced Premier Phahol to resign; this was the last Assembly conflict during the Phahol's administration. The confrontation arose over the motion made by Thawin Udon, an Isan MP from Roi-et.³ Thawin's motion proposed to compel the Government to present a more detailed

¹Ibid., pp. 499-502; also see Kenneth P. Landon, The Chinese in Thailand (N.Y.: Russell & Russell, 1941), pp. 161-168.

²Minutes of the Meetings, August 6, 1938, op. cit., pp. 716-719.

³Thawin and three other influential Isan MP's were killed eleven years later by the order of Police General Phao Sriyanond, who, from 1938 on, helped Phibun to establish Thailand as fascist and police state. The incident was called "Kilo 11" which will be discussed in detail later.

explanation of its budget to the National Assembly, the so-called "proposal Concerning the National Budget". In fact, Thawin contended that the lack of details precluded adequate parliamentary scrutiny of the national budget.¹ Premier Phahol and his Finance Minister refused to amend the existing procedures and, after the motion was passed, Phahol dissolved the Assembly and retired from politics for good.

Morrell maintained that legislative action caused the resignation from politics of the former leader of the 1932 and 1933 coups. By its constitutionally-provided right to oppose the Cabinet, "the Assembly had managed to become a serious annoyance to the elite. Phibun in his new position decided that strong military government using nationalistic symbols and pursuing new international goals was required to overcome political unrest and government instability. For the next six years he was able to dominate the Thai legislature far more than Phahol ever had."²

Executive Dominance over the Assembly
during Phibun's Administration, 1938-1943

Phibun's 'silent coup' of December 16, 1938 increased the power of executive branch of the Government vis-à-vis

¹Minutes of the Meetings, vol. III, op. cit., pp. 1423-1469; Withet Korani, op. cit., p. 605.

²Morrell, "Power and Parliament," op. cit., p. 955.

the legislature, although the new elections were officially called by Phibun on November 11, 1938 to legitimize his rule and to give the country an aura of pseudo-democracy. Again, the same group of Northeast leaders, such as Thawin Udon, Liang Chaiyakarn, Tiang Sirikhan, and of course, Thong-ind Phuriphat, were re-elected, but this time executive-legislative relations were entirely changed. It was the time in which most of the MP's were lulled into silence or effectively induced to cooperate with Phibun's Government. In this cabinet, Phibun maintained both the Premiership and post of Defense Minister, while Pridi was asked to head the powerless but highly responsible Ministry of Finance.¹

Within one month of assuming the Premiership, Phibun arrested over 40 people on charges of treason. The arrests were made after an abortive assassination attempt on Phibun's life.² In this "purge", members of the royal family, aristocrats, Assembly representatives and army rivals were arrested. On January 29, 1939, Liang Chaiyakarn, a prominent Northeast MP, was also arrested on the charges of sabotage and attempting to destroy the nation's political order and stability.³

In spite of Phibun's early warning to the MP's, there were two special cases reflecting legislative opposition,

¹Sawang Lanlua, op. cit., p. 31.

²Coast, op. cit., p. 11.

³Withet Korani, op. cit., p. 674.

led by Northeast MP's, to the Government's attempt to consolidate and prolong absolute power. In the attempt to destroy his political opposition, Phibun proposed a special bill to the Assembly requesting the establishment of special tribunal court to speed up the trial. As a result, a group of liberal MP's, led by Chamlong Daoruang, a well-known representative from the Isan province of Kalasin, opposed Phibun's proposal arguing that the trial would not be fair to the accused because they were not allowed to have the Defense Counsel. Chamlong's motion was defeated in the Assembly because the majority of the representatives were either bought off or suppressed by Phibun.¹

Another incident which directly involved a group of Northeast politicians arose over the issue of extending the period of "democratic tutelage" for another ten years. The clash deserves special consideration, because this time the struggle was fought between two groups of Northeast MP's, the conservative aristocratic group and the liberal humble-born group. It was Thong-muang Atthakorn and Thong-di na Kalasin who supported the article entitled "The Motion to Extend the Tutelage Provisions of the Constitution for Another Decade." Their action was considered an attempt to please Phibun and to prolong the presence of first-

¹Coast, op. cit., p. 11.

²Withet Korani, op. cit., p. 674.

category appointed members of the Assembly for another ten years.¹

A group of liberal MP's from the Northeast, headed by Thong-ind Phuriphat (Ubon) and Tiang Sirikhan (Sakol Nakorn), vigorously opposed this bill on the ground that it would be unconstitutional and would destroy the original wish of the 1932 "Promoteurs" to give the Thai people a genuine democracy. In spite of Thong-ind's convincing speech, his appeal for a constructive democratic development was defeated in the Assembly.²

Finally, in keeping with his themes of ultra-nationalism and military dictatorship, Phibun established a Youth Movement modeled on the Hitler Youth, full of aggressive patriotic fervor. He changed the name of Siam into Thailand, and allowed propaganda for a so-called Pan-Thai movement aimed at the recovery of surrounding French and British territories, which once had belonged to Siam but had had to be ceded to the French and British during the colonial era. Phibun would be the "Führer" of all Southeast Asia.³

¹Withet Korani, op. cit., pp. 683-684.

²Ibid., pp. 689-691; Minutes of the Meeting, 2nd Session-Ordinary, vol. I, op. cit., August 15, 1940, pp. 367-479.

³Kruger, op. cit., p. 61.

Japanese Occupation and the Emergence
of Civilian Supremacy, 1941-1945

International politics has affected the political fortunes of men like Prime Minister Phibun and Luang Pradit (Dr. Pridi). In her penetration of Thailand, Japan was able to take advantage of Thai animosity toward China. Also the Japanese were able to exploit Phibun's ambitions to create a greater Thailand with the addition of territory inhabited by Thai peoples under foreign jurisdiction or even once under the sovereignty of the country itself. Actually the Thais were not fond of Japan, but some of them saw her as a potential source of strength against China and French imperialism and a possible means of forwarding the Pan-Thai movement.¹

Shortly after the Japanese began their military advance into Southeast Asia, and after a token resistance to the Japanese occupation, Phibun's Government agreed to become an ally to the Japanese. The agreements reflected the traditional policy of Thailand of keeping peaceful relations with strong states, the so-called "bending with the prevailing wind" policy. This decision triggered Pridi's resignation from the Government to take up the post of Regent. With Pridi's departure, the military under Phibun assumed almost total control of the Government, although the

¹Russell Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, 1954-1958 (N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1958), p. 234.

parliament was permitted to continue.¹

The war and the irredentist atmosphere in which it was fought had an impact on the people of the Northeast. After the brief war with the French in Indochina had ended inconclusively, due to the Japanese intervention, the lands on the right bank of the Mekong River, as well as certain portions of Cambodia ceded to the French in the treaties of 1904 and 1907, were restored to Thailand as a result of the negotiations.² The whole episode was justified by officials in Bangkok on the grounds that "racially" the peoples in the territories claimed by Thailand belonged within the Thai Kingdom.³

The result of this proclamation made it clear to Northeastern villagers that Isan and Lao were considered by the Bangkok regimes as ethnically inseparable. Since the battles took place along the Thai-Lao northeastern border, they drew a large crowd of Bangkok Central Thais to the area to inspect the war preparations and defenses. These incidents helped stir up the awareness of Isan population that a territorial borderline existed, dividing them from the people of Laos. In addition, the Thai prosecution of

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism ..., op. cit., p. 28.

²Walter Vella, The Impact of the West ..., op. cit., pp. 381-384; Sir Josiah Crosby, Siam: The Crossroads (London: Hollis and Carter Ltd., 1945), pp. 117-121.

³Landon, "Thailand's Quarrel with France," op. cit., p. 39.

the war underscored the fact that decisions about the future of the Northeast lay with the Bangkok Government and its leaders.¹

Under the pseudonym of "Ruth", Pridi cooperated closely with the Allied Headquarters in Kandy as well as with Ambassador Seni Pramoj's forces in Europe and the U.S.² The Free Thai Movement included many prominent Isan MP's; one illustration of the importance of Northeastern politicians in the Free Thai Movement can be found in the fact that in 1944 Thawin Udon (Roi-et) was sent as the representative of the "Free Thai Movement" to the Chinese Government in Chungking.³ Among the other Isan representatives who were involved in the "Free Thai Movement" were Chamlong Daoruang (Mahasarakham), Tiang Sirikhan and his brother Tim (Sakol Nakorn), Thong-ind and his brother Tim Phuriphat (Ubon), Fong Sitthitham (Ubon), Liang Chaiyakarn (Ubon) and Kwang Thongthawi (Kalasin).⁴ Although it is difficult

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., pp. 27-28.

²Seni was appointed the Thai Ambassador to the U.S. during World War II. After Phibun's cooperation with the Japanese, Seni broke up with Phibun and helped organize the "Free Thai Movement" in the U.S. and in Europe.

³Nicol Smith, and Clark Blake, Into Siam's Underground Kingdom (N.Y.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1945), p. 193.

⁴The first five liberal Northeast politicians were staunch supporters of Dr. Pridi and his Socialist cause, while the remaining three were more the followers of Khuang Aphaiwong than Pridi and later joined Khuang in founding the Democrat Party.

to document the activities of the Isan MP's and the "Free Thai" in aiding the Allied cause, the events which transpired after the war suggested that certain of those Isan members of the Free Thai Movement must have established close ties with Ho Chi Minh who also worked with the OSS in China and Prince Souphanouvong during the war.¹

Throughout this period of the revival of civilian power vis-à-vis the executive military-dominated government, Thai politics was marked by the renewal of legislative intervention in executive actions instead of simple acquiescence which reflected the experience of the pre-war years. In July 20, 1944, the legislature suddenly re-emerged to wield influence over the Thai political process, causing the fall of Phibun's cabinet. The struggle took place over the issue of transferring the capital from Bangkok to the hinterland and the malaria-infested area of Petchaboon Province.²

Coast has provided a good summary of the situation and the role of Isan elites in the collapse of Phibun's Government after its parliamentary defeat.

After a couple of months there was serious trouble with the labor force ... Phibun drafted a bill for compulsory conscription of workers on this

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., p. 28.

²Sawang Lanlua, op. cit., p. 99; see also Charun Kuwanon, op. cit., pp. 248-256; Thong-ind Phuriphat, the famous anti-government MP from Ubon, criticized Phibun's Petchaboon scheme on the Assembly floor that it caused tremendous hardships for the people because of labor conscription. See, Withet Korani, op. cit., p. 723.

national project. He presented the bill personally to the Assembly, only to find that the overwhelming majority of the members were against him. This reverse came about largely because he had filled the Assembly with military members who had always supported him, and at this time of national emergency most of them were outside Bangkok. Led mainly by Nai Thong-Indr Buripat, (MP from Ubon) and Nai Tiang Sirikhand (MP from Sakol Nakorn), two staunch Pridi men, the Opposition blocked the Premier's scheme.¹

In the period between July 1944 and the coup d'tat, of November 8, 1947, led by Phibun, Dr. Pridi held the real power, although various individuals were in name Prime Minister. In August 1944 Khuang became Prime Minister and immediately appointed a Committee to investigate the "Phetchaboon Scheme". The Chairman of this Committee Fong Sitthitham (MP from Ubon), was joined by several other Northeastern politicians including Chamlong Daoruang (Mahasarakham), Liang Chaiyakarn (Ubon), and Tiang Sirikhan (Sakol Nakorn).²

After the war, opposition to Pridi did begin to appear among some of his former associates in the Free Thai Movement. Nevertheless, there were many Northeast MP's who remained loyal to him and whose support strengthened Pridi's power in the Parliament following the 1946 elections. Northeast politicians who consistently gave their allegiance to Pridi included of Thong-ind Phuriphat, Tiang Sirikhan, Thawin Udon and Chamlong Daoruang. Together with Pridi, they

¹Coast, op. cit., p. 26.

²Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, Who's Who in Southeast Asia (August 1945-December 1950) (microfilms of Filecards, 1945-1950, n.p., Cornell University Microfilms, Ithaca, New York).

helped organize the Sahaceep (Cooperative) Party.¹ It is justified to claim that the Cooperative Party was composed largely of Free Thai politicians from the poverty-stricken Northeastern provinces.² Those who broke with Pridi, including Fong Sitthitham and Liang Chaiyakarn among the Isan MP's, joined Khuang, Seni and his brother Kukrit Pramoj, in forming the Democrat Party. Morrell commented as follows on this civilian political split:

One of the greatest tragedies of Thai politics has been the split between civilian 'leftists', typified by Pridi and the civilian 'rightists', typified by Kukrit. The continuing animosity between these two groups, their complete inability to cooperate even on minor political issues, opened a wide gap in the potential opposition, greatly enhancing the military's ability to dominate the Thai political scene almost unhampered for four decades.³

Although it is misleading to suggest that these opposing conservative and liberal civilian factions were split mainly over ideological labels which have currency in the West, there was definitely a difference in political philosophy between them. Pridi and his followers were anxious to have Thailand associated with and perhaps even lead the national forces which were beginning to appear in Indochina. They were also willing to consider introducing new, perhaps

¹Chaowat Sudlapa, op. cit., p. 148; also see Kajatpai Burapatna, Thai Politics and Political Parties (Bangkok: Odeon Store Press, n.d.).

²Frank C. Darling, Thailand and the United States (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1965), p. 47.

³Morrell, "Power and Parliament," op. cit., pp. 959-960.

even radical, ideas, particularly in the economic sphere, to carry forward the unfinished task of modernizing the Kingdom. Some sources suggested that aside from a group of Isan leaders, other pre-war Pridi conservative supporters in the Assembly were unwilling to associate themselves with the "Sahacheep Party", largely because of its liberal and 'allegedly' leftist policies.¹

The Democrats, on the other hand, tended to be more concerned with preserving the cultural continuity and traditional institutions of the country, since its leaders came from either royal or aristocratic families. In consequence, the Democrats were less concerned with relationships with neighboring peoples and more cautious regarding plans for modernization. In his study on the attitudes of Isan elites, Keyes concluded that:

These two oppositions, in their various subsequent guises, have both held attractions for the populace of the Northeast as well as for the rest of the country. Both factions have, at least publicly, remained committed to parliamentary rule. Unfortunately, however, neither have been permitted sufficient time in office to develop effective means for implementing their ideas, for the military, with its alternative commitment to dictatorial or oligarchical rule, has repeatedly exerted itself to eliminate the progress made by the other two factions towards

¹Kiat (pseud.), Political Chronicles [Phongsawadaan kaan muang] (Bangkok: Kiattisak Press, 1950), cited in Wilson, Politics in Thailand, op. cit., p. 236.

parliamentary rule.¹

Upon the successful termination of prolonged diplomatic negotiations between Bangkok and the Allied Powers, at the end of 1945, the Seni Pramoj cabinet resigned. In accordance with the 1932 Constitution, new elections were held on June 6, 1946 following the resignation of Seni's Government. The pro-Pridi "Constitutional Front" together with the Isan MP's "Sahacheep Party" won a decisive majority in the Assembly, thus assuring Pridi's political future. Under these favorable circumstances, Pridi appeared to command the respect and support of the Allies as well as of the representatives and the mass of the Thai people. In fact, victory at the polls gave Pridi a base of authentic popular support never previously enjoyed by other Thai politicians. To political analysts and certainly to Pridi, the time seemed ripe to institutionalize democratic controls over the Government, to break of the military officials and to establish truly responsible government.

Huntington's analysis of the party system could very well be applied to the case of Thailand in this particular incident. The conservative sees the party as a challenge to the established hierarchy, and the administrators see it as a threat to rationalized rule and the bureaucratic model, whose goals are efficiency and the elimination of conflict. Parties simply introduce irrational and corrupt

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., p. 30.

considerations into the efficient pursuit of goals. Nevertheless, Huntington maintained that the argument against parties betray the circumstances. Corruption, instability and susceptibility to outside influence all characterize weak party systems rather than strong ones.¹

In the case of Thailand, the conservative-aristocratic groups viewed Pridi's attempt to democratize Thailand through the establishment of political parties, the "Sahacheep" and the "Constitutional Front", as a direct threat to their continued privileges and dominance in politics. They finally seized upon the death of King Ananda Mahidol, Rama VIII, and the relative disorder and corrupt practices typical in any postwar developing countries to overthrow Pridi and his parliamentary supporters, especially the Northeastern elites. Hence, they destroyed the best chance of turning Thailand towards progress and democratic political development.

In sum, for a brief three year period just preceding and following the end of the Second World War, the members of the anti-military groups did rule the country. These successive civilian regimes have been called the 'second ruling circle' by Riggs and were referred to as the 'Pridi-Khuang-Thamrong' group. The reliance of Khuang upon parliamentary supporters, Pridi's own ideological commitment to parliamentary democracy, and the apparent expectation of this ruling circle that a real attempt to employ democratic

¹Huntington, Political Order..., op. cit., pp. 404-405.

procedures would help Thailand regain recognition and support from the Western allies resulted in a short-lived florescence of parliamentary vigor.¹

During this period, a number of Isan MP's rose to positions of major importance in the Government. For example, Thong-in Phuriphat, a parliamentary hero from the Isan province of Ubon, who was also regarded as a champion of the underdog, became a Minister without Portfolio and then Deputy Minister of the Interior in the first Khuang cabinet and later a Minister of Industry and Minister of Communication under Thamrong.² Chamlong Daoruang was also appointed a cabinet member, acting for the Minister of Commerce in Seni's cabinet.³ In Khuang's first cabinet, he became a Minister without Portfolio, and later Assistant Minister of Commerce in the Thamrong cabinet (1946-1947). Thawin Udon was made a Senator and in April, 1947, was appointed Manager of the government-owned Thai Industrial Development Corporation. Liang Chaiyakarn became a Minister without Portfolio and later Assistant Minister in Khuang's second cabinet (January-March 1946).⁴

¹Riggs, Thailand: The Modernization of..., op. cit., p. 233.

²Withet Korani, op. cit., p. 1127.

³Kiat, Political Chronicles, op. cit., pp. 97-101.

⁴Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., p. 30; and Withet Korani, op. cit., pp. 806 and 995.

Unfortunately, the Isan politicians, due to their idealistic goals and short-sighted, were to be held responsible for all the Assembly's troubles causing the resignation of Khuang's Government. On March 1946, the second Khuang cabinet was brought down by pressure from the Assembly following its ascension to power two months earlier. Again Thong-ind Phuriphat introduced a motion protesting Khuang's economic policies and advocating price controls to stop inflation.¹ Actually, Thong-ind's proposal had something in common with the 'wage-price' control practiced in the West, since he proposed to set up a Committee to check and control the price of commodities considered to be legitimate to both traders and consumers. Tiang Sirikhan and Phan Indthuwong, another Northeast MP from Khon Khaen, also supported this motion and criticized the Khuang Government's policy of laissez-faire which he deemed unjust and unfair to the poor.²

This was a rare event in Thai politics, an ideological confrontation between two different groups, one advocating economic liberalism and a laissez-faire economic system and the other favoring economic protectionism and strong government controls over prices and other aspects of the economy. By a narrow margin, 65-63, the opposition

¹Minutes of the Meetings, vol. IV, 1946, op. cit., unbound, not page-numbered, not indexed.

²Withet Korani, op. cit., pp. 1066-1067 and 1015, 1068, 1072.

defeated Khuang and the Democrats. As Morrell commented:

This was the second time in Thai politics in which it appeared that a legitimate two-party system might be emerging, one group based in Bangkok and espousing free enterprise economic liberalism and the other based in the provinces and advocating programs of greater state initiative. The opportunity was again overtaken by events.¹

The Postwar Re-emergence
of Parliamentary Power, 1945-1948

The theme which dominated the first years of the postwar period was the attempt by the Thai Government, under Pridi's guiding hand, to regain international acceptability to erase the low esteem in which Thailand had been held during the war for its alliance with Japan. Nevertheless, the postwar civilian leaders had to cope with various attempts by the British Government to subject Thailand to the position of a war criminal. With its tactic of disparaging the Free Thai Movement, the British accused its members as opportunists and refused to consider its vast strength which to be very helpful to the Allies during the war. Nai Thawee Bunyaketu, the then Minister of the Interior, has made it clear in his memoir that an attempt by the Free Thai leaders to counter British machinations had produced the undesirable civil-military clash which directly involved the Assembly and exacerbated the chances for democratic development.

They (the British) complained that there were very

¹Morrell, "Power and Parliament...", op.cit., p. 961.

few underground soldiers in arms ... and thus they tried perhaps to nullify Thailand's claim to treatment as an independent state after the war ... I consulted Pridi, who had been the leader of the Free Thai Movement in Thailand. We decided to hold a parade of all the underground soldiers, numbering about 10,000 in Bangkok.¹

While the parade served to dispel rumors about the strength of the underground, Thawee acknowledged that it also created difficulty in terms of civil-military relations. While the regular Thai soldiers had in their possession old and obsolete weapons, the underground Seri Thai soldiers had acquired during the war new weapons, supplied by the Americans.

In fact, the soldiers had earlier asked us for the new weapons in the possession of the Free Thai Movement soldiers. We refused, because, as per understanding between the Free Thai Movement and the Allied Powers, these new weapons should be held by the Free Thai Movement soldiers only and never transferred to the government troops, which officially fought on the side of the Japanese troops. The military politicians, now out of power, were plotting all the time to come back to power. They used the parade of underground soldiers to spread disaffection among government soldiers against the ruling civilian politicians. They argued that the parade was intended to stamp inferiority on government soldiers who could not boast of new weapons.²

To advance the objective of regaining international acceptability, Pridi was also interested in seeing Thailand play a crucial role in the drama of resurgent nationalism which spread across Southeast Asia in the immediate post-war period. Hence, while maintaining correct relations

¹Thawee Bunyaketu, op. cit., p. 110.

²Ibid., p. 111.

with France, his Government gave increasing aid to the rebel forces in Indochina. After the war some 50,000 Vietnamese refugees had settled in the Northeast area of Thailand; and now the Thai Government did little to prevent them from infiltrating recruits and supplies into Indochina.¹

While in Paris on his good will tour and after the Dutch launched military operations against the Indonesian nationalists in 1947, Pridi was inspired by the idea of creating a "Southeast Asian Union". Although the French were unsympathetic to such an idea, Pridi persisted, and in September, 1947 an organization designed to promote this end, the "Southeast Asian League", was founded. It included a number of his followers, especially the Isan leaders, as well as exiled leaders from neighboring countries who wanted to expel the colonial powers from their homelands.²

Keyes, in particular, observed that the list of officers of the League is extremely interesting in that it revealed the connections between several of the important Isan politicians and leaders of the independence movements

¹Nuechterlein, Thailand and the Struggle..., op. cit., p. 95; Donald Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indochina (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 135; Arthur Dommen, Conflict in Laos (N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1964), p. 27; Bernard B. Fall, The Two-Vietnams (N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1964), p. 14.

²Nuechterlein, ibid., p. 95; see also George K. Tanham, Communist Revolutionary Warfare: The Vietminh in Indochina (N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1961), p. 67.

in Indochina. The President (Tiang Sirikhan) and the Public Relations officer (Senator Thawin Udon) were both well-known Isan political leaders, while Vice President (Tran Van Giao) and Treasurer (Le Hi) were important figures in the Viet Minh, and the General Secretary (Prince Souphanouvong) was to become the leader of the Pathet Lao Movement.¹

What the "Southeast Asia League" might have accomplished is purely speculative, however, for it only survived two months. The scheme collapsed as a result of the military coup of November, 1947, ousting the Thamrong Government before Pridi could put the policy into effect. While Pridi was pursuing his wish to make Thailand a significant force outside its borders, events within Thailand had greatly undermined his position. On June 9, 1946, King Ananda, who had just returned from Switzerland, was found dead of gunshot wound in his Royal Palace bedroom.

In spite of the mistrust created by the King's death case, it appeared that Pridi was still securely in power when he held the premiership, and, even after his resignation on grounds of poor health, when he officially turned over the Government to his supporter, Admiral Luang Thamrong Nawasawadi. Nevertheless, the inability of an investigat

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., p. 31; See also Vietnam Information Service, Paris, 1947, pp. 7-8; Thompson and Adloff, "Who's Who in Southeast Asia," op. cit.

ing group to come up with definite conclusions as to the cause of the King's death, coupled with widespread corruption in the successor Thamrong Government, helped to discredit Pridi and to make possible the military coup of November 1947.¹

Phibun's 1947 Coup and the Restoration
of Military Supremacy in Politics, 1947-1957

The events surrounding the military coup of November 1947, which permanently destroyed the power of Pridi and his associates, most of whom were of the Isan elite, was well recalled by U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, Edwin Stanton, in the following passage:

Pridi fled silently after Phibul staged a military coup ... Fortune was not kind to this statesman who had planned and worked to give his country democratic rule, to raise the standards of living and promote the welfare of the people. Instead, he was forced to flee the country with the dark stigma of implication in King Ananda's death attached to him,
...²

Following the coup, while Pridi's political career was devastated and his reputation was tarnished forever. Phibun, who for the past couple of years had slowly reassembled its political strength, re-emerged as a national hero. Both the "Cooperative Party" and the "Constitutional Front" disappeared forever from the Thai political scene. Nevertheless, it is necessary to keep in mind that Pridi

¹Thawee Bunyaketu, op. cit., p. 129.

²Stanton, Brief Authority, op. cit., p. 219.

assumed the Prime Ministership for the first and only time in his long history of involvement in Thai politics at a time when Thailand was about to face unprecedented turbulence and tragedy.¹

For a brief period, Phibun and the coup leaders allowed Khuang to become Prime Minister, although his actions were subjected to the strict surveillance of military authorities. Clearly, the Democratic interlude had merely postponed temporarily the consolidation of power by Phibun, which finally came to an end in April 1948 when the military staged a coup de main against Khuang and immediately restored Phibun to the Premiership.²

With respect to the role of Isan representatives, the pro-Pridi "Constitutional Front" and the "Cooperative Party" members, few of them stood for the election of January 1948, since they had been arrested, dispersed or had to go into hiding after the coup. Nevertheless, the election results from the Northeast clearly indicated that the Isan population remained heavily committed to political leaders who supported parliamentary rule, despite the resurrection of the military dictatorship, along with anti-Communist and anti-Pridi propaganda by the Government.³

¹Morrell, "Power and Parliament," op. cit., p. 961.

²Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., p. 32; Bun-chuai Srisawasdi, Major Khuang Aphaiwong (Bangkok: Ruampim Press, n.d.), pp. 503 & 556.

³Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., p. 32.

In order to consolidate its power, to destroy Pridi and his Isan associates permanently, as well as to justify the coup de main against Khuang, Phibun, with close cooperation of high-ranking generals, produced stories of Communist Republican plots, or the intended murder of the King, and of an armed rebellion that had been planned for November 30, 1947. Coast noted that the purveyor of the more fantastic stories was Luang Kach, who claimed that Pridi "had been about to establish a Siamese Republic as a cornerstone for a Southeast Asian Union; that radio orders had been intercepted and documents found bearing out these contentions; that agents were on their way to Switzerland to murder King Phumipol; and that an arms cache, including many Russian weapons, had been discovered at the house of Thong-in Phuriphat (MP from Ubon), one of Thamrong's Ministers -- arms indubitably intended for the Communist revolution."¹

Again, Kruger who has done an extensive research on events following the King's death, commented on this particular incident:

Any idea that the Communists, Pridi himself, or anyone else, planned to seize power, by removing the monarchy - which was merely a constitutional cipher, with no effective power anyway - could only have meaning if there had been an attempt to wipe out the whole royal family. Yet not only was no such attempt made out. Phumipol was offering the throne the very same day by Pridi.²

¹Coast, op. cit., p. 42.

²Kruger, op. cit., p. 240.

Table Showing the Postwar Rise of Army Officers and
the Accumulation of Their Ministerial Functions

	<u>Events</u>					
	1948	1951	1954	1957	1963	1969
Persons						
	Army Coup 1947 democ. govt. ousted 1948	Silent C. Phibun- Phao consolid. power	Sarit-Phao conflict: Phibun's balance	Sarit C. ousted Phibun- Phao	Death of Sarit	Constitution '68 Election '69
FM Phin	C in C	C in C Dept. PM (to '53)	Inspe. Gen. Retd. Defense Min. Agr.			
FM Phibun	PM Min Def	same	same	exile		dead
FM Sarit	Cdr. 1st Army '49	same & Min Def	C in C Min Def	Sup. Cdr, C in C Min Def PM '58	dead	
FM Thanom	Cdr. 1st Div	D.Cdr. 1st Army	Cdr. 1st Army	Dep. C in C D. Min Def	Sup. Cdr. PM Min Def	same

Source: J. L. S. Girling, "Politics Amalgamated: The Thai Example,"
Australian Outlook 24:3 (December 1970), p. 268.

With respect to the role and activities of those Isan representatives who ardently supported Pridi and his Socialist cause and parliamentary rule and who constituted the core of the "Constitutional Front" and the "Cooperative Party", they had to escape and go into hiding. The charges and the ultimate actions taken against these men were extremely critical in shaping subsequent political attitudes in the Northeast. Events following Phibun's 'takeover' of the Government had made it possible for him and his followers to press charges on Pridi and the Northeastern elites. One of the numerous charges was that they had conspired to subordinate Thai national identity within a larger Communist-dominated Southeast Asian Union.¹

With the exile of Pridi, the charges began to be focused more specifically on the Northeasterners who were still in hiding. However, in the latter part of 1948, they reappeared and were almost immediately arrested. Tiang Sirikhan, Chamlong Daoruang, Thong-ind Phuriphat and his brother Tim, and Thawin Udon along with another Pridi Minister from the Central Plains, Dr. Thongplaeo Cholaphum (MP from Nakorn Nakok) were charged with plotting a separatist movement in which the Northeast would be joined to Indochina in a Communist-dominated Southeast Asian Union.²

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., pp. 32-33.

²Sawang Lanlua, op. cit., p. 253.

Coast, nevertheless, analyzed the arrests of these Northeast MP's by citing the example of one prominent representative as follows:

Tiang Sirikhan, himself a Laotian and a person of great prestige in the Northeast, denied the pro-Communist charge while quite openly admitting his sympathy with the aim of forming some sort of South-east Asian Union, though not one that would infringe upon Siam's sovereignty. Many Laotians, while not wishing to cut themselves loose from Siam, felt that the administration of the Northeast was too feebly controlled from Bangkok, and that greater local¹ autonomy was essential for proper administration.

One particular incident which greatly hampered the attempts by Isan elites to develop Thailand along a constitutional path and draw attention of the Bangkok regime to focus on the economic grievances of the Northeast was the tragic deaths of pro-Pridi Isan representatives and former Ministers in successive civilian governments of Khuang, Pridi and Thamrong. In March 1949, following incidents which involved the mysterious deaths of several "Free Thai" leaders by gunshot wounds in their homes, Thong-ind, Cham-long and Thawin, along with Dr. Thongplaeo were re-arrested in spite of the fact that they had just been released shortly before. Soon after their arrest, they were shot to death by the police "while attempting to escape."²

The official story was that the four men were being transferred by bus to another prison, when suddenly a rescuing party of their friends fired on the bus,

²Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., p. 34.

¹Coast, op. cit., p. 5 .

killing the prisoners and missing the escorting policemen.¹

According to the news report, this tragic murder case was known as "the Kilo 11 incident" since the four MP's were shot at the road marker number 11 of the Phaholyothin road in the suburb north of Bangkok. It was later speculated that, while they were being transferred to Bangkhaen police station, police officers under Police General Phao's direction, disguised in civilian clothes, approached and executed them. The case received wide-spread publicity and aroused suspicion of a police conspiracy at that time.²

Lauriston Sharp, who was a professor at Cornell University and was engaging in field research in Thailand during that time gave the following unofficial view of the incident:

In Bangkok and villages near kilometre 11, there was general shocked disapproval of Phibun and his unpopular police over this 'incident'. For the time some passersby would salute the marker and for months peasants would express disapproval of a person by saying 'send him to Kilo Eleven.'³

In the following months, several other Isan leaders were also harassed and arrested. For example, Tiang Sirikhan and Tim Phuriphat were brought to trial on charges of

¹Coast, op. cit., p. 53.

²Sawang Lanlua, op. cit., p. 253.

³Lauriston Sharp, personal interview with Charles Keyes on March 1965, cited in Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., p. 73; see also Andrew Roth, "Siam: Tranquility and Sudden Death," The Nation (October 1949), pp. 317-320.

separatism but were later released. Perhaps, their release came as a result of the public outrage over the "kilo 11" incident as well as the inconclusive result of the trial.¹

On March 25, 1949, a new election was declared and Phibun was elected premier by the Assembly. Again, Tiang Sirikhan stood for re-election and won his seat back, although he was still under indictment at that time. Unfortunately, after his successful bid for re-election in February 1952, Tiang, branded by the Government as Khuunphon haeng Phupaan (Hero of the Phupan Mountain), was re-arrested on charged of being both a Communist and a separatist. Bangkok newspapers reported in December 1952 that Tiang had escaped to Burma to evade arrest in conjunction with a new plot by Communist conspirators.² This time Tiang disappeared forever and his alleged separatist plot produced by the police was rejected by all the people concerned, especially among the Isan villagers. According to the popular belief which was later corroborated in a court trial, Tiang too had been assassinated under the direction of the 'Gestapo' Chief, General Phao Sriyanond.³

Charles Keyes' study of the development of Isan regionalism is one of the best pioneering pieces of research

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism ..., op. cit., p. 34.

²Bangkok Post, December 16, 17, 1952; January 13, 1953.

³Keyes, Isan Regionalism ..., op. cit., p. 34.

in this field. He observed that:

The elimination of these men had lasting repercussions in the Isan region. Northerners had taken pride in the accomplishments of local men who had risen to cabinet level. This pride was severely injured when these men were killed. Moreover, they were killed not only because they had been followers of Pridi, but, more damaging, because they had been Northerners. The main charges against Chamlong, Thong-In, Thawin, and Tiang was that they were involved in a plot to separate the Northeast from the rest of the Kingdom. The Northeast was then accorded a political identity which heretofore it had not had.¹

Zolberg's thesis of the military intervention and the attitudes of its leaders in ethnicity, regionalism and political integration could well be applied to the case of Thailand, particularly concerning Isan regional dissent and the Central Government's maltreatment of its leaders. Zolberg maintained that, in relation to the fundamental problem of political integrity, conceived of as the institutionalization of a formula for closing the elite-mass gap, military rulers conceived of national unity as "oneness", defined² negatively by the absence of social conflict stemming from regionalism, primordial loyalties such as ethnicity, or religious affiliations. In all countries, to which Thailand is no exception, Zolberg noted that:

Ethnic particularism has been condemned and its manifestations through voluntary associations

¹Ibid.

²Aristide R. Zolberg, "Military Intervention in New States of Tropical Africa," in Henry Bienen, ed., The Military Intervenes: Case Study in Political Development (N.Y.: Russell Sage Foundations, 1968), p. 87.

prohibited. The goal seems to be the achievement of homogeneity by political fiat, as if the rulers genuinely believed that the absence of conflict somehow produces national integration. Furthermore, integration means reinforcement of the tangible authority of the center.¹

Unsurprisingly, these four Isan "martyrs" became symbols of the growing sentiments shared by the majority of politically-conscious Northeastern populace. In a subsequent period, a common feeling emerged, namely, that they were discriminated against as a whole by the Central Thai and the Central Government. In addition, Keyes asserted that the death of these prominent Northeastern leaders "was a major catalyst in the development of Isan regional political identity and purpose, for it demonstrated most dramatically the attitudes of the Central Government towards those who were identified with Isan political aspirations."²

Parliamentary Debates and the
"Northeastern Problem" in the 1950's

In the parliamentary debates of the first years after Phibun-Phin-Phao military group launched a coup de main against Khuang's Government, many Isan representatives played upon a growing sense of regionalism to put pressure on the Bangkok Government. Their objective was simply to direct more Government attention towards the "Northeastern Problem". On behalf of their regional constituency, these

¹Ibid.

²Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., p. 35.

Isan politicians demanded that the Government halt its anti-Isan propaganda. Citing the disappearance of Tiang Sirikhan and the "Kilo 11" incident, they argued that the Bangkok leadership always ignored and even suppressed Isan political leadership and overemphasized bureaucratic centralization to the detriment of the Isan region.¹

On the economic front, these Isan deputies continually raised the charge of economic discrimination by the Bangkok Government against the Northeast. They had ample evidence to show that the Government was not doing enough to stimulate development in the region and enable it to attain the same level of economic advancement as the rest of the country. For example, in July, 1949, and again in December, 1950, Bunphaeng Phrommakhun (MP from Srisaket-Prachachon Party) and Liang Chaiyakarn charged that the Government of Phibun neglected and discriminated against the Northeast, citing the example of the Government's failure to help the Northeast rice millers in the international marketing of rice.² In a rally of Northeasterners in Bangkok, called by Liang Chaiyakarn in December 1950, several Isan MP's, such as Bunkhum Chantrasrisuriyawong (Independent-Udorn), and Lt. Charubutr Ruangsuwan (Independent-Khonkhaen), took the opportunity to attack and criticize the Government's hands-off policy concerning the Northeast. Certainly, their

¹Ibid., p. 39.

²Bangkok Post, February 14, 1949.

outspoken attacks on the Bangkok Government received widespread support from their Isan constituents.¹

Throughout this period, the issue of political discrimination against the Northeast has been subjected to intense scrutiny by Isan elites. Chun Rawiwan (MP from Nongkhai) spoke out strongly against the Constitution, attacking the "indivisibility of the Kingdom" clause on the grounds that it was potentially injurious to the rights of Northerners. Again, in December, 1950, a newly emerging group of Isan MP's, boldly proposed that Thailand be divided into six autonomous regions. In the same month, Nat Ngoenthap (Independent-mahasarakham) delivered a speech at the rally of Northerners in Bangkok, proclaiming that, while the three Northeastern MP's who had been killed in the "Kilo 11" incident were gone, he and other Isan representatives would continue to fight for the cause of the Northerners as the deceased had done.²

The "Silent Coup" of November 1951 may be the low point in the dignity of the National Assembly.³ Phibun re-established the Constitution of 1932, bringing back the 'tutelage' principle with only one National Assembly

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., p. 40; Bangkok Post, February 7, 1957; Thompson and Adloff, "Who's Who in ...," op. cit., n.p.

²Keyes, *ibid.*, p. 40.

³Wilson, Politics in Thailand, op. cit., p. 210.

half-appointed, thereby solving the serious difficulty in organizing a majority group to support the Government.¹ The result of February, 1952, election were as Phibun had expected. Although Liang Chaiyakarn took his newly-founded "Prachachon (People) Party" to the Phibun camp, the majority of the Isan electorate was still reluctant to give a military-led Government a majority, in spite of the fact that the military was firmly ensconced in power and had won a parliamentary majority in the rest of the Kingdom.

Shortly after the opening of the Assembly, it was obvious to everyone, including Phibun, that a new opposition group had emerged. This non-Democrat opposition group of Northeast MP's under the new leadership of Thep Chotinuchit and Klaew Noraphat (the Srisaket and Khonkhaen MP's) continued to flourish even after all political parties were banned. The strength of the Isan-led opposition was apparent in the 35 votes, out of 241 cast by MP's of both appointed and elected categories, which Thep received in the election for the president of the Assembly.²

¹Chaowat Sudlapa, Phak kaan muang, op. cit., p. 166; Bunchuai Srisawasdi, Phantri khuang..., op. cit., pp. 477-478.

²Thep, an MP from Srisaket, who was to become a major figure in the "new left" revival of 1955-1958, has been one of the strongest advocates of Northeastern causes although he was born and raised in the Central Province of Nakorn Pathom. After his graduate with an M.A. from the Law school, he as appointed a judge in 1937 and shortly thereafter was elected to Parliament from Srisaket. For events surrounding the elections, see Bangkok Post, March 21, 1952.

Results of the February Election
for the Whole Kingdom and the Northeastern Region

<u>Party Affiliation</u>	<u>No. Seats Nationally</u>	<u>No. Seats N/E</u>
1) Pro-Phibun		
Seri Mananghasila	85	15
Thammathipat	10	2
Total pro-Phibun	95	17
2) Democrat	28	10
3) Leftist		
Economist (Setthakorn)	8	8
Free Democrats (Seri-prachathip-pa-tai)	11	11
Hyde Park Movement	2	1
Total Leftists	21	20
4) Other		
Nationalist	3	0
5) Independent	13	6
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 160	<hr/> 53

Source: The Siam Directory (1957), pp. 1-6.

Having been aware that his former base of power had shifted to his two rival lieutenants, Phibun decided once again to lead Thailand back to constitutional democracy after returning from his world tour. Apparently, he was impressed with the enormous power of the legislature as well as the civilian supremacy in politics displayed in the American and the British systems. Hence, through a Government spokesman, it was announced that political parties would be legalized after a period of suppression since 1947 and that a new general election would also be held

on February 1957.¹

Sarit's Dictatorial and Absolutist Rule, 1958-1963

The general election of February, 1957, showed that the Government Seri Manankhasila Party, headed by General Phao, barely maintained a majority. Dissociating himself from the Phibun-Phao group and keeping himself out of the campaign, Sarit described the elections as "filthy" and accused the Government Party, Seri Manankhasila, of ballot-stuffing. Following student protest and demonstration,² Sarit seized the Government in September 1957, and forced Phibun and Phao into exile. Thailand, therefore, had experienced seven major coups and experimented with six constitutions since the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932. The coup d'état had become the accepted method of changing governments and military power became the only valid source of political authority. The psychological and political vacuums created by the sudden overthrow of the absolute monarchy enabled the military leaders to replace the traditional loyalty to the King with a coerced loyalty based on arms.³

¹Wilson, Politics in Thailand, op. cit., p. 210; Wendell Blanchard, Thailand, op. cit., pp. 128-136; Riggs, Thailand: The Modernization..., op. cit., pp. 167-170; for details, see Platong, (pseud.), Phak kaan muang thai [Thai Political Party] (Bangkok: Kao na Press, 1965).

²Darling, Thailand and the..., op. cit., pp. 113-130; Wilson, Politics in Thailand, op. cit., pp. 29-33.

³Darling, "Marshal Sarit and....," op. cit., p. 348.

Sarit's absolutist rule was manifested immediately after his takeover for the second time on October, 1958. After a brief conference with his aides following his return from the U.S. and Great Britain, Sarit seized the Government, abolished the 1952 Constitution, dissolved the Assembly and banned all political parties.¹ Martial law was declared and a new Revolutionary Party was established to rule the country temporarily from the army headquarters in Bangkok. Again, no major change in executive personnel was occasioned by the 1958 coup. As had been expected, the Government's difficulties in dealing with the Assembly were cited as the reason for Sarit's actions. His spokesman, Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, justified the coup in the following terms:

How can representative government function if those who are elected to represent the people in the National Assembly forget the interest of the country as a whole and pursue only their selfish gain.²

Consequently, Sarit's reassertion of his dictatorial and absolute leadership were marked by sweeping arrests of all political opponents to the regime, including former Assembly representatives, newspaper editors, writers, labor leaders, teachers, students and businessmen. These individuals were immediately charged with being Communists or or fellow travelers.³

¹Bangkok Post, October 21, 1958.

²Darling, "Marshal Sarit..." op. cit., p. 356.

³New York Times, October 22, 1958.

Shortly after, the new regime proceeded to announce that all persons arrested would be held without recourse to the civil courts and would be tried by court-martial. Twelve newspapers were closed, and gatherings of more than five persons for political purposes were prohibited. Also, it was announced that a Constituent Assembly would soon be appointed to draft a new constitution and serve concurrently as a legislature. However, there was no announcement regarding new election.¹

Judging by circumstantial evidence, Sarit's regime could be regarded as one of the most disruptive and failure in the process of political institutionalization and democratic development in Thailand's history. Until the seizure of power by Sarit, no government after 1932 claimed to be absolute. Modest opposition to the government was usually permitted, and some limits were maintained on executive rule. National and local elections were intermittently held, and political parties were gradually allowed to organize and run candidates for public office. The legislature, the courts, the King, the press, public opinion, and foreign opinion in varying degrees served as a check on the party in power. In addition, the gradual mellowing of the two military leaders (Phahol and Phibun) usually prevented the

¹Walter F. Young, "Sarit and the Absolutist Rule," in Udom Songsri, ed., Thailand: Generals and Politics (Bangkok: Odeon Store, 1969), pp. 41-69.

authoritarian rule of the military regimes from becoming unduly repressive or harsh. Each of these leaders had received his military training in Western Europe, and in spite of their desire for strong leadership they were willing to tolerate some of the delays and frustration inherent in a modern constitutional and democratic government.¹

Sarit's authoritarian character was displayed even before his actual takeover late in 1958. As Wilson has pointed out, Sarit was a confirmed anti-democrat who always argued publicly against democracy on the ground that it was inefficient and unsettling. Due to this conception, Sarit believed that democracy constituted a threat to development and security, goals of higher value than democracy.² Hence, Darling commented that the dramatic change in the Thai Government was attributable largely to the personal characteristics of Sarit, who is much more militant and autocratic than the two preceding army leaders, Phahol and Phibun.³

¹Darling, "Marshal Sarit....," op. cit., p. 348.

²Wilson, U.S. and the Future of Thailand, op. cit., p. 119.

³Darling, "Marshal Sarit....," op. cit., p. 348. Prof. Kramol Thongthammachat, the present Dean of the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, who is also one of Thailand's foremost students of political modernization, has from time to time, openly criticized the military 'takeover' and the inability of military regimes to govern the country effectively and progressively. Citing the examples of Phahol's, Phibun's and especially Sarit's administrations, Prof. Kramol rightly predicted the long-term effects the military regimes had caused to the future of Thailand's constitutional representative government. See Kramol Thongthammachat, Ratha-sapha nai rabob kaan pok-krong

Janowitz' analysis of the ideology of military leaders, which is usually anti-political, perhaps coincided with those of Sarit's and his subordinates. According to Janowitz, for the military leaders, interest in politics goes hand in hand with a negative outlook and even hostility to politicians and political groups.

It is the politics of wanting to be above politics. Among officers, there is no glorification or even respect and understanding for the creative role of the politician and the political process. In part, this reflects the oppositional mentality.¹

As far as the role of Isan politicians during this period is concerned, their political freedom had to come to an abrupt end when Sarit seized power and declared martial law.² In the aftermath of mass arrests directed by Sarit, many leftist politicians, most of whom were Isan representatives, as well as the pro-Government Isan deputies who had traveled to Russia or Communist China were immediately arrested or went into exile. Sarit's harsh treatment in the

khong thai [National Assembly in the Thai System of Government] (Bangkok: Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 1971).

¹Janowitz, The Military in the Political Development ..., op. cit., p. 65.

²Bangkok Post, October 21, 1958; for details see, Kamol Somvichien, The Thai Military in Politics: An Analytical Analysis, Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, England, 1969, pp. 197, 215; Charles W. Weatley, The Military Coup: An Exploratory Study of Overt Crises in Political-Military Relations, Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1967, p. 289.

following years of the so-called "leftist" Isan MP's and their regional affiliation in spite of his previously proclaimed socialist attitude after the 1957 election and his connection with the region in early childhood came as a rather surprising move. Nevertheless, judging from Sarit's autocratic and anti-democratic attitudes, the Northeast politicians whose political philosophy was to uphold parliamentary rule and the equality of Isan economic development was to prove to be a threat to Sarit's pledge for absolutist and integration policies. Even Darling recognized that the "Leftist Party" whose membership numbered many Isan politicians, was the only splinter party to uphold a consistent and coherent socialist program.

This small socialist party, which first used the name, Socialist Front, and later called itself the Economist Party, has, accordingly, consisted largely of elected representatives and their followers from the impoverished northeastern provinces. It has been led by two members of the national legislature, Thep Jotinuchit and Klaew Norapati, who served as the small vocal opposition to the triumvirate military regime and proposed the adoption to a socialist economy, a non-aligned foreign policy and the recognition of Communist China.¹

An interesting comment on the attitude of Sarit and his military associates toward the Assembly was revealed in an editorial in one of Sarit's newspapers on the occasion of the first meeting of the new Assembly in February 1959. Expressing the hope that the new Assembly would do better than

¹Frank C. Darling, "Political Parties in Thailand," Pacific Affairs 44:2 (Summer 1971), p. 238.

the old one, it said:

At the time, there are not a few people who are interested in the attitude of the new assembly and who intend that the new assembly should be different from the old, especially in the use of harsh, cruel and insulting language which was the habit of some members of the former assembly and in disrespect to the hallowed place (in¹ which meetings are held) by inciting disturbances.¹

From the above statement, representing the thinking of military officers, a conclusion can be drawn that parliamentary activity or legislative intervention proved a great annoyance to Thailand's bureaucratic and military elite. It was a threat to the elites' continued ability to unilaterally make an implement decisions, a role to which they are not only accustomed but to which they consider themselves entitled. The MP's aggressively demanded authority and influence over Government programs, policies and decisions, and presented a barrage of information on rural problems which the bureaucracy did not particularly care to receive. But since they operated from such an inherently weak base of power, with minimal legitimacy and negative status, their escalating pressures -- along with the severe problems of factional competition within the cabinet in the fight for political succession -- eventually led to their downfall.²

Sarit's new regime continued to base its power on the armed forces and the dramatic appeal of its economic and

¹Thai Raiwan, (Bangkok), in Thai, February 7, 1959.

²Morrell, "Power and Parliament...", op. cit., p.42.

social reforms. The subject of general elections had been forgotten and the task of drafting the new Constitution was staggering, with the intention to drag it on forever. Darling himself made a premature judgement concerning Sarit's absolutist rule. He asserted:

In spite of the revival of political absolutism by Sarit and his intimidation of all internal opposition, the future political trend in Thailand will probably be towards the restoration of at least a modicum of political freedom and the return to some form of constitutional and democratic government. Sarit himself may mellow with the passage of time ... and he may see that an unnaturally accelerated economic and social development program at the complete cost of human freedom is too high a price for the achievement of higher material standard of living.¹

During Sarit's premiership, (October 1958-December 1963), the "Northeastern Problem" was re-defined in Thai ruling circles from being one of minor provincial complaints to one of potential danger to the continued existence of the Government of Thailand itself.² The Thai leadership began to fear that economic underdevelopment and the strategic position of the Northeast might make the region fertile ground in which seeds of insurrection could grow. Moreover, Isan regionalism might develop into an open Isan separatist movement, since the villagers had seen their leaders arrested and perhaps executed by the Bangkok officials on the

¹Darling, "Marshal Sarit...", op. cit., p. 359; Bangkok Post, February 13, 1959; and March 14, 1959.

²Keyes, Isan Regionalism..., op. cit., p. 51.

grounds that they demanded equality, political and economic, for the Isan region. As Hindley's has contended, no study had been made, or made public, of the extent and level of political consciousness among the Northerners in general, or of the connection between the earlier opposition and the Communist rebellion that slowly gained momentum after 1961.¹

¹Hindley, "Thailand: The Politics...", op. cit., p. 368.

CHAPTER VII

CRISIS IN THE NORTHEAST AND ITS POTENTIAL THREAT
TO THAILAND'S NATIONAL SECURITYA) Communism and Insurgency

Asian communism can be viewed as a product of a much larger process whereby Asia, caused to enter the world stream within the last century, was forced to emulate, or at least to adjust to an "advanced" West. Communism, to be sure, was but one mode of adjustment, and a mode taken initially by a tiny minority.¹

The Communist Party of Thailand

Communist activity in Thailand dates back to the late 1920's, when the Comintern maintained the headquarters of its South Seas Bureau in Bangkok. Under the supervision of French Communist, Hilaire Noulens, the Communist Party for Southeast Asia was formed.² The advantage of Bangkok was its lack of colonial occupation and its central location relative to other colonial countries of Southeast Asia.

In spite of an atmosphere of obscurity surrounding the formation and activities of the early Communist

¹Robert A. Scalapino, "American Foreign Policy in East Asia," Australian Outlook 22:3 (December 1968), p. 270.

²Robert W. McColl, "Political Geography of Revolution: China, Vietnam and Thailand," Journal of Conflict Resolution 11:2 (June 1967), p. 164.

movement in Thailand, it was a result of decisions made by the Russian Communists soon after their successful revolution of November, 1917. The Bolsheviks had initially hoped and believed that the European proletariat would rise, even during the war, and throw out their capitalist governments. The Russians were so disappointed when this did not happen that they began to look to Asia for support in maintaining the revolutionary momentum. Lenin's evolving theory held that Asia, the pawn of the European imperialists, was a major reservoir of manpower and other vital resources. He further realized that Asia literally had no proletariat in his term, and only peasants could become the mass base for his efforts.¹

Following the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922, Michael Borodin was sent to China to work as an adviser to Sun Yat-sen and helped organized the Far Eastern Bureau of the Comintern in Shanghai.² Nevertheless, when Stalin came to power, he advocated a new Soviet foreign policy stressing that socialism was to be developed first in one country. In spite of the lessened Soviet interest in an Eastern policy, various Communist organizations concerned with Asia

¹George Tanham, Trial in Thailand (N.Y.: Crane, Russak and Co., Inc., 1974), p. 27.

²Charles B. McLane, Soviet Strategies in Southeast Asia: An Exploration of Eastern Policy Under Lenin and Stalin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 198, 338-345, 445-449.

and Southeast Asia continued their activities. Thailand, although not at all a first priority, was not overlooked by the Communists even in those early years.¹

As suggested by various sorts of evidence, Thailand has often been used as a haven by dissident political elements from surrounding areas, partly by reason of the fact that it was for long the only non-colonial Government in that part of Asia. Refugees and plotters from Burma, Vietnam and Malaya have often operated from Bangkok and utilized Thailand as a base area for their underground anti-colonialist activities. Groups from as far away as India and Indonesia have set up operations on Thai soil with relative impunity.²

According to Brimmell, the South Seas General Labor Union, set up in Singapore in 1926, and the South Seas Communist party, formed there in 1928, were both the fomenting of Communism, chiefly among the overseas Chinese in Thailand and other countries of the region.

Siam in fact was within the Singapore organization's territory, and continued to be the responsibility of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), when the latter was set up in 1930. The South Seas Communist Party... had a Siam Special Committee, which reported in 1929 that a Communist Party, a Communist Youth Organization, a General Workers' Union, and a Young

¹Tanham, Trial in Thailand, op.cit., p. 28.

²Daniel D. Lovelace, China and "People's War" in Thailand, 1964-1969, Center for Chinese Studies, China Research Monographs, no. 8. (Berkeley, Calif.: The University of California Press, 1971), p. 14.

Workers' General Labor Union had all been established by that date in Siam.¹

Scalapino's account of the origin of Communist activity and the establishment of Communist Party in Thailand coincide with those of Brimmell, although the dates of the CPT (Communist Party of Thailand) origins have been variously listed as either 1935 or 1942 by other sources. Scalapino asserted that the first serious evidence of Communist presence in Thailand was provided by the political polarization which took place in the Bangkok Chinese community following the KMT-CCP (Kuomintang-Chinese Communist Party) split of 1927.² Hence, the fact remains that most Communist activity in Thailand had been externally oriented, and the Thai role has largely been passive and non-participatory.³

By 1927 Communist ideas were being propagated by both the Comintern and the Chinese Communist agents. Subversive leaflets were distributed, and it was generally agreed by all Communists operating in Siam during that period that most important task of the Communists at this stage was to organize party cells and introduce Communist study groups. The conclusion which has been drawn from their early activities in Siam was that their ideology,

¹Brimmell, Communism in South Asia ..., op.cit., p. 114.

²Scalapino, The Communist Revolution ..., op.cit., p. 15.

³Lovelace, op.cit., p. 14.

"Communism", was popular, in fact, only among the Chinese and the Vietnamese who were aliens and whose nationalist feelings supported the Communist doctrine.¹

The fact is that there were two distinct local Communist parties, the CPT and the CCPT (Chinese Communist Party of Thailand). The first one was predominantly staffed by the Thai, while the latter was manned by the overseas Chinese. From the outset, the major characteristic of both Communist parties "seemed to have been their ineffectiveness and lack of mass support." The ephemeral CPT never amounted to more than a handful of dissident Thai intellectual and political figures. The CCPT's influence, on the other hand, remained confined within the struggle for power and politics among the overseas Chinese communities and its motherland.²

Scalapino's analysis of the role of Siamese intellectuals in modernization and development and its attraction to Communist appeals is quite relevant to the case of Thailand.

Why did Marxism-Leninism appeal to the Asian intellectual? Let it be made clear at the outset that the communist appeal extended only to a small element within the intellectual community ... Many intellectuals saw in Marxism-Leninism the opportunity to retain a commitment to the broad, theoretical values of democracy without being tied to its traditional forms and practices. The 'new democracy'

¹David Wilson, "Thailand and Marxism," op.cit., p. 86.

²Thompson and Adloff, op.cit., p. 60.

of Communism was based upon the tutelage of the masses by an intellectual elite, thereby giving that elite a new function, purpose, and power.¹

To the vast majority of Thai people, Communism is an alien and vaguely understood ideology. In short, "Thai communism lacks both a head and a body."² In the past up to the early 1970's, there is no sizable, deeply dissatisfied, intellectual class, to lead a Communist movement. As for the not so uprooted Thai peasants, they have thus far shown little interest in political doctrines of any kind, insofar as they have any impression of Communism. In addition, the doctrine is likely to be regarded with suspicion for its rejection of Buddhist belief, its emphasis on government ownership of land, and its association with the unpopular Chinese.³ Of course, the favorable outlook of the situation in Thailand, as far as the attitudes on Communism of peasants are concerned, has been steadily changing. Since the late 1960's, and even a decade or two earlier in the Isan region, there has been signs of peasants unrest and disenchantment. Having been subjected to the extreme poverty and denial of basic necessities of life by the Government,

¹Scalapino, "American Foreign Policy in East Asia," op.cit., p. 271.

²Donald Zagolia, "Who Fears the Domino Theory?" The New York Times Magazine, April 21, 1968. Reprinted in Survival 10:6 (June 1968), p. 188.

³U.S. Army Area Handbook for Thailand, 1st revision, 1963, op.cit., p. 371.

the Thai peasants are tempted to join the Communists or anybody who would rescue them from starvation and discrimination. These desperate peasants and workers are willing to believe in any programs, Communist or other, which would provide them with a better standard of living, such as promises to provide them with land, food and tractors.

Marxism has in fact enjoyed far less success in Thailand than perhaps in any other country in Southeast Asia, whether it be a class-based ideology, an organizational tool, or an economic doctrine. Gurtov cited a couple reasons to explain the relative failure of Communist activities in Thailand. First of all, political organization in Thailand is based on personal allegiances, because of which politics has featured the manoeuvrings of bureaucratic groups and factions rather than producing disciplined, ideological mass parties. Secondly, the stress in Buddhism on individual merit has influenced a general societal interest in upward mobility, self-reliance and profit. Marxism's rigid class distinctions have, thus, in Gurtov's view not appealed to Thai peasants or intellectuals, especially in the absence of widespread economic discontent.¹

As has been already indicated, Communist activities in Thailand in the earlier years are somewhat obscure, and

¹Melvin Gurtov, China and Southeast Asia-- The Politics of Survival (D.C. Heath Lexington Books, 1971), p. 5.

indeed, the first few decades can only be sketchily described. Even less well known is the history of CPT. As far as the relationship between CPT and CCP (Chinese Communist Party) is concerned, we do know that one year after the founding of CPT, the Shanghai Far East Bureau Dispatched six CCP members to Thailand. Following the arrest in 1927 of Han Ming-huang, who was charged with being Communist agent, the Siamese Foreign Minister at the time announced that there was an increasing Communist agitation in Siam.¹ Thus, from the outset, the ideas of Communism in Siam -- as in Malaya-- were identified in the indigenous mind with the Chinese menace itself. This was later to lead to some confusion, as measures directed against the Chinese community were apt to be justified by references to the Communist danger.²

During the years between 1928 and 1930, Ho Chi Minh himself was alleged to have resided in Thailand, a fact which was believed to have strengthened the position of the CPT and undoubtedly would have strengthened his hold on the Vietnamese living here. Presumably it was early in 1925 that Ho Chi Minh reportedly sent a group of Vietnamese from his Vietnamese Revolutionary League, with headquarter in Canton, to work among the Vietnamese living in Thailand's

¹Thompson and Adloff, op.cit., p. 5.

²Brimmell, op.cit., p. 112.

Isan (Northeast) provinces.¹ In Udorn and subsequently in Sakol Nakorn, both located in the Northeast, Ho had apparently founded a newspaper called "Than-Ai" (Friendship), opened a school where both Thai and Vietnamese were taught and set up a forest operative.² Posing as a Buddhist monk, Ho also reportedly wandered among the Vietnamese communities in the Northeast.³ While Ho directed his efforts primarily towards Indochina, his ideas and organization clearly had their impact on the local conditions.

During the coup d'etat of 1932, the Communists evidently tried to exploit the liberalization policies of the "Promoteurs". Throughout Bangkok's streets, radical elements increased their activities and Communist propaganda reportedly was distributed everywhere. Tanham asserted that this shadowy Chinese-dominated party claimed partial credit for what was purely a Thai coup, while, in fact, the party played no role. It is interesting to note that in its claims it referred to itself as the Communist Party of Siam, not the Chinese Communist Party of Siam.⁴

¹For further details, see Eksaengsri, op.cit., pp. 10-15.

²Jean Lacouture, Ho Chi Minh: A Political Bibliography, translated from French by Peter Wiles (N.Y.: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), p. 52.

³Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism: A Case History of North Vietnam (N.Y.: Praeger, 1964), p. 47.

⁴Tanham, Trial in Thailand, op.cit., p. 13.

In the aftermath of June, 1932 revolution, fears of Communist influence grew rapidly, perhaps because the Thai Government was irritated by the excessive claims of the Communists coupled with the instability of the country's political system at that time. Hence, various Thai military regimes capitalized upon the alleged threat of "Communist subversion". The abortive Royalist revolt of 1933 led by Prince Baworadet was also rationalized as an anti-Communist measure, and in that same year the first "Anti-Communist Act" was proclaimed, making the propaganda of Communist doctrines a crime against the state.¹ Evidently, the coup of June 1932, although not Communist in character, revealed the vulnerability of the monarchy in the face of a well-organized conspiracy.

In the course of events, however, communism became an issue in 1932, not because of the activities of any party "but because Pridi Phanomyong, the youthful intellectual leader of the People's Party, issued a utopian pamphlet entitled 'National Economic Plan'. His plan was based on the idea of nationalizing all economic resources."² As a result, changes in the Thai power structure following the coup of 1932-1933 eventually brought avowed anti-Communists

¹Brimmell, op.cit., p. 114; Wilson, Politics in Thailand, op.cit., p. 17.

²Wilson, The United States and the Future of Thailand, op.cit., p. 70.

to the fore in the Government. Only a small group of leftist intellectuals, mostly the Isan politicians who persistently gave support to Pridi, continued to lend a more liberal complexion to the evolving political system.¹

Despite the restrictions enforced through the 1933 "Anti-Communist Act", the CPT sent three members to the Comintern's Far Eastern Bureau in Shanghai in 1935 for training and had representatives at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in Moscow. By this time, the Party had become closely associated with Ho Chi Minh's Communist Party of Indochina, which still had groups in Thailand.² Also, the World Communist Youth League claimed that it had members in Northeast Thailand.

As for the activities of Communist movement in outlying areas, there were some sporadic demonstrations outside Bangkok during 1934-1936. Again in the Northeast province of Khonkhaen, a large group of Vietnamese paraded openly in the street, and some clashed with the police.³

The Anti-Communist legislation, enforced by the police, appeared to be effective. Membership in the Communist dominated General Workers' Union dropped from about 1,000

¹Justus M. van der Kroef, "Guerrilla Communism and Counterinsurgency in Thailand," Orbis 18:1 (Spring 1974), p. 108.

²U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Thailand, op.cit., p. 375.

³Tanham, Trial in Thailand, op.cit., p. 30.

in 1929 to approximately 100 in 1934. Communist activities were therefore limited mainly to the surreptitious distribution, of pamphlets which finally had to come to an end in 1935 when the Comintern's Popular Front Policy was in effect.¹

During the war, although the Thai Government under Phibun chose to ally the country with Japanese, Regent Pridi and his close civilian faction secretly formed an anti-Japanese movement, mainly in the Northeast. Nevertheless, the Communists apparently tried to take advantage of the situation in Thailand as they did elsewhere in Southeast Asia, and in 1942 the first Congress of the CPT was held.²

Throughout the war years, the CPT remained dormant, and unimportant except for some cell activities. It had no political organizations to infiltrate, and both wings of the coup group, Pridi's liberal and Phibun's conservative factions, were anti-Communist.

Generally speaking, the Siamese Communist Party showed no sign of life during the war years, although certain Chinese Communists in Bangkok published a newspaper, Truth News which adopted a singularly moderate tone. Like the Siamese leaders themselves, the Communists were playing

¹U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Thailand, op.cit., p. 375.

²Ibid..

a waiting game.¹

During the period of liberalization which followed World War II, the Communists gradually emerged into the open for the first time since the enactment of the restrictions in 1933. Party weakness and public apathy toward its appeals were indicated by the fact that Thailand is the only nation of Southeast Asia in which a Communist-led insurrection did not take place immediately after the war. Nevertheless, in the turn of events, which led to the anti-Communist faction under Phibun being discredited in the postwar years, it seemed as though the CPT might at last come into its own. Chinese Communists in Thailand, with their own newspapers, retained operational independence. A ten-point program, entitled, Khom-mu-nit thai cha tham a-rai nai paj-ju-ban [What Thai Communists Will Do Now?], drafted in 1945, although not widely circulated until the next year, stressed the party devotions to democratic principles and urged the vote for eighteen-year olds and direct popular elections of Members of Parliament.²

Owing to the subsequent events and to the attitude taken by Phibun and his followers, it became customary to refer to Pridi and his Isan supporters as constituting a left-wing movement within the 'coup group'. In fact,

¹Brimmell, op.cit., p. 155.

²Thompson and Adloff, op.cit., pp. 108-109.

Brimmell has argued that, in general, "Pridi can be regarded as the formative force upon the Siamese intelligentsia: but their outlook was scarcely revolutionary and is hard to differentiate in Western political terms from that of the military leaders."¹

In the course of the period of liberalism which restored Siam to the esteem of the U.S., Pridi relaxed the discriminatory legislation which had been imposed in the late 1930's against the Chinese and Malay minorities. Hence, by the end of 1945, several Communist or pro-Communist newspapers, including Chon kam-ma-cheep [Proletariats], the Lok Mai [New World] and the biweekly Ma-ha-chon [The People], though still illegal, were being published openly. Despite the Pridi's Government's threat to invoke the 1933 anti-Communist Law, there was an outburst of left-wing activities, chiefly on the part of the overseas Chinese Community which was becoming increasingly attracted to Mao's newly emerged revolutionary theory.²

The postwar adjustment of relations with the Western powers and especially with the Soviet Union was somewhat complicated and tended to undermine Thailand's bid for U.N. membership. Consequently, in order to ensure Soviet approval of Thailand's application for U.N. membership, the

¹Brimmell, op.cit., pp. 153-154.

²U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Thailand, op.cit., p. 376.

National Assembly repealed the Anti-Communist Act of 1933 in October, 1946, which resulted in the establishment of a Soviet legation in Bangkok on May 4, 1948 and its vote of abstention in the United Nations.¹

Subsequently in the general elections of January 1946, the Communists entered candidates, not as Communists, but as members of the Proletarian Party, which had been formed in 1945. One of their candidates, Prasert Sapsunthorn, a former lecturer at Chulalongkorn University, was elected from Surat Thani, a Southern peninsula province. As for the postwar status of the CPT, it again emerged into the light of legality on December 6, 1946, with Prasert as its Security General. The CPT reportedly was inaugurated in its new form at a large open-air meeting.² MacDonald noted that:

Nai Prasert Subsunthorn was elected as an independent in 1946, and he formed 'Siam's one-man Communist Party' to depict his disillusionment with the major political parties supporting Pridi and the liberal regime.³

As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, some of the ideas of Communism were taken up in Siam by organizations not connected with the Communist Party, e.g., by the Proletarian Party, which emerged in November 1945 by putting forward

¹Paul Shirk, "Thai-Soviet Relations," Asian Survey 9:9 (September 1969), pp. 682-693.

²Brimmell, op.cit., p. 242.

³Alexander MacDonald, Bangkok Editor (N.Y.: MacMillan Co., 1949), p. 205.

four candidates for the elections to the National Assembly of January 1946. As for the radical groups supporting Pridi, there was no evidence whatsoever implicating them with the CPT and its activities, despite various absurd claims and accusations by Phibun and the ultra-conservative groups.

In the immediate postwar years, Thai policy towards Communism acquired certain international dimensions. Aside from the abrogation of Anti-Communist Act in October, 1946 in order to appease the Soviet Union, Premier Pridi also saw that Thailand, due to its long history of independence, should play a leading role in the drama of resurgent nationalism in postwar Southeast Asia. To advance this objective, Keyes maintained, Pridi had allowed Bangkok to become a center in which representatives of the Indochinese independent movements could contract for armament supplies and present their cases to the outside world. Pridi even succeeded in establishing the "Southeast Asian League" in September, 1947. The League consisted of Prince Souphanouvong, the Pathet Lao leader, as its Secretary General.¹ Hence, immediately after assuming the Premiership Pridi found himself the object of new charges by Phibun and his conservative cliques that he was permitting Thailand to be used as a base for Communist-inspired insurrections in

¹Keyes, Isan: Regionalism . . ., op.cit., p. 31; Frank C. Darling, Thailand: New Challenges . . ., op.cit., Chapter 2. For further details see Peter Poole, The Vietnamese in Thailand (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970).

Indochina, Burma and Malaya. It was asserted that arms, which had been dropped to his followers by the Allies in 1944 for use in an anti-Japanese uprising, were being sold to the Communist-directed Vietminh forces fighting the French in Vietnam.¹

The decision to abrogate the Anti-Communist Act by Pridi's Government and the reversal of Thai policy from anti-Communism to neutralism was, as a matter of fact, carried out with some reluctance. Premier Pridi was actually quoted as saying in regard to this development that:

Politics and diplomacy are two different things. Whether we agree with another country's beliefs has nothing to do with diplomatic relations. I wish to insist that Siam can never be a Communist country because our customs, convention and history differ greatly from that of Russia ... I have studied enough economics to be in a position to say that we have nothing to fear about that. I wish to make this point clear because I was once branded as a Communist.²

Following the mysterious death of King Ananda on June 9, 1946, Phibun and his army supporters proceeded to discredit Pridi and his intellectual followers, mostly from the Isan areas. Having made the most of the whispering campaign attributing the King's death to Pridi and his Republican plot, the Phibun conservative clique began to plan the restoration of military supremacy in politics. Brimmell has argued that Phibun launched a coup after the

¹U.S. Army, Area Handbook, op.cit., p. 377.

²The Siam Daily (Bangkok), May 4, 1946.

formation of the Cominform and the outbreak of Cold War in Europe, which made the Western powers too busy to intervene in any domestic political change in Thailand.¹

Phibun's postwar administration, which took power after the "coup de main" against Khuang's civilian Government, did not immediately outlaw the Communists, apparently wishing to avoid friction with the Soviet Union, which had just opened a legation in Bangkok in May, 1948. Nevertheless, the Government maintained close surveillance over Communist suspects and occasionally ordered raids on the headquarters of Communist-dominated groups, such as the Central Labor Union. While conducting his campaign against the Chinese Communists and the left-wing organizations, Phibun obviously did not abandon his anti-Pridi campaign, aiming to eliminate Pridi and his Isan associates from Thai politics forever.²

Phibun's attempts during this period to discredit Pridi and link him with both the Communist plot and the King's death were recorded by Coast.

In order to justify the coup, the military produced stories of communist and republican plots, or the intended murder of the king, and of an armed rebellion that had been planned for November 30 (1947). The purveyor of the more fantastic stories was Luang Kach, who claimed that Pridi had been about to establish a Siamese Republic as a cornerstone for a Southeast Asian Union ... and that an arms cache ... had been discovered at the house of Thong-Indr,

¹Brimmell, *op.cit.*, p. 245.

²Darling, "Political Parties...", *op.cit.*, pp. 238-9.

one of Tamrong's Ministers ... arms indubitably intended for the Communist revolution.¹

A government campaign against the "diffusion of Communism" followed. In late 1948, four Isan ministers who supported Pridi were arrested and charged with plotting a separatist movement in which the Northeast would be joined to Indochina in a Communist-dominated Southeast Asian Union. Tiang Sirikhan, one of the prominent Isan deputies who was arrested, had denied the pro-Communist charge and even declared that he did not know what a Communist was at that time.²

In January, 1951, two other former Pridi followers, Thep Chotinuchit and his brother, Pethai, were arrested and accused of having been involved in a similar Communist conspiracy to overthrow the Thai nation. Thep, who was Deputy Minister of Communications and Pethai, the Secretary General of the newly-formed People's Party and editor of the Political Weekly, maintained their innocence and denied having any party affiliations. All ministers were, moreover, ordered to dismiss any of their officials who indicated by word or act that they were Communist sympathizers. By the end of 1951, almost all left-wing periodicals had

¹Coast, Some Aspects of ..., op.cit., p. 50.

²Ibid.

ceased publication.¹

In spite of the Government's all-out efforts to suppress the leftist and radical intellectual elements in the Thai society since 1951, the Second Congress of the CPT was held and was reported in the Comintern Journal of June 27, 1952. The Party's Secretary General was believed to be Prasong Wongwiwat, who apparently had replaced Prasert Sapsunthorn. Tanham maintains that the CPT, heavily influenced by Mao's thought, did manage to send cadres out to the rural areas to recruit peasants, despite having been traditionally weak and predominantly Chinese in character and membership. A few cells formed from 1949 to 1952 in the Northeast were believed to have continued meetings for years.²

At the Second CPT Conference, Secretary General Prasong reportedly issued a call for the mobilization of millions in the struggle for independence and democracy, and the delegates are believed to have criticized certain "left and right deviations" which had prevented the Party from forming a United Front. A new Central Committee was formed, including Prasert Sapsunthorn, former CPT Secretary General and three others, Wat Sunthornchamorn, legal adviser to the Central Labor Union, and two other unknown persons named Sak Suphakasem and Prapan Wirasak. Prasert

¹U.S. Army, Area Handbook ..., op.cit., p. 377.

²Tanham, Trial in Thailand, op.cit., p. 32.

was later sent to attend the Peking Peace Conference of October, 1952 and apparently remained in China thereafter. Together with Sanguan Tularak, who had been Siam's first Ambassador to China in 1946 but was later dismissed in 1947 by Kuang. Prasert's presence there was reported in 1955.¹

After the promulgation of the Anti-Communist Activities Act in November 1952, the CPT, which had technically enjoyed legal status since the end of World War II, suddenly lost its legal basis and had to go completely underground. Nevertheless, Brimmell commented that there were certain disquieting factors behind this reassuring scene.

Siam had committed itself to the anti-Communist camp, and had derived profit from so doing. Nevertheless, there was a vague uneasiness at the extent of this commitment -- it was felt that the traditional Siamese position of leaving room for manoeuvre and compromise in accordance with the changing international balance of power had been unduly compromised²

Following his 1957 "World Tour", Phibun initiated the unexpected series of political reforms known collectively as the "New Democracy". In fact, some reforms took place at the end of September, 1955, when Phibun's Government passed a "Political Parties Act", permitting the formation of political parties in Thailand. Consequently, although a number of "Socialist" parties emerged, the CPT still remained

¹Brimmell, op.cit., p. 346; also see U.S. Army, Area Handbook ..., op.cit., p. 378.

²Ibid., p. 348.

illegal. Given the fact that the Communists were not allowed to operate in the open, some party members either joined the socialist opposition or remained underground.¹

By January 1957 there were twenty-two parties in existence, and more were still being formed. The latter parties tended to be more and more left-wing, reflecting the upsurge of political interest among intellectuals, liberated by Political Parties Act. In September 1956 the Socialist Party established a "Socialist Front", together with the Economist Party² and the Hyde Park Movement Party.³ Later they were joined by the "Social United Front", and on June 17, 1957, the four parties jointly declared that they had formed a new "Socialist United Front" under the leadership of the veteran politician, Thep Chotinuchit. Of course, this newly-organized Front was heavily manned by politicians from the Northeast. General policy guidelines of the "Front" aimed at "complete independence for Siam and the elimination of imperialism in any form, a genuine

¹Lovelace, op.cit., p. 16.

²Its leader was Thep Chotinuchit, an MP from the Northeast Province of Srisaket, whose views inclined toward neutralism. Late in 1955, shortly after forming his party, Thep proceeded on a visit to the PRC where he presumably met former Premier, Pridi, and members of the CPT. On his return to Bangkok in February 1956, Thep was arrested and jailed.

³For further details though not comprehensive, see Thailand, Communist Suppression Operations Command, Communist Insurgency in Thailand (Bangkok: n.p., 1957), n.p.

People's Democracy, permanent peace, and an improved standard of living." Favoring a policy of neutralism and peaceful coexistence in international affairs, Thep and the "Front" also suggested that Thailand should not be the only country in Southeast Asia to be tied to the West, but should pursue a policy of neutrality like its neighbors.¹

By mid-1958, the Thanom's Government, appointed by Sarit who had to go abroad for further medical treatment, began to face serious political instability. Many prominent politicians, mostly from the Northeast, planned to call a "General Debate". Some planned and even made trips to Communist China and the Soviet Union. This rebellious atmosphere created by Members of the Assembly proved so intolerable to Sarit, who had just returned to Bangkok, that he immediately took an opportunity to stage another "coup d'etat" restoring himself as absolute ruler and dictator of Thailand.

In the aftermath of Sarit's second coup, political parties were once more banned, the National Assembly was dissolved, and a martial law was immediately proclaimed. In addition, there was a sweeping arrest of major political oppositions, newspaper editors and intellectuals. The two influential Isan representatives in the cabinet, Tim Phuripat and Ari Tantiyawichakun (MP from Korat) were forced to

¹Jay Taylor, China and Southeast Asia: Peking's Relations with Revolutionary Movements (N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 271.

resign because of their occasional outspoken opposition to some government policies. Thep Chotinuchit (MP - Srisaket) and Klaew Noraphat (MP - Khon-khaen), and the other two Isan deputies were also arrested and imprisoned by Sarit on charges of conspiracy and secessionist agitators.¹ As a result of Sarit's anti-Communist policies, the CPT had to go underground, shifting its strategy from "urbania" to "ruralia". Thus, the emphasis of the CPT efforts in Thailand seemingly shifted from attempting to indoctrinate and acquire support from urban workers, students and intellectuals to seeking support from the peasantry and poverty-stricken masses of the people residing in remote and rural areas.

B) Insurgency in the Northeast and the Participatory Role of Communist Neighboring States

The guerrilla fights the war of the flea. The flea bites, hops, and bites again, nimbly avoiding the foot that would crush him. He does not want to kill his enemy at a blow, but to bleed and to feed on him, to plague and bedevil him, to keep him from resting and to destroy his nerve and his morale ... time is required to breed more fleas. What starts as a local infestation must become an epidemic, as one by one the areas of resistance link up, like spreading ink spots on a blotter.²

¹Darling, "Political Parties ...," op.cit., p. 238.

²Lt.Col. Frederick Wilkins, "Guerrilla Warfare," in Mark Osanka, ed., Modern Guerrilla Warfare : Fighting Communist Guerrilla Movements, 1941-1961 (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1962), p. 3.

Prior to discussing the insurgency and the extent of 'guerrilla warfare' in the Northeast of Thailand, it is desirable to consider the general characteristics, principles and levels of guerrilla insurgency collected from the works of Mao Tse-tung and General Vo Nguyen Giap is as follows:

Phase I - Latent and Incipient Subversion: ranges from circumstances in which subversive activities is a potential threat to the period when such activities occur with frequency in an organized pattern.

Phase II - Organized Guerrilla Warfare: the period in which the subversive movement has gained sufficient local or external support so that it is able to initiate organized guerrilla warfare or related forms of violence against the established authority.

Phase III - War of movement: occurs when the insurgency becomes primarily a war of movement between the organized forces of the insurgent and those of the established authority.¹

The transition from one phase to the next does not preclude the activities of the prior phases. A comparison has been made of the three phases of insurgency to the layers of a cake: the first layer is never removed, the second

¹Jerry A. Orr, Proposed Criteria for Indicators of Incipient Insurgency, (Research Analysis Corporation, Field Office, Thailand, Field Paper no. 19, September 1967), pp. 7-8.

layer is added to it, and the third layer is added to it if necessary."¹ This certainly is the situation in Vietnam, and to a much lesser degree of intensity, that of the first two phrases in Thailand.²

In sum, the currently accepted doctrine about insurgency is that popular attitudes and popular support play the decisive role; but their roles are subsidiary and permissive. Concerning to the doctrine, Wolf remarked that the primary activating force behind the insurgency lay in popular likes and dislikes, the erosion of mass support for established institutions, and the gaining of popular support and commitment by the insurgency.³

In Mao's picturesque phrase, guerrillas need popular sympathies as fish need water, and this thought dominates all of Mao's work on revolutionary warfare. "Because 'guerrilla warfare' basically derives from the masses and is supported by them it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation."⁴

¹George Tanham, War Without Guns (N.Y.: Frederick A. Praegers, 1967), p. 12.

²Fall, op. cit., pp. 368-369.

³Charles Wolf, Jr., "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: New Myths and Old Realities," Yale Review 56:2 (December 1966), p. 225.

⁴See "Mao's Primer on Guerrilla Warfare," New York Times Magazine, June 4, 1961, p. 13; quoted in Chalmers Johnson, "Civilian Loyalties and Guerrilla Conflict," World Politics 14:4 (July 1962), p. 655; Mao Tse-tung, "Be Concerned with the Well-Being of the Masses," Selected Works, vol. I (N.Y.: International Publishers, 1954), p. 147.

While the world was more or less "frozen" by the American presence and commitment to the status quo, two other dimensions of the security environment of the new states were not stable: regional conflicts and domestic conditions of law and order. According to Wilcox, security, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder, whose experience and vision dictate which field he views and how far he can see. For most Asian governments, the strategic balance in Asia was far less crucial than their tenuous grasp on local levers of influence or their festering disputes with their neighbors. Security, therefore, continues to be the first priority of Asian governments and witnesses enhanced challenges in domestic, regional, and global dimensions.¹

Thailand's insurgency varies in intensity and scope according to its geographical area. In a statement by General Saiyud Kerdpol, Director of the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), the Northeast constitutes the greatest threat to the Bangkok regime.² An article based upon a stolen North Vietnamese military document which recently appeared in the Bangkok Post, revealed the general North Vietnamese strategy towards Thailand. One important

¹Wayne Wilcox, "The Prospective Politics of Insecurity and Strategic Asymmetry in Asia," International Journal 24 (1968-1969), pp. 13-34.

²David Jenkins, "Changing Tune," FEER 79:11 (March 19, 1973), p. 26.

part of the strategy is to increase the pressure and level of conflict in Northeast Thailand in order to establish a liberated area 50-100 kilometres deep along the Mekong River, particularly in the vicinity of Vientiane, which can become a protectorate of both the unified Vietnamese nation and Laos.¹

The Northeast or Isan region first gained national political significance during World War II through the Free Thai Movement. It was in the Northeast that the Free Thai Movement, led by Pridi, set up its original stronghold, gathered intelligence and carried on underground activities to help the Allies and thwart the Japanese war efforts in Southeast Asia. Following the war, the Movement, heavily staffed with Isan representatives, received such overwhelming popular support that it could put strong pressure on the military factions led by Phibun. During the postwar years Premier Pridi's ambitions to make Thailand a leader and a significant force in the revival of nationalism and anti-colonialism in Southeast Asia had resulted in making the Northeast a sanctuary for the pro-Vietminh group and anti-French rebels; an activity which had to be terminated following Phibun's takeover of power in 1948.²

¹Bangkok Post, March 30, 1975; also Stephen Alpern, "Insurgency in Northeast Thailand: A New Cause for Alarm," Asian Survey 15:8 (August 1975), p. 685.

²For details, see Hanna, "Thailand's Strategic Northeast: Defense and Development," op. cit.; Also see "Northeast Thailand, Symposium," op. cit., pp. 349-378.

Mao's conquest of mainland China in October, 1949, caused great concern to the Thai leaders, whose three million overseas Chinese proved to be an important economic force of the country. Accordingly, Phibun immediately warned the Chinese communities in Thailand not to engage in political activities on behalf of either side in the Chinese war. The Chinese, as Phibun reminded them, should remember that they were living in Thailand as guests, and that the Government would tolerate no violation of the law. In fact, Phibun was following a "wait and see" policy, and he did not want the local Chinese to embarrass his Government with respect to either the Peking or the Taiwan regimes, until he had had time to assess the new international situation and decide what position Thailand should take. However, Phibun's policy received a severe jolt in June, 1950, when Radio Peking broadcast a sharp attack against his Government for oppressing the local Chinese and demanded assurances that Thai authorities would stop this policy. This alarmed so Phibun that he began to alter his policy toward Communist China. Since, at about the same time, the U.S. began to re-evaluate its policy in the Far East, following the Communist victory of China, it is likely that Phibun was encouraged into thinking that an anti-Communist policy would have the support of the U.S.¹

¹Nuechterlein, Thailand and the Struggle..., op. cit., p. 102.

The years 1952-1955 witnessed growing corruption and political intrigue in Thailand, coupled with strongly repressive measures on the part of the police against anyone suspected of leftist sympathies. With public opinion muted, with bribery of a complaint National Assembly by the Government on a large scale, and with a world situation that made it convenient for the regime to use the threat of Communism to silence all opposition, politics in Thailand steadily deteriorated.¹

As for the role of the CPT during this period, it was in effect driven underground again, since Phibun was able to consolidate his power vis-à-vis the Assembly after 1952. It could, nevertheless, manage to hold its "Second Congress" despite being subject to Phibun's strong anti-Communist law. Under a new Central Committee, it was reported that "it had focused its prolytizing in the Northeast where, according to some Thai sources today, it immediately began laying the organizational groundwork for its subsequent guerrilla campaign and sending promising neophytes for training to China, Laos and North Vietnam."²

The Role of Peking in the Thai Revolutionary Movement

In 1949 the Chinese Communists openly proclaimed their aim of promoting armed revolts throughout the areas

¹Ibid., p. 64.

²van der Kroef, "Guerrilla Communism...", op. cit., p. 109.

of South and Southeast Asia, and, after extending their rule to China's southern border, they proceeded to give large scale assistance to the Vietminh. They showed relatively little concern about their relations with the existing non-Communist governments in these areas and seemed preoccupied with encouraging immediate Communist insurrections.¹

For the Chinese Communists, the underdeveloped world is a land of tremendous opportunity. It is a world in flux, where old political orders and alliances are crumbling and new ones are being formed: where new friends can be won, old balances of power upset, and powerful new alliances built. It appears that China will seek to initiate a revolution only if a Government is particularly hostile to China; or if the regime is particularly vulnerable and its revolutionary opposition strong; or if the country is of great strategic importance; or, more likely if some combination of these three factors is present.²

In the case of Thailand which is strategically important to the security of mainland China, its close alliance with the U.S. proved to be a great annoyance to the Chinese regime. Consequently, the Chinese revolutionary campaign; especially among the overseas Chinese community

¹A. Doak Barnett, Communist China and Asia (N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 291.

²Peter Van Ness, "Accent on Underdevelopment," FEER 47:8 (February 25, 1965), pp. 330-337.

in Thailand, emerged immediately after Mao's victory in October 1949. In a Peking Radio Broadcast entitled "The Thai Communist Manifesto", on November 26, 1950, the Chinese regime called for the creation of a "national democratic common front"; denounced the Phibun regime as "an instrument of American imperialism"; and condemned Thailand for sending troops to fight in the Korean War.¹

Peking's relations with the Thai overseas Chinese were carried on directly by the participation of Thai Chinese representatives on the "Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission" and as "overseas" delegates to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Aside from establishing relations through the Chinese Communist Party agents in Bangkok, indirect contacts were believed to be maintained by Radio Peking. Its broadcasts periodically attacked the Thai Government and charged it with being responsible for crimes against the Chinese community, crimes which were usually ascribed to the evil influence of American imperialism.² Regardless of such examples of sporadic outrage, most of the protests from Peking were of the pro forma variety.³ The Thai Government's activities during this period, for example, entering the Korean War with the United Nations

¹Paul R. Shirk, "Thai-Soviet Relations," Asian Survey 9:9 (September 1969), p. 690.

²People's China 3:6 (March 16, 1951), p. 28.

³Lovelace, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

and the U.S., negotiating military and economic agreements with the U.S., and Phibun's repressive measures against the overseas Chinese, - were adduced as evidence confirming the sell-out to imperialism.¹

Peking's reaction to the new shift of Thai foreign policy and closer relations with the West was, of course, unfriendly and even hostile on some occasions. The Phibun Government was variously condemned as "criminal", "fascist", and a "lackey of Wall Street".² One article in the Chinese press even labelled Phibun "the Franco of the East" and described Thailand as "under the firm control of many American advisers."³ In addition, the Thai Government was accused of having "thrown (Chinese) into Bangkok prison and brutally beaten them."⁴ It was obvious that Peking at that time was purposefully attempting to foment additional suppression of the Chinese minority by the Thai authorities hoping thereby to create new grievances favorable for the spread of Communism.⁵

¹New York Times, January 22 & 29, 1950.

²NCNA (New China News Agency), Peking, November 21, 1950; also SCMP (Survey of China Mainland Press), American Consulate General, Hong Kong, no. 15, November 22, 1950, p. 13.

³SCMP, no. 27, December 10-11, 1950, p. 5; NCNA, December 9, 1950.

⁴New York Times, January 22, 1950; NCNA, November 21, 1950; SCMP, no. 15, November 22-23, 1950.

⁵Darling, Thailand: New Challenges..., op. cit., p. 22.

Peking's growing antagonism and hostility towards Thailand was no doubt partially responsible for an incident in 1953 which frightened the Phibun Government. In January 1953, the Chinese Government announced the establishment of a "Thai Autonomous People's Government" at Sipsongpanna in southern Yunnan Province.¹ The area has long been the former homeland of the Thai people and is still inhabited by approximately 200,000 Thai tribesmen. Although this was primarily a Chinese internal administrative move aimed at gaining better control over national minorities, the Thai viewed it as a threat. They feared that the Chinese were trying to stir up a Communist-led "Pan-Thai" movement in Northeast Thailand.²

A few days after the signing of the Geneva Conference on Indochina in July, 1954, another event which greatly concerned the Thai leaders was the emergence from obscurity in China of the former Premier Pridi who still commanded the great respect and loyalty of the majority of Thai intellectuals and Assemblymen. In an article published in the People's Daily, Jen-minh Jih-pao, and subsequently broadcast by Radio Peking, Premier Pridi was quoted as saying that the relations between Thailand, Vietnam and China

¹Edwin F. Stanton, "Spotlight on Thailand," Foreign Affairs, October 1954, pp. 77-79.

²Lovelace, op. cit., p. 30; Edwin Stanton, "Communist Pressures in Thailand," Current History 38: 22 (February 1960), p. 104.

should be based upon the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. In advocating the overthrow of American influence and the military dictatorship in Thailand, Premier Pridi asserted that:

... the Thai People must wage struggle against American imperialism, which is holding Thailand in its grip, and the reactionary government in Thailand, which is subservient to American imperialism. Only by doing so will they be able to do away with forces that place obstacles in the way of Thailand's progress towards peace, independence and sovereignty.¹

According to Lovelace, Pridi's re-appearance signaled the start of a four-year campaign in which the Chinese attempted to regain an influence in Thai domestic politics.² In fact, Pridi, who was referred to as the public leader of Thailand by Radio Peking, has not made any statement publicly or any broadcasts himself; nor does he live anywhere near Peking. While in China until he decided to move to Paris in the late 1960's, Pridi lived in modest comfort. As Kruger notes:

Whatever his political interest, he works at translation or at a philosophical work in which he seeks to interpret Buddhism in the context of the modern world ... Siamese refugees, communist or non-communist, come to him, the Mentor of old, and he tells them to take heart. One day the tragedy of Ananda will no longer send its repercussions into

¹People's Daily, July 29, 1954; Nai Pridi Panomyong, "The Geneva Conference and the Future of Thailand," NCNA, Peking, July 29, 1954; SCMP, no. 859, July 30, 1954, p. 16.

²Lovelace, op. cit., p. 31.

the world of power politics; and all the restless ghosts which that event sent forth in torment, including Ananda's own, may end their wanderings.¹

Among young people in Thailand today, especially the products of the universities, there are great and growing frustrations at the lack of democratic opportunities and the suppression of political opposition by military regimes. Having equipped themselves with intellectual enlightenment, they became alienated with government maladministration and abuse of power and corruptions. A series of military coups which made Thailand subservient to military dictatorship for decades proved to be a political disaster and an obstacle to future constitutional and economic development for Thailand. Among them, "the name of Pridi still sounds like a clarion call to freedom and to social justice, despite ceaseless propaganda of his alleged Communism."²

By the beginning of 1954 the situation on the international front was also in flux. The Korean armistice brought an increase in Chinese prestige in Asia generally. In Southeast Asia, however, the war in Vietnam presented many parallels with Korea. Widespread concern for a

¹Kruger, op. cit., p. 243.

²Ibid., p. 242. A similar situation could very well be applied to the post-October 1973 politics in which a number of intellectuals, professors and students alike, as well as lawyers and newspaper-men, became impressed with Dr. Pridi's ideas of democratic development and egalitarian reforms. Through reading his books, which suddenly became best-sellers, this new groups of intellectuals established themselves as Pridi's disciples, although most of them had never met him in person.

settlement of Indochina conflict, coupled with a desire to conclude some form of political settlement in Korea, provided a new opportunity for China to emerge as a Great Power in the international scene.¹

By the spring of 1955, it was clear that a thaw was taking place in the Cold War and that Moscow and Peking were prepared to relax their pressure on Asia in favor of a policy of "Peaceful Co-existence". The Bandung Conference in Indonesia was, therefore scheduled to be held in April 1955. It was clearly an effort by the neutral nations of Asia to counter the so-called neo-colonialist aspects of the SEATO and the Baghdad Pacts, and to offer an alternative to military alliances in maintaining peace in Asia.²

After some hesitation, Thailand decided to send Prince Wan Waithayakorn, the then Foreign Minister, to attend the Conference. During his informal discussion with the Chinese Foreign Minister, Chou En-lai, Prince Wan was reassured by Chou that China had no aggressive designs on Thailand, that the Autonomous Thai Government in Yunnan had no significant meaning outside China, that Pridi was not

¹David A. Wilson, "China, Thailand, and the Spirit of Bandung," Part I, The China Quarterly 30 (April-June 1967), p. 160.

²Brimmell, op. cit., p. 286; see also Russell H. Field, Southeast Asia in the United States Policy (N.Y.: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1963), pp. 41-48; Frank N. Trager, "The Communist Challenge in Southeast Asia," in William Henderson, ed., Southeast Asia: Problems of United States Policy (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1963), Chapter 6, especially pp. 139-148.

engaged in subversive activities against Thailand, and that China was willing to negotiate the question of citizenship for the Chinese minority in Thailand along the lines of the agreement previously concluded with Indonesia.¹

Following the Bandung Conference, although the Thai leaders were still skeptical of Chinese intentions and also aware that Bandung did not reduce the long-term danger that Chinese power posed for its neighbors to the South, the Conference and the Ministers' direct communications did have the psychological effect of making that danger seemed less imminent. Hence, in late May Prince Wan significantly stated that:

The Thai Government is not blind. It realized that the Peiping regime has de facto control over the majority of the Chinese people. But being a small nation, Thailand has to wait for the United Nations to admit Communist China before extending recognition.²

With a reduction in world tensions, the Thai Government increasingly found itself in a difficult position to justify the repressive measures that had been in effect for the past several years against dissident political groups and the overseas Chinese communities. Domestically and internationally, the Thai Government found itself being criticized for having aligned the nation so closely with the Western camp.

¹Fifield, The Diplomacy of..., op. cit., p. 264.

²New York Times, June 3, 1956.

Hence, Phibun was forced to embark on a more liberal policy, both domestically and abroad. At home, the Government had to lift some restrictions on the activities of political opponents and leftist groups. During the period between 1955 and 1956, a number of leftist parties were therefore formed, whose programs included anti-Americanism, neutralism, recognition of Communist China, major domestic reforms and economic development of the rural areas of Thailand, particularly the Northeast provinces where these parties had their strongest appeals. Just before the February 1957 elections, the four Socialist parties joined together to form the Socialist Unity Front.¹ Although the Socialist label is generally misleading since it concentrated mostly on anti-Westernism, the Socialist Unity Front made much propaganda during the election campaign. During this period, the spokesman for the Front advocated Pridi's return from exile in China, and it was apparent that these parties would be the nucleus of a popular leftist appeal concentrated among the Isan politicians and the former Free Thai leaders.

Obviously, the programs espoused by the Socialist Front was identical, both with the programs proposed by the CPT and also with the policy objectives of Peking. This similarity of views, of course, does not prove that there

¹Brimmell, op. cit., p. 350; Nuechterlein, op. cit., p. 129.

was any coordination of strategy. Most of the leaders in organizations associated with the Front were apparently non-Marxist and were united only in their opposition to the Government and in support of various social and political reforms that at least on the verbal level ranged from Fabian to "clean government".¹

Among the leftist parties which joined together to form the Socialist Front, some were identified with former Premier Pridi and his Socialist economic development and egalitarian course, but others were independent of the exiled Premier, though they shared his views and grievances, his alienation from the corrupted military dictatorship and his anti-governmental attitudes as a whole. "Unlike other political organizations in Thailand," maintained Taylor, "the Socialist organizations and various fronts were not based on personal and factional ties but actually had an ideological foundation, anti-Western nationalism."²

Undoubtedly, the Chinese Communist regime and its CPT ally were pleased with the development of this national democratic front, which, in the Maoist model, took U.S. imperialism as its principal enemy. The Peking strategy was to promote the infiltration of the front by Communist

¹Wilson, "China, Thailand, and the...", Part II, op. cit., 97-101; George Modelski, SEATO: Six Studies (Melbourne: F.W. Chesttirsty Ltd., 1962), pp. 124-127.

²Taylor, op. cit., p. 271.

party members and eventually establish "Communist hegemony" over the movement. But at some point disagreement began as to whether or not concurrent preparation for armed struggle should proceed.¹

Throughout the period from 1955 to 1958, Peking continued to emphasize two primary themes in its Thai-directed propaganda: the disadvantages of Thailand's cooperation with American imperialism; and the potential benefits of friendly relations with the Peking regime. This new anti-imperialist campaign was basically nationalistic and non-revolutionary: anti-Americanism rather than Marxism was the dominant theme.² The objective of China's new approach was the creation of a respectable pro-Chinese opposition among Thailand's newly formed minority parties. On January 25, 1957, even still the outlawed, the CPT jumped on the nationalist bandwagon, delivering a message in a rare "New Year's Day" broadcast by Peking Radio, which called for the "establishment of a broad national front - a front to consist of every nationalist class, and every nationalist party - in order to triumph over the incursion of American imperialism."³

Amidst this relatively friendly atmosphere between

¹Ibid.

²Lovelace, op. cit., p. 32.

³Wilson, "China, Thailand and the...", op. cit., p. 71.

China and Thailand as a result of the "Spirit of Bandung", Premier Pridi once again made the headlines which apparently underscored the short-lived détente. In an interview with a Ta Kung Pao (Hong Kong) correspondent in June, 1957, Pridi declared that he supported the demand of the patriotic people of Thailand for neutrality and against participation in any bloc, but the Thai Government could still establish normal relations with China, although Thailand was now a member nation of SEATO."¹

Yet after 1958, unlike the Soviet Union, Communist China shifted its foreign policy from the friendly "Spirit of Bandung" back to revolutionary Marxist militancy previously displayed. It indeed intensified the Communist revolutionaru threat to the area and constituted also to the ideological split between the two Communist powers. The Peking regime provided increasing support to North Vietnam and urged the use of revolutionary guerrilla warfare in the effort to seize South Vietnam. Obviously the Communist regime in Peking had made it cleat that it was unhappy with Sarit's anti-Communist policy as well as his close cooperation with the U.S. and the Thai intervention in Laotian politics. A summary of the new Chinese attitudes is provided by the following paragraph from a Radio Peking broadcast of September 30, 1959:

¹Ta Kung Pao (Hong Kong), June 8, 1957.

Since the coup d'etat last year, the Sarit Thanarat ruling clique has been following a line devised by the U.S. imperialists: stepping up war preparation on one hand and suppressing the nationalist and progressive elements who advocate peace, neutrality, democracy and national independence on the other.¹

Hence, by late 1950's, the end of the first decade of periodical contacts between Communist China and Thailand, there had been both ups and downs, sometimes unofficial, sometimes semi-official, sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile and overt verbal attacks - in this strange love-hate relationship. Any prospects for improved future relations seemed dim at that time. In fact, formal relations and diplomatic ties between Communist China and Thailand were not to be established until a decade and a half later. During that time, the Chinese attitude towards future relations with Thailand was clearly indicated in an ominous note to the concluding lines of a 1959 Jen-minh Jih-pao editorial:

If the Thailand authorities persist in this wrong path by acting contrary to the interests of peace and the independence of their own people, serving as accomplices of U.S. imperialism and being hostile to the Indochinese and Asian peoples, they will eventually stand convicted before history.²

From the foregoing summary, it is justified to conclude that Communism has played a rather unusual role in

¹NCNA, Peking in English to Asia, October 1, 1959, in Foreign Radio Broadcasts, Daily Report, October 2, 1959.

²NCNA, Peking, May 30, 1959; SCMP, no. 2026, June 3, 1959, p. 50. Also see Coral Bell, "Security in Asia: Re-appraisals after Vietnam," International Journal 24 (1968-1969), pp. 1-12.

the developmental process of Thai politics. Aside from having been a minor political force characterized by its lack of influence and membership, Communist activities have always been associated with non-Thai ethnic groups. For this reason, it has frequently been used as a pretext for the oppression of the economically powerful Chinese community and as a scapegoat for the failures of incumbent regimes. In Lovelace's estimation,

Anticommunism has served Thai governments well, both as an excuse for the suppression of internal opposition and as insurance of external aid. One might almost say, therefore, that prior to 1962, the Thai communist movement was more of an asset than a threat to the central government.¹

C) Guerrilla Warfare and Political Unrest in the Northeast

The post-1957 history of Thai Communist movement and activities of other radical and anti-government groups is intimately connected with the "Isan" Northeast region of Thailand. In spite of the fact that, prior to the Laotian crisis of 1958-1959, Communism was not considered a serious internal threat to the Northeast and security of the country as a whole, the situation has been steadily changing. By the end of 1957, a small increase of anti-government violence, represented by political assassinations and clashes between rebellious elements and authorities, had occurred in this

¹Lovelace, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

strategic Northeast region bordering Laos and Cambodia. It is well to consider that, although this development coincided with the rise to prominence of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, the Northeast had been the setting for discontent and anti-government activities long before Sarit came to power. Yet it may be more than coincidental that once the Sarit regime stepped up its hunt for Communist sympathizers in the Northeast in 1960, certain anti-government groups there forged closer relations with Communist forces in Laos than ever before, and the first reports were heard of Thai Communist organizational activity.¹

Traditionally, Northeast Thailand has been a source of difficulty for the Central Government at least as far back as the early part of the 19th century and probably even before. Michael Moerman goes so far to state that "it is probable that Northeast Thailand's contributions to the nation as a whole have been people and trouble."²

In regard to the historical aspect of the region, rebellions in the Northeast against the Central Government are not new. Having been incorporated into the city-states of Siam until the early part of the 19th century, the Isan region of Thailand was very loosely administered and integrated into a system of tributary states with lower kings

¹Melvin Gurtov, China and Southeast Asia..., op. cit., p. 8.

²Michael Moerman, "Northeast Thailand", Symposium, op. cit., p. 7.

and higher kings, in which both were dominated by Bangkok, until the French colonial government took over Indochinese states. Even in the modern period of the national state of Thailand, relations were not easy, and one of the consistent political difficulties has been the integration of political life in the Northeast into the national political life. A kind of integration does exist; but it has always been rough and filled with conflict. In sum, the Northeast is said to have possessed a unique identity, as well as special characteristics such as its relative economic poverty, its geographical isolation from the rest of the country, its ethnic distinctiveness, its strategic location and vulnerability to hostile penetration and its history of political dissidence and parliamentary opposition to the Central Government.

On the whole, Wilson suggests, the other regions of Thailand have been integrated in a much more pacific and effective way, even though regional differences have been recognized. For many not altogether clear reasons, the Northeast and political leadership in the Northeast have been a source of conflict. As Wilson states:

In elections, for example, in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's, when there was an elected parliament, a predominant number of members from the Northeast have been opposition members, sometimes to the left - sometimes to the right, but always opposition. Recently, we have heard, of course, about terrorism, dissidence, insurgency, etc., in the Northeast. This is part of a long pattern of trouble in this area of the country; we must not think that the trouble there now is innovated purely

by people from the outside. There may be a certain amount of encouragement and support from outside¹ but unfortunately, there is some basis for it too.

The present phase of Communist insurgency in the Northeast is believed to have begun in 1960, two years before the founding of the Communist radio station calling itself "The Voice of the People of Thailand" (VOPT). Prior to the Laotian crisis of 1959, Communism was not considered a serious source of political instability to the nation and an internal threat to the Northeast, in spite of the fact that a majority of Isan MP's had always been counted among the ranks of opposition. As has been indicated in the previous chapters, most Isan politicians have been considered radical, with some branded as Communists, by the conservative military government in Bangkok, due to the Central Government's policy of "benign neglect."²

The issue of separatism, which has been a matter of concern to Thai governments down to the present, seems to have been based on Bangkok's belief that Northeastern dissidents, because of their presumed ethnic similarity to the Lao, and their open criticism and opposition to the Central Government in Bangkok, hoped and even planned with the Vietminh and later with the Pathet Lao leaders to realize the

¹Wilson, "Thailand: The Northeast," Group Discussion, op. cit., p. 15.

²David A. Wilson, "Bangkok's Dim View to the East," Asian Survey 1:4 (June 1961), p. 13; Wilson, "Northeast Thailand," Symposium, op. cit., p. 349.

goal of union with Laos and the Communist Vietminh state.¹ For example, during the administration of Sarit, (1958-1963), he obviously convinced that the North Vietnamese and the Chinese intended to foment insurrection in the economically backward Northeast region of Thailand as part of a general Communist strategy for subjugating the Southeast Asia mainland.²

The suspicions of the Bangkok regime about a close relationship between the secessionist movement, headed by former Isan MP's and dissident leaders, and a Communist invasion plan to incorporate the Northeast region with the Indochinese Communist states, was heightened in mid-1961. One of the largest dissident groups which emerged in 1961 with a tinge of Marxism, was the so-called "Solidarity Movement", headed by Krong Chandawong. Krong, a former Assembly member from the Northeast, was a follower of Tiang Sirikhan who was executed by the order of Police General Phao in 1952 because of his strong support for parliamentary democracy, equal development for the Northeast region and outright opposition to military rule. After Sarit successfully established an absolute military dictatorship

¹On the early history of organized opposition to the Thai Government, see Pierre Fistié, "Minorités ethniques, opposition et subversion en Thaïlande," Politique Étrangère 32:3 (1967), pp. 295-324. Fistié's account seems to err in attributing separatist aims to the Free Thai and later anti-government movements in the Northeast.

²Poole, op. cit., p. 73.

in late 1958, Krong was arrested, along with other dissident Isan MP's, the so-called left-wing radical groups in the Assembly.¹

According to Tanham, "Krong's political faith is not entirely clear, but he was certainly organizing against the government." As a result, he and some 100 of his followers were arrested, and in May, 1961, Krong was executed by special order under article 17 of Sarit's interim constitution.² As a matter of fact, Sarit's Government allegations that Krong and his followers, approximately 4,000 of them cooperated with Laotian and Vietnamese Communist rebels to build up a Thai Exile's Association³ have never been proven in regular court procedures. Nevertheless, it was reported that some Thai-Lao as well as Vietnamese of the Northeast had served with the Pathet Lao during the period between 1959-1962 power struggle.⁴ However Gurtov contended that:

... it is no means clear that these dissident Thai in fact wanted to amalgamate the northeast with

¹Robert Shaplen, "Letter from Bangkok," The New Yorker, March 18, 1967, p. 146.

²Tanham, Trial in Thailand, op. cit., p. 34.

³Robert Karr McCabe, Storm Over Asia: China and Southeast Asia, Trust and Response (N.Y.: The New American Library, 1967), p. 105.

⁴George Modelski, "The Viet Minh Complex," in Cyril Black and Thomas Thornton, eds., Communism and Revolution: The Strategic Uses of Political Violence (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 199-200.

Laos, though they may well have wanted greater autonomy from central Thailand. Nor is it clear that they had any connection with the CPT or were meant to return to Thailand to continue their insurgent activity after service in Laos. To judge from circumstances at that time, the Pathet Lao and their North Vietnamese backers were primarily interested in gaining recruits for the war in Laos.¹

By early 1960's there is no doubt that Communist activities had increased or at any rate had come more out into the open since 1961, when the first large-scale round-up of Communist suspects took place in the Northeast. Following the arrests of Krong and his "Solidarity Movement" followers in May 1961, the police were still seeking another hundred more "plotters" three months later, since most of them had fled to the hills and formed anti-government bands which later joined in the Communist-led insurgency movement. According to the Government's account, disclosed by General Prapas Charusathien, the then Minister of the Interior, "those arrested were spreading Communist, or at least anti-government, propaganda in the villages, training picked men for guerrilla warfare and creating disturbances in association with the Pathet Lao in order to prepare the Northeast for a Communist "take-over". The plotters, said Prapas, "spoke of getting Russian and Chinese aid to develop the Northeast. They promised the villagers they would set up schools, give free schooling and provide Soviet and Chinese

¹Gurtov, China and Southeast Asia..., op. cit., pp. 9-10.

tractors for collective farms."¹

At the end of the month, another incident took place which had a further, powerful influence on the growing sense of regionalism among the Isan populace. It was the arrest of Fong Sitthitham, a conservative Isan politician, a former Assistant Minister of Education and a representative from the Northeast. As had been expected, Fong was charged by Sarit's Government with plotting a secessionist campaign and attempting to convince the Northerners to consider themselves as Laotians and with trying to create a split between the Thai and Lao Governments.²

By the end of the year, an allegedly Communist document called "Prediction" was circulated, calling for the expulsion of the U.S. from Thailand and the overthrow of the Thai Government.³ In addition, the military Government in Bangkok persistently claimed that the Communists had stepped up their activities in the Northeast in recent months in accordance with Communist strategy practiced by the Vietminh and Pathet Lao leaders. Clandestine Communist organizations within Thailand, like the "National Liberation League", were believed to be much more active than ever before. Disturbing reports that China had been recently

¹Siam Nikorn, (Bangkok), in Thai, May 29, 1961.

²Daniel Wolfstone, "The Siamese Situation," Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER) 39:5 (January 31, 1963), p. 204.

³Tanham, Trial in Thailand, op. cit., p. 34.

buying up large amounts of Thai currency had reached Bangkok. Nevertheless, there is some doubt as to the accuracy of this report; it was not explained why China was buying Thai currency in Hong Kong when any amount could be purchased through her agents in Thailand itself.¹ This is but one example of rumors presumably circulated by Government sources, hoping to spread fear and insecurity among the people, so that the ruling juntas would be able to justify its repressive and unconstitutional rule.

By the summer of 1962, Thai leaders were expressing difficulty in getting talks started with Hanoi about extending the repatriation of the Vietnamese refugees, and the security situation in Thailand's immediate area still seemed to be deteriorating. Although Thailand reluctantly agreed to sign the Geneva Agreement of 1962 on Laos, Sarit and the generals were very pessimistic about the future situation in Laos and especially in the Thai Northeast. Sarit himself reportedly declared that a neutral country must be as "strong and capable of helping itself as Switzerland is," but that Laos "cannot stand on its own feet."²

Amidst the diplomatic and international pressures, Thai domestic politics was marked by additional arrests of

¹Paul Sitthi Amnuai and Gopinath Pillai, "Constitutional Paradox," FEER 47:5 (February 1965), pp. 217-218.

²Sapada Sarn (Bangkok), October 1, 1960.

95 Communist suspects. Most of them were from the poverty-stricken Isan provinces of Nakorn Phanom and Sakol Nakorn, bordering on Laos but divided from it by the Mekong River. According to police reports, some of the arrested Northeasterners had received armed training in the Pathet Lao-held area around Mahakxay, just across the border. "The plotters wanted to establish a beach-head at Nakorn Phanom," declared Police Major General Pote Pekanand, returning from Northeast operations on December 18, 1961. "Villagers in various parts of the province were recruited by persons sent by the Pathet Lao."¹ Also more than a hundred weapons, including carbines, Stens and other submachine guns, were reportedly seized in the raids.²

With respect to the role of Thailand in Laotian affairs and the alleged support the Pathet Lao gave to the Northeast dissidents, Sarit, in the interview with Far Eastern Economic Review's correspondent, accused the Pathet Lao of engaging in infiltration and subversion in Thailand Northeast. Upon answering the question whether he favored partition as a solution to the Laos problem, Sarit denied the allegation but indicating that "non-Communist nations should get together and act firmly together to stem communist

¹Siam Rath, (Bangkok), in Thai, December 18, 1961.

²Insor, op. cit., p. 103.

expansion through diplomatic as well as other means."¹

In contrast to the Government's exaggeration of the level of Communist activities and its anti-Communist propaganda fanfare, the fact was that there had been a slight increase in armed incidents in the Northeast since the end of 1959 and only an extremely limited crypto-communist organizational activity. Moreover, the pre-1960 developments seem not to have involved Thailand's Communist Party, with only one exception. On October 1, 1959, the official Chinese Communist anniversary, there was a CPT congratulatory message to the CCP published by the NCNA. The message surprisingly contained no reference to revolutionary activity taking place or in preparation by the Thai Communists.²

Fistié has summed up the causes of insurgency in the Northeast, stemming as usual from various factors. Some incidents were believed to originate in autonomist plotting abetted by the Pathet Lao, while others may have been prompted by arrests and executions of villagers suspected of Communist affiliations by the Thai police.³ A good historical background to the problem of the Northeast has also been presented by Fistié, who maintained that "the problem there is not one primarily of local separatist desires, but of

¹Krisna Moorthy, "Interview: Sarit Thanarat - Prime Minister of Thailand," FEER 40:10 (June 6, 1963), p. 532.

²NCNA, no. 640, October 2, 1959, p. 41.

³Fistié, "Minorite Ethniques...", op. cit., pp. 309-310.

alienation from and despair of the Bangkok regime.¹ The significance of the Northeast region to the overall political development of Thailand is also acknowledged by Williams, who noted that the Northeast "was the center of the 'Free Thai Movement' during the war and was also the power-base of Pridi." It overwhelmingly supported opposition politicians during the period 1955-1958. "Its separatist desires should be seen as the result of its shabby treatment by the central government."²

As for the role of the CPT in the revival of the Northeast insurgency in the 1960's, it reportedly held a Third Meeting in 1961, at which it was decided that the people should "form their own groups to fight the enemy."³ Besides from the decision to form an armed group, it also agreed to abandon the "parliamentary road" of political struggle.⁴ This meeting, which may have been held in Peking, marked the first call ever of the CPT for armed struggle. The message was not made public at that time, and in fact the CPT was not formally to identify itself with armed

¹Pierre Fistié, "Thaïlande: Danger au Nord-Est," in France-Asie, no. 187 (Autumn), Tome XXI (I); also see Maxwell Brem, "Government Dissensions Undermine Prospects of Dealing with Rising Domestic Pressures," Times, October 15, 1971.

²Michael Williams, op. cit., p. 432.

³Radio Peking Broadcast, article on the Thai Communist Party, December 5, 1967, in Thai.

⁴NCNA (International Service Broadcast), September 4, 1966.

struggle in Thailand until sometime in 1966.¹

Due to an increasing level of Thai-U.S. escalation in Vietnam as well as an intensification of intervention in the Laotian conflicts by both allies, Peking's attention eventually shifted to Thailand. Prior to the early 1960's, Chinese commentaries dealing with worldwide revolutionary development often omitted Thailand from the list. In fact, Chinese Communist analysts during that time usually referred to Thailand almost exclusively in connection with the volatile Laotian situation.² Nevertheless, following the 1962 Rusk-Thanat Communiqué,³ Peking charged that Thailand was following a dangerous road because of its involvement with "intensified U.S. military adventures" in Southeast Asia. "This runs directly counter to the interest of the people of Thailand and is arousing growing dissatisfaction and resistance. The actions of the Thai reactionaries will boomerang sooner or later."³ For the first time, it was clearly suggested that the pro-Western alliance policy of the Thai Government would result in an internal uprising.⁴

As a result of the Chinese shift of attention back to the revolutionary movements in Thailand, it was speculated

¹Taylor, op. cit., p. 288.

²People's Daily, Peking, June 20, 1964, p. 4.

³NCNA, April 10, 1962.

⁴Taylor, op. cit., p. 289.

that preparations were, in coordination with North Vietnam, under way for the long and difficult task of creating a guerrilla structure in the Northeast and ultimately in other parts of Thailand. Armed struggle was, after all, the proper strategy for the revolution in Thailand, and the foundations of the support base must be laid and guerrilla bands trained before the overt insurgency could be launched.

Therefore, a Northeast Region Jungle Headquarters was reportedly established in 1962 to direct the planned insurgency, and a Farmers Liberation Association was also formed in the Northeast to support the jungle guerrillas.¹

A number of young Thais, mostly from the Northeast region, had been reportedly sent to schools in Vietnam, Laos and China via a well-developed underground railroad in Laos. As has been the established pattern, while a military training camp for Thai insurgents was set up at Hua Binh, fifty miles southeast of Hanoi, most of political leadership and cadres were generally trained in China. It was reported that the camp, staffed with both Thai and Vietnamese instructors, graduated 62 Thai recruits in 1962. By 1965, this number was said to increase to about 130 graduates.² Following their graduation, some of these professional

¹Tanham, op. cit., p. 34.

²Stanley Karnow, "Insurgency in Thailand: Looking Glass War," FEER 17 (1967), p. 23; J. L. S. Girling, "North-east Thailand; Tomorrow's Vietnam," op. cit., pp. 388-397; see also Testimony of former terrorists in Strait Times, (Singapore), September 14, 1968.

insurgents were provided practical experience with the Pathet Lao in Laos; in fact, some observers believe that the Thais were recruited merely to serve in Laos.¹

The strategy in recruiting villagers of the Northeast to become the Communist guerrillas or "forest fighters", as they call themselves was that the Communist cadres persuaded the Isan villagers that under present conditions they faced only hardships and sufferings. They were told that the Government was corrupt, oppressive and only interested in Bangkok. Often, the villagers were told that they themselves had to take the initiative to change the situation, and that if they joined the forest army, they would get money, training for a good job, land and tractors, schools and hospitals.² Moreover, Communist propaganda in the Northeast region had been achieved through the distribution of pamphlets demanding that the Bangkok regime "get rid of the foreign bandits, give the people freedom to form political parties, improve the standard of living of the laborers, preserve the national culture, improve the quality of junior officers, get rid of decadence and corruption and develop modern industries."³

Since its founding in 1962, the VOPT was reportedly

¹Tanham, Trial in Thailand, op. cit., p. 48.

²Girling, "Northeast Thailand," op. cit., p. 389.

³Victor Anant, "Siam: The Next Domino," New Statesman (April 29, 1966), p. 602.

operated by the members of the CPT living in exile in Communist China. It claimed that Chinese trained agents, some of them ethnic Thai, had launched a peddler's invasion of Northeast Thailand by infiltrating into small Thai settlements along the border with Laos, bringing gifts and propaganda, storing arms and acting as a vanguard for subsequent infiltrations by Communist Pathet Lao agents.¹

According to Lovelace, the year 1964 may be considered the major point of departure for serious and coordinated insurgent operations in Thailand.² In the Northeast provinces, the first outbreak of violence began to occur as village leaders were assassinated and robberies began to take place along the American-built "Friendship Highway", connecting Bangkok with Nongkhai province in the Northeast bordering the Laotian border. Although there were no overt signs of Chinese involvement in the newly activated guerrilla movement, Chinese press attention to Thailand generally increased during the course of the year.³ Actually, the first indication of renewed Chinese hostility towards Thailand appeared on October 1, 1964, when Radio

¹Justus . van der Kroef, "Thailand Between Two Millstones," Contemporary Review 209:1206 (July 1966), p. 20.

²Lovelace, op. cit., p. 46.

³Ibid., p. 47. The increasing level of violence, robberies and murders, may also have been caused by the worsening economic condition of the area and may have had no significant political meaning at all.

Peking broadcast a message of congratulations from the CPT to Communist China on its fifteenth anniversary. Despite having made it clear that the Thai Communists sided with the Chinese against the Russians in their ideological struggle, the message called for the overthrow of the royal Government by the combined force of a "patriotic, democratic united front" composed of "any groups of individuals that are against the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys..."¹

Slightly over a month after the publication of the CPT's message,² the Party's United Front appeal was said to have received its first direct response. On November 8, the VOPT publicly announced the formation of the "Thailand Independent Movement" (TIM), which immediately issued a manifesto rebroadcast on December 13, in Thai language by Peking Radio. One of the most interesting messages was the following: "Our dear fatherland has been transformed into a new type colony of the U.S. imperialists ... They have used Thai territory as a base for military aggression against neighboring countries."³ Peking's reproduction of the TIM manifesto represents the first overt indication of indirect

¹NCNA, Daily Bulletin, no. 2435, October 3, 1964, pp. 75-77; also Robert Shaplen, "Letter From Bangkok," op. cit., p. 147.

²Gurtov maintained that, even after the CPT's message, the Chinese leadership was still not specifically urging an armed struggle, perhaps reflecting Peking's hesitancy to support a rebellion. See Gurtov, op. cit., p. 12.

³New York Times, January 9, 1965; JMJP, December 14, 1964.

CCP support for a Thai insurgent organization. The document was reproduced without editorial comment, but the precedent was nonetheless important.¹

In addition to a notable increase in the effective level of China's media coverage of Thailand after mid-1964, in comparison to the prior period, there was an increasing level of pro-Peking propaganda broadcast by the VOPT, especially about the establishment of a number of Thai language schools in Peking and Canton, reportedly staffed by exiled CPT leaders.² Furthermore, it was claimed that by this time the Communists had begun a systematic program of infiltration and indoctrination of villages along the Mekong River. In Nakorn Phanom province, for example, many of the males of Ban Dong Luang village reportedly attended secret Communist meetings on an average of once a week.³

The increase in tensions in Indochina and the signs of a developing confrontation with the U.S. thus provided the tactical justification for Peking's promotion of armed struggle in Thailand and especially in the Northeast region. As pointed by Taylor, our analysis of the evolving bifurcation of the Chinese leadership in these years suggested that:

¹Lovelace, op. cit., p. 47.

²van der Kroef, "Thailand Between Two...", op. cit., p. 20.

³"Thailand: The Anatomy of a Domino," Newsweek, June 31, 1966, p. 36.

One group tended to look upon the policy toward Thailand as a tactic, whereas others, probably including Mao and Lin Piao, saw it primarily in terms of the ideal design for Southeast Asia ... In the case of Thailand, international events in 1965 as well as the policies of the Bangkok government probably justified the policy in the eyes of almost all opinions in Peking.¹

Early in January, 1965, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, reportedly told a French diplomat in Peking that "Thailand was being used as an American bridgehead in Southeast Asia and was on the list for communist revolution and liberation."² Perhaps what did trigger Chen Yi's bold declaration stemmed from the fact that the Thai Government had been involved rather extensively in the war in Vietnam, as well as in occasional sabotage right in the Chinese, southern border itself. Moreover, Chen Yi and other Chinese leaders must have known about the construction of American bases in the Thai soil, presumably right after the signing of Rusk-Thanat Communiqué at that time.

Meanwhile, the VOPT announced the formation of a group called the "Thai Patriotic Front" (TPF), which leveled its main attack on U.S.-Thai cooperation. On February 5, People's Daily also reported the formation of the TPF and its six-point program containing an anti-imperialist but little Marxist orientation. The demands called for national

¹Taylor, op. cit., p. 289.

²Washington Post, January 27, 1969; FEER, February 10, 1966, vol. 51, no. 6, p. 235.

independence and the elimination of all U.S. troops; granting democratic rights; overthrow of the fascist dictatorship; improvement of the people's livelihood, and development of education.¹

Chen Yi's declaration and the establishment of the TPF occurred notably before the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, which presumably began on February 7, 1965. Nevertheless, the build-up of air bases and strategic roads in Thailand had been going on for some time prior to the actual bombing of North Vietnam. It is not known when operating U.S. squadrons actually arrived in Thailand or when they began to take part in raids on the North. The New York Times first reported that U.S. jets were operating out of Khorat in central Thailand in April 9, 1965.²

As a result of U.S. bombing of North Vietnam and the dispatch of ground troops into South Vietnam, incidents of assassinations of local officials in Northeast Thailand began to increase. Warning and threats from Hanoi and Peking directed at the Thai Government also gained in intensity. Similarly, there was a marked increase in clandestine radio broadcasts beamed to Thailand from somewhere in Laos or North Vietnam. As for the infiltration in the backward Northeast by Communist agents, it was not clear whether

¹Peking Review 8:7, February 12, 1965, p. 25.

²C. L. Sulzberger reported that 45% of all bombing attacks against North Vietnam originated in Thailand, see New York Times, April 15, 1966.

they were sent by Communist China, the Vietminh, the Pathet Lao or by more than one of these.¹ In any case, Hinton noted that Thailand was clearly due to experience increased pressures aimed at undermining its present Government and foreign policy and at pushing it into neutralism.²

The intensity of the PRC indirect support for insurgent movements in Thailand and in the Northeast unquestionably increased during 1965. The Chinese media during the year produced five statements by the TIM and the TPF as well as a "fraternal message from the CPT to the CCP."³ Also, Peking's association with the several expatriate front organizations became much more explicit. Monkhon na Nakorn, who emerged as a leader of the TIM and later became an assistant permanent representative of the TPF, received a very warm welcome by the Chinese leaders when he arrived in Peking in mid-1965.⁴

Another indication which alarmed the Thai leader was a re-emergence from obscurity of former Premier Pridi, who

¹Harold C. Hinton, Communist China in World Politics (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), p. 423.

²Ibid.

³George Modelski, "Thailand and China: From Avoidance to Hostility," in A. M. Halpern, ed., Policies Toward China: Views from Six Continents (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 356.

⁴NCNA, Peking, June 25, 1965; SCMP, no. 3488, June 30, 1965, p. 33; McCabe, Storm Over Asia, op. cit., p. 107.

in early 1965 "surfaced" at Canton. There he visited the North Vietnamese consulate to offer support to the Vietnamese people in their struggle against the U.S.¹ Again, in October, Dr. Pridi attended the sixteenth anniversary celebration of the founding of the PRC and was received by Chairman Mao on the sixth.² In spite of having been described in the Chinese press as the "ex-Prince Regent of Thailand", Pridi certainly did not identify himself with the CPT nor with any of the front organizations in Peking. Gurtov observed that:

He (Pridi) has not been appointed to or accepted any official position in the hierarchy of either the party or the fronts; nor has he endorsed these groups ... But his credentials as a Communist and a partisan of the Chinese are extremely doubtful, and these have assuredly been factors in his aloofness from the Thai exile groups. One explanation for his quietness while in China, and perhaps also for his departure, may be that Pridi was regarded by the Chinese as ideologically questionable and by his Thai Communist counterparts as more neutralist than communist, anti-party, and lukewarm toward the rebellion.³

In spite of the fact that, throughout his two decades stay in China, from mid-1949 until his departure for Paris in the Spring of 1970, Dr. Pridi had associated his name with Communist causes on only rare occasions, mostly

¹NCNA, Canton, February 11, 1965; Daily New Release, (DNR), February 12, 1965.

²Peking Review 8:42 (October 15, 1965), p. 3.

³Gurtov, China and Southeast Asia, op. cit., p. 15.

endorsing the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence". Nonetheless, fears were aroused in Bangkok, especially among the ruling generals, that he might still be used as the focus of a Thai Government in exile and a center of intellectual loyalty back in Thailand.

With the establishment of the TIM and the TPF, the Thai insurgent movement began to acquire the "international connections" which Modelski has claimed as essential for the success of aspiring parties in internal war.¹ The fact that the Front merged with and became paramount over the TIM was merely a ruse to create the appearance of an ever-growing united front.² At about the same time, a number of lesser front organizations were also created, such as the Federation of Patriotic Workers, Thai Patriotic Youth Organization, and the Self-Liberated Farmer's and Planters' Association.³

In actuality, armed struggle in Thailand was continuing to rise, and it was August 7, 1965 that was cited by the TPF as the beginning of the armed struggle in Thailand.⁴ Again, the first "People's Armed Unit" under the

¹George Modelski, The International Relations of Internal War (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, Center for International Studies Research Monograph, no.4, May 1961).

²VOPT Broadcast, January 7, 1967.

³FEER 52:7 (May 19, 1966), p. 327.

⁴VOPT Broadcast, August 7, 1967.

CPT leadership, headed by Phayom Chulanond, was "publicly set up" on November 19, 1965 in the Northeast province of Ubon Ratchathani.¹ In December, guerrillas in the Northeast launched their first raid on a police station, following the alleged return of about 136 Thai recruits from military cadre training in Hua Binh earlier that year.²

Ethnic Groups of Communist Terrorists (CT's)
Throughout the Country

Ethnic Groups	Central	Northeast	North	South	CT's Supporters
Central Thais	61.9%	1.1%	16.7%		8.8%
Northern Thais			20.8%		1.5%
Southern Thais	9.5%		100%		41.7%
Thai Lao		66.3%	8.3%		27.9%

Source: Privileged material, acquired during the summer of 1975 in Thailand.

The guerrillas operated in the Northeast areas are believed to be led by a former sawmill manager by the name of Yod Pathisawat, who secretly ensconed himself in a Phu-phan Communist stronghold in a mountain range. Two or three militant bands were also believed to be operating in parts

¹Ibid., December 31, 1968.

²Ibid.

of Sakol Nakorn province, trying aggressively to spread fear and insecurity among the villagers by publicly executing government supporters and boasting of the Government's inability to protect them.¹ From the beginning of 1966, terrorism tripled and there were more than one hundred incidents in which over fifty officials, policemen and teachers were killed.² Also the Thai press has disclosed a statement by a Thai official, who claimed that the CT's were recruiting supplies of foodstuffs, weapons and ammunition by way of helicopter landings in the remote areas of the Northeast from Vietnam and Laotian agents.³

By mid-1965 then, the Thai Communists had met with some relative successes in their long struggle to strengthen the party organizations. They were also successful in forging the semblance of a "united front". Its level of activities and propaganda campaigns were more frequent than in the previous years, although not until August 1965 did the Communists themselves claim that their rebellion was indeed underway.⁴

By the beginning of 1966, one could witness an

¹Girling, "Northeast Thailand," op. cit., p. 396.

²"Build-Up in Thailand," Statist (London); republished in Atlas, February 1967, p. 39.

³Siam Rath, (Bangkok), December 8, 1966.

⁴The CPT members persistently maintained that the first armed incident conducted by communist guerrilla took place in Nakorn Phanom Province in the Northeast in August 1965.

increasing level of Communist Chinese hostility towards Thailand, especially in its foreign policy broadcasts elevating the status of the insurgency in Thailand from that of broad "mass struggle" to a "people's war". For example, Peking Radio had broadcast a TPF "New Year's Message to the Nation", on January 14, 1966, declaring that : "only when the people's armed struggle is expanded to a people's war can we destroy the enemy's armed forces and win final victory."¹

Subversive activities grew steadily in intensity in the Northeast throughout the year 1966. Assassinations, ambushes, and armed propaganda campaigns in the villages all increased throughout the Northeast. The VOPT subsequently began to broadcast in Lao to the Northeast provinces, and the Chinese press and radio enthusiastically reported on the progress of the "raging people's war."² Intelligence estimates then placed insurgent strength at around 1,500 men, with approximately 1,000 of these operating in the Northeast.³ Based in the hundred-mile-long Phuphan mountain-range, the Northeastern guerrillas succeeded in gaining a foothold of popular support in the Maoist style, among

¹NCNA, Peking, January 14, 1966; SCMP, no. 3620, January 19, 1966, p. 32.

²People's Daily, April 27, 1966.

³U.S. Department of State, World Strength of the Communist Organizations (19th ed.), January 1967, p. 89.

the 3.5 million villagers living in the six eastern-most provinces of Kalasin, Nakorn Phanom, Sakol Nakorn, Nongkhai, Udorn Thani, and Ubon Ratchathani, all located in the Northeast which constitutes an area of roughly 25,000 square miles.¹

The Thai Government's decision, announced in May, 1966, to send some small non-combatant military units to South Vietnam met with a strong reaction from Hanoi and Peking. Immediately, both governments warned in radio broadcasts that the Thai Government would have to bear the consequences of its decision to join the war in Vietnam. The VOPT broadcast issued a statement by the "Patriotic Front" charging that "since the Thanom-Prapas Government has trespassed on Vietnam territory, stamped under-foot the sovereignty of the Vietnamese people on their own soil, the Vietnamese people are then fully entitled to pursue their enemies in Thailand and destroy them."²

Shortly after this warning and as had been expected, there was a sharp increase in the number of incidents of violence in the Northeast. Peking primarily claimed that the insurgency was spreading like a 'prairie fire'.³ Two or three larger and more militant bands of CT's are reported

¹Lovelace, op. cit., p. 52.

²Poole, op. cit., p. 75. The statement by the TPF was dated May 8, 1966 and was broadcast by the VOPT on June 3, 1966.

³Karnow, "The Looking Glass War," op. cit., p. 541.

to be in parts of Sakol Nakorn province. In some defenseless areas, this has led to a "Vietnam-type" situation in which police and local officials reached an accommodation with the Communists: they were spared, provided they did nothing about the Communist propaganda meetings and party organizational activities taking place under their noses.¹ Certainly, the advantage lay with the Communists who were effectively usurping the authority of the Government, as the villagers knew. Meanwhile the North Vietnamese were training Thai guerrillas and political cadres - the number increased from 68 in 1962 to 130 in 1965 - in seven to eight-month courses of weapons training, demolition, jungle survival, ambush drill and so on.²

While other Thai officials reportedly stressed the growing danger of a Communist insurgency in the country, on July 4, 1966, Prime Minister Thanom himself asserted that his country was now threatened not only in the Northeast but also in the South. In addition, an unidentified Thai official declared in December that: "It's worse than it was in July. The Communists are showing up in more places."³ By November 11, 1966, following an ambush of a Thai police patrol by some 80 guerrillas near Nakae district in Nakorn Phanom province, and as clashes became more frequent, the Thai authority received more information and the size,

¹Girling, "Northeast Thailand...", op. cit., p. 306

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

organization, and leadership of Northeastern insurgents. As has been reported by Stirling, three men were identified as guerrilla regional commanders: Yot Ti Sawatt, 48; Joi Rajasittu, 37; and Keun Khampeuk, 30. All three were Thais, born in local villages in the Northeast but trained in guerrilla techniques at Mahakxay in the Communist zones in Laos.¹

Given the ethnic and regional diversity in the backgrounds of insurgent recruits, the concept of local strike force autonomy appears to have served the guerrillas well. Van der kroef also noted that it may also assist in explaining why the known leaders of the TPF and the "liberation forces" were essentially local figures.²

The Chinese propaganda campaigns in Thailand was characterized by its news reports throughout the period of struggle. The revolutionary movement in the Northeast was first described by Peking as a popular uprising, then as "armed struggle" and finally as a "people's war". On January 28, 1966, Jen-minh Jih-pao devoted a half-page report to the rapid growth of the guerrilla movement in Thailand. The article noted that the armed struggle of the

¹John Stirling, "The Red Signals on Thailand's Far Borders," The Strait Times, January 25, 1966; see also "Communists Organize Terrorism in Thailand," Communist Affairs (November-December, 1966), p. 14.

²Van der Kroef, "Guerrilla Communist...", op. cit., p. 116.

Thai people had developed so rapidly that the U.S. and Bangkok were resorting to "armed suppression."¹

Throughout 1967 all evidence suggested that the focus of guerrilla activity was in the Northeast, and Government efforts at suppression as well as economic and social programs were stepped up in this area. During this period, the U.S. State Department estimated that the Thai insurgent strength reached between 2,000 and 2,200, with about 1,500 guerrillas in the Northeast and approximately 500-700 along the Thai-Malaysian border.² The SEATO Report for the same year asserted that "communist subversive and terrorist activities increased considerably, especially in the Northeast."³ Moreover, it was mentioned in the report that weapons of Chinese manufacture had for the first time been captured by Government forces.

In the first nine months of 1967, the Thai insurgents launched 269 attacks in 28, of the 71 provinces of Thailand, most of them located in the Northeast. This compared with 120 attacks in the Northeast and the South during the first 11 months of 1966 and 24 attacks in the Northeast in 1965. During this same period, the guerrilla

¹NCNA, Peking, January 28, 1966; FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service), January 28, 1966; JMJP, April 27, 1966; SCMP, no. 3688, May 2, 1966, p. 24.

²U.S. Department of State, World Strength..., op. cit., p. 96.

³The SEATO Report, 1967, p. 5.

killed 138 "Government supporters" (teachers, informers) and 78 "officials" (police, headmen, soldiers) - as compared to 70 "supporters" and 36 "officials" in 1966, and 30 "supporters", and 3 "officials" in 1965. By October 15, 1967, insurgent activity had so increased that General Prapas announced that the Thai army would henceforth be entirely responsible for the control of Communist forces in the South and the Northeast.¹

As to casualties inflicted on the Thai insurgents from January 1966 to October 1967, official figures indicated that 263 CT's had been killed, 2,600 had been taken prisoners and 2,200 had surrendered.² However, only 41 weapons were reported captured.³ These figures on the insurgents' weapons capabilities tend to arouse one's

¹Richard Allen, ed., Yearbook on International Communist Affairs (Stanford, Calif.: The Hoover Institutions, 1969), p. 568.

²New York Times, December 10, 1967. The figures were slightly different from Government sources which reported 247 killed, 406 captured, 2618 arrested and 2162 defected.

³Karnow, "The Looking Glass War," op. cit., p. 541. It is important to note that the estimates of guerrilla forces operating in the Northeast differ widely. On April 1, 1967, The Economist, reported on page 25, that there were 600 to 1,000 hard-core terrorists. Herald Munthe-Kass wrote an article, "Far From Bangkok," in the Far Eastern Economic Review, on May 19, 1966, page 326, indicated that there were 3,000 to 5,000 active members of the Communist underground organizations in the Northeast, including at least 1,000 armed guerrillas. Also Deputy Defense Minister Air Chief Marshal Thawee Chulasap opted for the figure of somewhat fewer than 5,000 terrorists in the Northeast, divided into 5 groups of less than 1,000 men each. Bangkok World, November 17, 1966.

suspicion that all criminals captured were apparently counted by the Thai authorities as Communists or as their sympathizers and supporters.

By January, 1967, two circumstances in particular may have given cause to identify the Thai Communists' struggle with the CPT. The first was the announcement of the Thai Government that it would send additional ground forces to South Vietnam to bolster its 300-man naval and air transport units already there.¹ Immediately, Peking declared that the Vietnamese people had earned "the right to hit back" at the Thai authorities.² The second was the discussion in the American press about the stationing of B-52 bombers in Thailand. For the first time, Peking subsequently charged that the Thai bases had become part of the American base system that was being used to "encircle" China and give the U.S. added capability to "attack the 'underbelly' of China."³

Perhaps the major event of 1967, nevertheless, was the emergence of the CPT as the dominant organization in the Thai revolutionary movement. A declaration entitled "Message of the CPT to the People of the Whole Country,"

¹New York Times, June 8, 1970, pp. 1 & 3.

²The People's Republic of China, Foreign Minister Statement of January 19, 1967; NCNA, January 19, 1967.

³New York Times, November 18, 1966, p. 5; NCNA, international service broadcast of April 3, 1967.

broadcast on January 7 and subsequently published in the Peking Review on February 10, marked the first sign of this development, in which it was announced that the struggle in Thailand had entered a new stage. Furthermore, the CPT radio broadcast, aside from its appeal for the creation of a "broad, patriotic, and democratic united front, declared itself to be "the vanguard of the Thai people." Subsequent articles in the Chinese press went further to credit the CPT with leadership of the guerrilla forces dating back to the firing of "the first shot" in August, 1965, and with a political leadership role dating from 1961.¹

By mid-1967 one incident, which occurred on July 26, had clearly marked a new turn in Thai Communist strategy, from verbal attacks and the avoidance of physical confrontation with American forces in Thailand to open armed conflict, though still on a small scale. A new phase of conflict took place when an American air base, one of the largest, at Udorn in the Northeast, was overtly attacked by a band of unidentified guerrillas. Thai and American security guards defending the base suffered several casualties, as did the attackers. The airplanes at the base were damaged by small-arms fire. Four days later, the Under-

¹Peking Review, February 10, 1967, vol. 10, no. 7, pp. 26-27; NCNA, Peking, September 16, 1967.

²Poole, op. cit., p. 79.

Secretary of the Minister of the Interior in Bangkok announced that, because of the attack, the authorities would move some of the remaining Vietnamese refugees from the Northeast to an unspecified location in South Thailand.² Thai officials also said that they had evidence linking a guerrilla killed in the raid to a North Vietnamese commando squad, which had allegedly been sent to sabotage military installations and to assassinate Thai officials.³

Having denied any Northeast Vietnamese role in the attack, Radio Hanoi stated that: "it was an act of 'revenge' by Northeast Thai dissidents for Bangkok's military cooperation with the U.S." Hanoi also renewed its charge that the Thai Government was committing barbarities against the Vietnamese refugees.⁴

Guerrilla operations spread further throughout Thailand during 1968. In the Northeast, the tactic of armed propaganda meetings used during 1967 gave way to increased and heavier fighting by 1968, much of it due, however, to greater attention by the Thai Government and military pressure on, the insurgents. In contrast to the North, the

¹Peking Review, February 10, 1967, vol. 10, no. 7, pp. 26-27; NCNA, Peking, September 16, 1967.

²Poole, op. cit., p. 79.

³Washington Post, July 31, 1968, p. A16.

⁴FBIS, Asia and Pacific Daily Report, October 10, 1968, p. K1; New York Times, August 11, 1968.

reported number of CT's had declined in the Northeast, from roughly 2,000 armed guerrilla in 1967 to 1,700-2,000 in 1968 and to 1,200-1,500 in 1969.¹

With respect to the decreasing number of CT's in the Northeast, as claimed by the Thai Government, Gurtov, however, argued that no distinctions were apparently made between externally infiltrated Thai-Lao, common bandits, and the assortment of other anti-Government types that together make the Northeast a complicated picture.²

Following the promulgation of the 1968 Constitution on June 20, a Thai-language Radio Peking broadcast three days later scored the "fake" Constitution for "depravedly playing a political deception upon the Thai people." The article further noted that:

Even though the Thanom-Prapas clique pretends to put on a comedy called 'transferring administrative power to the people' by using the words 'freedom of speech, general elections', and so forth ... it will not be able to cover up its genuine nature, just as a fox cannot hide its tail.³

Although considerable evidence was accumulated to prove that the insurgents were receiving extensive foreign

¹Bangkok Post, March 1, 1968; Senate Hearings on Thailand, U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, subcommittee on U.S. Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, November 10-17, 1969, 91st Congress, 1st session, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1970, p. 628.

²Gurtov, op. cit., p. 39.

³FBIS, Peking, in Thai language to Thailand, June 23, 1968, and October 25, 1968.

assistance, such as weapons from Communist China and the maintenance by North Vietnamese of a training center at Hua Binh near Hanoi for Thai insurgent leaders,¹ several analysts submit that Peking and Hanoi were lending the revolt limited backing, mainly in order to preoccupy the Thai army, and thus prevent its deployment in a possible thrust to seal off the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos, North Vietnam's lifeline to the South. Accordingly, Karnow logically claimed that Peking's primary aim was to "neutralize rather than overthrow the Thai Government; just as the Japanese had done in their sweep down Southeast Asia a generation ago."²

The Thai armed struggle once again reached a new stage in January 1969 with Peking's announcement of the founding of the "Thai People's Liberation Armed Forces" (TPLAF), thus capping the Maoist model with a people's liberation army, aiming to hasten the development of revolutionary armed struggle in Thailand.³ The "Supreme Command" of the TPLAF, which clearly was under the leadership of the CPT, disclosed that it was necessary to establish the TPLAF and its Supreme Command in order to make operations more "efficient and unified", since guerrilla

¹Christian Science Monitor, May 12, 1967.

²Karnow, op. cit., p. 546.

³Peking Review, February 21, 1969.

operations had expanded to areas covering the entire country, and the scope of operations had been intensified.¹

In the same month, the TPF Thai-exiled leader, Phayom Chulanond, announced that the revolutionary situation of Thailand had advanced to a new historical period and that "the people's war" would take the offensive in attacking the enemy.²

In the 1969-1970 period, terrorist activities again increased in the Northeast region, while still expanding among the Meos in the North and the Moslem areas in the South. By December, 1969, the Thai Provincial Police Commissioner, Prakarn Chatnilbhan, declared that Peking had been sending more than 1,500 Thai-born Chinese into Thailand after lengthy indoctrination programs in China. Prakarn also disclosed that the Communist's chief weapon in the "coming offensive" was the Chinese-built road from Yunnan Province through Laos and heading towards the Thai border.³

The origins of China's road-building activities in northern Laos are somewhat secret. However, it was reported that the first length of road had started during

¹VOPT, December 31, 1968, TPLAF Supreme Command Communique on January 1, 1969.

²NCNA, January 14, 1969.

³"Tell it to the Marines," FEER 497 (December 4, 1969), p. 380.

1962, and again a few months later, in a joint communiqué following the March 1963 visit of King Sri Savang Watana to Peking, it was announced: "the highway being constructed by the Chinese side by the request of the Laotian side from the Chinese border at Yunnan Province to Phong Saly in Laos as aid without compensation will be completed in April 1963."¹

With great concern for the Chinese road-building project, Thai official Air Chief Marshal Thawee Chulasap publicly announced on October 25, 1970 that Thailand had officially warned the headquarters of SEATO of the incipient threat to Thailand's domestic security and territorial integrity posed by further extension of the Beng Pak highway.² The reason for this concern was that the road construction had been briefly suspended due to the rainy season, had finally been extended in a line heading straight for Thailand's troubled Northeastern provinces, to a point only 25 miles from the Thai-Lao border.

One interesting incident concerning the relationship between the Thai exile groups and the Chinese regime in Peking bears some significance for our analysis of the nature and future development of Thai Communist movement. During the 1967-1969 period, it was reported that divisions within

¹Kim Woodward, "At Thailand's Backdoor," FEER 68:46 (November 14, 1970), p. 32.

²Ibid.

the TPF and resistance to Chinese control apparently emerged as the CPT took more of the limelight. The Thai exile groups in Peking, whose leaders had presumably refused to accept the Communist Party's dominant role, were purged, while the Chinese were strengthening their influence over the Thai movement. Taylor indicated that a group of Thai liberal politicians who had taken refuge in Peking in the late 1950's were expelled by the Chinese in early 1967, because they refused to cooperate with the Communist Party and had wanted the TPF to be independent of both China and the Communists.¹ In June 1966, following Miss Phatthanothai's May speech, denouncing her left-wing father, Sang Phatthanothai, for trying to persuade the Thai exiles in China to leave and move the TPF headquarters to Laos.² Another statement was released through Radio Peking claiming that a reactionary clique "of Thai exiles who had been guilty of anti-Chinese activities had been driven from the country."³

By the early 1970's, the ideology and organization of the Thai insurgent movement after half a decade of "struggle" had gradually but completely been made over in the image of the Chinese revolutionary model. In

¹Taylor, op. cit., pp. 296-298.

²Peking Radio, in Thai, May 21, 1967.

³Ibid., June 3, 1967.

Lovelace's point of view:

The ironic fact remained, however, that the entire apparatus was more model than reality. Despite all the posturing and propaganda, the 'people's war' in Thailand continued to be a very limited operation, with none of the characteristics of mass mobilization and charismatic leadership necessary for real effectiveness. This persistent disparity between image and reality suggests that China's support of insurgency in Thailand remained primarily an exercise in propaganda manipulation and self-¹approbation.

Yet, slightly more than one-half of the provinces in Thailand experienced various levels of insurrectionary activities in the 1970's. Although insurgency in the North-east was less severe, the threat of renewal activities² is still of great concern to the Thai Government, especially after the fall of the various Indochinese governments to Communist hands. Moreover, the exact dimensions of activity are obviously difficult to assess since the Thai Government's official reports of incidents are frequently suspect, exaggerated, or unreliable, and the definition of "insurgents" often includes bandits and political dissidents. Nevertheless, one thing is certain; there is a significant correlation between increased reports of "communist insurgency" and increased U.S. foreign aid to Thailand, especially in the military field. The more the Thai military regimes abandoned Thailand's traditional

¹Lovelace, op. cit., p. 63.

²Neher, "Thailand: Towards Fundamental Change," op. cit., p. 135.

uncommitted foreign policy and moved further into the Western camp, i.e., participating in the Vietnam war, providing bases for U.S. bombing operations in Indochina, intervening in the Laotian political struggle, the more overt Communist attacks and anti-Government activities would inevitably become and certainly increase, partly as an act of political retaliation. The more U.S. military assistance kept flowing to the generals' pockets and bank accounts, the more they could strengthen and establish themselves as dictators and could afford to ignore the genuine wishes for economic development and democratic politics of the masses of the people. In the final analysis, it is also clear that the problem of insurgency tends to be confined to those areas where the Government has frequently earned distrust through negligence and ill-conceived, as well as poorly administered, policies.

CHAPTER VIII

U.S. INVOLVEMENT AND THE "SPILL-OVER"
OF THE INDOCHINA WAR INTO NORTHEAST THAILAND

U.S. intervention has brought Thailand and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam into a de facto conflict, though no formal state of war exists between them ... What would have happened had the U.S. not intervened in Indochina at all? To the best of one's judgement, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam would have emerged as modern states. The process of modernization and consolidation of Thai and Vietnamese societies into nation states has been going on at least since the turn of the century. Moreover, forces of modernization in this age of technology and ideology can mold a society of several ethnic groups into a modern state faster than ever before, even though the problem of ethnic minorities may remain.¹

A) The Postwar Thai-U.S. Alliance and the
Beginning of U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia

Historical records clearly indicated that the first contact between Siam and the U.S. occurred as a by-product of the expanding American trade with China and the East Indies early in the nineteenth century. American relations with Siam were expanded when Protestant missionaries began

¹Usha Mahajani, "U.S. Intervention in Laos and Its Impact on Laotian Relations with Thailand and Vietnam," in Mark W. Zacher, and R. Stephen Milne, eds., Conflict and Stability in Southeast Asia (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1974), p. 271.

arriving in the 1830's.¹ Although their evangelical missions had not been especially successful in converting the Siamese to Christianity, the American missionaries proved themselves worth respected and admired among the Siamese both in the palace and among commoners. They were responsible for bringing the Kingdom the first experience of Western modernization, especially in the field of medical science, technology, education and social innovations.²

During the reign of King Mongkut, (Rama IV), the permanent diplomatic relations between Siam and the U.S. had been established in 1856, when Townsend Harris negotiated a new commercial treaty before taking his post as the first U.S. Consul-General in Japan.³ During the American Civil War, warm friendship and good understanding between the two countries had been extended, when in 1861 King Mongkut of Siam had sent a royal letter to Abraham Lincoln offering to send troops of elephants to assist in

¹George B. McFarland, ed., Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam, 1828-1928 (Bangkok: The Bangkok Times Press, 1928), p. 6.

²For further details, see Kachorn Sukhabani, Kho-moon pra-wat-saat sa-mai bangkok [Historical Records During Bangkok Period], (Bangkok: History Department, Sri Nakhatharaviroj Press, 1975), pp. 108-132; see especially Chapter V: "Dr. Bradley and the American Missionaries."

³Tyler Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia (N.Y.: MacMillan Co., 1922), p. 348; see also Abbot L. Moffat, Mongkut, The King of Siam (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961), pp. 62-87.

the war efforts.¹ Although President Lincoln politely refused the royal offer on the ground that the elephant "troops" would not be suitable to fight in the American continent, friendly relations between the U.S. and Siam had been restored since then.

A unique opportunity to established more cordial relations between the U.S. and Siam took place in April, 1879 following King Chulalongkorn's ascention to the Siamese throne. It occured when ex-President Ulysses S. Grant visited Bangkok briefly while making a world tour.² General Grant's visit symbolized a growing interest by some Americans in the impact of Western civilization on the nations of Asia.³

The influence of the U.S. in the modernization of Siam during the absolute monarchy is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, the U.S. contribution to the emergence of Siam as an independent nation-state was as fruitful and advantageous as those of the British and other Europeans. Since

¹Banning Garrett, "The Dominization of Thailand," Ramparts, November 1970, p. 10; also see William Bradley, David Morrell, David Szanton and Stephen Young, "Thailand: Domino By Default," Prepared and mimeographed by The Hazen Foundation, New Haven, Conn., March 1977, p. 2.

²John Russell Young, Around the World with General Grant (N.Y.: The American News Company, 1879), Vol. II, p. 246.

³Darling, Thailand and the United States, op. cit., p. 16.

1903 King Chulalongkorn had employed Professor Edward Strobel, formerly at Harvard Law School, and his colleagues to become top-level foreign policy advisers to the Siamese Government.¹ The Siamese Government had stated its purpose in placing the Americans into high advisory positions as follows:

It was felt, in view of the special position occupied by the U.S. of America in the sphere of international politics, that the appointment of an American would remove from the minds of Foreign Governments all apprehension of partiality and at the same time would help Siam to avoid being involved in European controversies.²

From the time of the 1932 overthrow of the absolute monarchy until the outbreak of World War II in Europe in 1939, the influence of the U.S. and its missionaries had declined. This resulted from the low level of American trade with the country, an increase in educational facilities provided by the Government, a rising Thai nationalism and the reduction of American advisory positions in the Thai administration.³

¹Eldon R. James, "Yale and Harvard in Siam," The Harvard Graduates' Magazine (June 1926), pp. 525-528; also see Kachorn Sukhabanij, "Thii-pruk-saa paen-din khong raw haa" [Administrative Advisers of Rama V] in Kho-moon prawat-saat ..., op. cit., pp. 348 and 372.

²Siam General and Medical Features (Bangkok: The Bangkok Times Press, 1930), p. 11; for further details of Thai-U.S. Relations following World War I, see Francis B. Sayre, "The Passing of Extra-Territoriality in Siam," American Council, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1928, p. 4.

³Department of State, Office of Intelligence and Research, A Brief Survey of Siamese Relations with the U.S. (November, 1945), pp. 3-4.

During the Second World War, the expansion of Japanese influence and imperialism into Southeast Asia had shattered beyond repair the legitimacy and unquestionable "sphere of influence" of European colonial empires in the region. In an independent Thailand, the Japanese occupation went rather smoothly, since the Thai regime decided to ally itself with the Japanese to prevent bloodshed. In addition, the failure of the Allied Powers to provide military assistance to Thailand and the swift military victories of the Japanese army so convinced Phibun of an assured Japanese triumph in the area that he promptly declared war on Great Britain and the U.S. on January 25, 1942.¹

David Wilson, who has long been a scholar and authority on Thai politics, commented on these events:

Here, indeed, was an odd development from the point of view of the U.S.: Thailand - a small nation, literally on the other side of the world; a nation with which the U.S. had had, for a century, slight but consistently friendly relations ... was offering to be at war with the U.S.. The situation was so absurd that the Thai ambassador to the U.S. felt that it was not only within his rights but also within his power to decline to deliver the declaration of war. The Field Marshal (Phibun)'s gambit was refused. From this refusal flowed curious results.²

¹Thawee Bunyaketu, "Memoirs," in Ray, ed., op. cit., p. 80; Nuechterlein, op. cit., p. 72.

²David A. Wilson, The United States and the Future of Thailand (N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1970), pp. 28-29. For further analysis of U.S.-Thai relations during World War II, based on the State Department official files, see James V. Martin, Jr., "Thai American Relations in World War II," The Journal of Asian Studies 24:4 (August 1963), pp. 451-467.

Concurring with Ambassador Seni Pramoj's request for U.S. assistance to liberate his country after having declared Phibun's Government in Bangkok as a puppet regime which did not represent the wish of the Thai people, the U.S. Government agreed to the request by approving Seni's proposal to set up an underground resistance movement. President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Hull agreed that a strategically located country like Thailand offered a unique and unexpected opportunity to the Allied war effort in Southeast Asia.¹ By 1942, two American officials, Dr. Kenneth P. Landon from the State Department, and Col. Preston Goodfellow from the OSS, specialists on the area, were assigned to train a group of 70 Free Thai Volunteers who planned to carry out the Allied mission in the occupied Thailand.²

According to Darling, the intimate contacts between the O.S.S. and the Free Thai Movement did much to win the cooperation of the U.S. at the end of the war.³ An American opinion concerning the Free Thai volunteers was given by one O.S.S. official:

The Siamese were universally popular with the O.S.S.

¹Pluvier, op. cit., p. 323.

²Stewart Alsop and Thomas Braden, Sub Rosa- The O.S.S. and American Espionage (N.Y.: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1946), p. 112.

³Darling, Thailand and the United States, op. cit., p. 37.

men who worked with them. Like the people of many small independent countries, there is a sturdiness and simple patriotism ... which endeared them to the many Americans in O.S.S. who knew them.¹

Following the Japanese defeat and the conclusion of World War II in August, 1945, Thailand emerged from defeat in an anomalous position. Regent Pridi and his Free Thai volunteers emerged as the dominant political group, while Phibun and his militarists were temporarily discredited and crippled as an active political force. Nevertheless, it was obvious to everyone that the legacy of militarism remained one of the greatest internal threats to political progress in Thailand.²

Thailand, in spite of its wartime alliance with Japan, did not emerge from the war as a defeated belligerent, thanks to American support and adroit diplomatic movement employed by Dr. Pridi and his civilian intellectuals.³ Zacher and Milne accurately described the U.S. postwar policy in Southeast Asia as follows:

For the U.S. which may be described as the interventionist power 'par excellence' its goals in Southeast Asia were a function of its global interests and

¹Alsop and Braden, op. cit., p. 103. As for the O.S.S. officials' favorable comments on Pridi, see Nicol Smith and Blake Clark, Into Siam Underground Kingdom (N.Y.: Bobb-Merrill Company, 1945), p. 189.

²Vella, op. cit., p. 387.

³Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, op. cit., p. 243.

became defined initially as a product of strategic position and posture in Asia at the end of the Pacific War. As General MacArthur once explained: 'Our strategic frontier then shifted to embrace the entire Pacific which became a vast moat to protect us as long as we held it.'¹

Certainly, an American postwar attempt to prevent Thailand from being occupied by the British and its sympathetic attitude towards Pridi and his liberal policy placed U.S. diplomatic support behind the liberal leaders and opened the way for Americans to exercise a greater influence in the country. The Americans were obviously suspicious of any attempt by the Europeans, especially the British, to tamper with Thai national sovereignty. A New York Times correspondent foresaw a completely independent Thailand as "the forerunner of the new political order for Asia, freed of colonialism."²

This sympathetic and friendly American attitude toward Thailand was due largely to the long history of cordial relations between the two countries, as well as to the hope of American leaders that the absence of colonial background in Thailand would enable it to serve as a model for other former colonies in the area. As Kenneth Landon states:

Any appraisal of Thailand looking forward to a postwar settlement must take into consideration the fact that the Thai are an old nation with a distinct

¹Zacher and Milne, op. cit., p. 184.

²New York Times, September 15, 1945

culture ... Above everything else, the Thai want their freedom, their continued national existence. They would resist any forced coalition of the countries of Southeast Asia. An attempt to put them under the domination of an outside power would merely result in the creation of an Asiatic Ireland.¹

In spite of the merits and the goodwill attempt on the part of the Americans in their efforts to liberate Thailand from the British, one point deserves to be mentioned here in relation to the impact of U.S. intervention in Thai domestic politics. The most serious weakness of American intervention in these negotiations was the failure to support the British proposal to reduce the power and prestige of the Thai armed forces, as previously recommended by Sir Josiah Crosby, former British Minister to Bangkok. Darling commented that:

This move was to have profound repercussions in postwar politics in Thailand. A unique opportunity for the Western democracies to weaken the authoritarian political tradition by reorganizing the armed forces and discouraging military interference in politics was thereby neglected. What the Americans were doing in Germany and Japan to destroy militarism and promote democracy they would not allow the British to do in Thailand.²

The conception of the postwar Far Eastern situation that guided American postwar policy included two fundamental erroneous assumptions. For American leaders, there was a common conception that a unified and ultimately prosperous China would cooperate with the U.S. in maintaining order in

¹Kenneth P. Landon, "Thailand," The Annals 226 (March 1943), p. 118.

²Darling, Thailand and ..., op. cit., pp. 43-44.

East Asia. This idea became obsolete following the defeat of General Chiang Kai-shek in 1949, which resulted in the abandonment of a policy of friendship and close cooperation with the Chinese Nationalists.

Another futile assumption of U.S. postwar policy was based on the idea that the European powers would be able to establish an orderly situation in Southeast Asia. It was hoped that the American good example in the Philippines in attempting to establish a responsible democratic government would be imitated by other European powers, a process in which U.S. involvement would not be required. To the American disappointment, this also turned out to be a failure and only wishful thinking.¹

The military coup which ended Pridi's tenure as an "elder statesman" set Thailand's foreign policy on a new course, in which anti-communism was to be the dominant theme.² After a brief interval during which Kuang headed an able civilian Government, Phibun staged a "coup de main" and took over the Government in April, 1948. It was rather interesting to note that the British and French reactions to Phibun's dictatorship were mild, since both were having problems with Communist rebellions in Malaya and Vietnam.

¹Wilson, The United States and the Future . . . , op. cit., p. 31.

²Brimmell, op. cit., p. 245.

Apparently, they were more than willing to forget Phibun's wartime collaboration with Japan. The arrival of a Soviet legation staff in Bangkok in January, 1948 did help to explain the Allied governments' prompt recognition of Phibun.¹

The Government headed by Phibun at first incurred the displeasure of the U.S. Government, since it took power by force and through the removal of the legitimate civilian Government. Phibun's wartime activities had not yet been forgotten, and his seizure of power could scarcely be regarded as democratic. Nevertheless, Suhrke observed that, from Phibun's point of view, "what better way of establishing an aura of legitimacy than to seek cooperation with a country that had been his enemy during the war, whose victory had caused his downfall, and which now supported the civilians whom he hoped to use as a facade in regaining power."² The entente between Phibun and the U.S. naturally blossomed in the early 1950's when Washington came to regard military regimes as the most viable anti-Communist force in Southeast Asia.

The establishment in power of Mao Tse-tung on the Chinese mainland in October, 1949 and the outbreak of the

¹Coast, Some Aspects of ..., op. cit., pp. 43-47.

²Astri Suhrke, "Smaller-Nation Diplomacy: Thailand's Current Dilemmas," Asian Survey (August 1971), p. 430.

Korean War in the following year drastically changed the courses of Thai as well as American foreign policy. Prior to this, the U.S. was beginning to oppose the Soviet Union and Stalinist designs. Following the 1948 Communist coup in Czechoslovakia, the U.S. had rushed large-scale military and economic aid to Western Europe to prevent further Communist aggression. In Southeast Asia, when the Chinese civil war was going on and the Chinese Communists seemed about to reach final victory, the anti-Communist regime headed by Phibun became more attractive to the American global policy. Darling commented that:

As the U.S. considered measures to deter Communist aggression in Southeast Asia, a conservative and anti-communist regime in Thailand became increasingly attractive regardless of its internal policies or methods of achieving power. The Americans consequently became less interested in assisting the evolution of constitutional democracy and more concerned with opposing the spread of communism.¹

As a result of drastic changes in world politics in the early 1950's, Phibun was successful in managing to forge closer relations with the U.S. and the Western bloc. It was a unique opportunity for Phibun to consolidate his internal political power as well. Hence, Phibun in the subsequent period began to voice the same opinion held by the Americans that the Communists posed a serious threat to Thai national security. In August 1949, he stated that foreign pressure had become "alarming" and internal Communist activity had

³Darling, Thailand and ..., op. cit., p. 67.

"vigorously increased."¹ As a matter of fact, the reason that Bangkok leaders have professed to regard Communism as evil is that they are anti-Chinese, and to them Communism means Chinese domination.²

The Korean War, Its Aftermath
and the Period of Adjustment, 1950-1954

As the Russian brand of Communism spread throughout Europe and Mao's troops began to consolidate their power in the Chinese mainland, U.S. global policy began to change. Its strategy became more associated with the idea of the containment of Communism. In Asia, and particularly in Southeast Asia, the U.S. sought to reorganize its Asian and Pacific position on a new basis. Southeast Asia, with the departure of European colonialists, was left a power vacuum that both the Western and Communist powers were eager to fill. At that time Thailand obviously appeared to be a key country vital to the security policy of the U.S. in the area.³

In February, 1950, Thailand's strategic importance in the new American anti-Communist policy in Southeast Asia was dramatically symbolized when Ambassador-at-large Phillip

¹New York Times, August 31, 1949.

²Brimmell, op. cit., p. 394.

³Fifield, The Diplomacy of ..., op. cit., p. 269.

Jessup arrived in Bangkok for a three-day Conference with all the U.S. ambassadors in the Far East. Their common concern was that the threat of guerrilla Communism in the area was serious, and it was agreed that the Communists had a "dynamic timetable" to bring Southeast Asia under their domination.¹

The outbreak of Korean War in June, 1950 hastened the efforts of the U.S. to bolster its anti-Communist foreign policy and Communist containment campaign throughout Southeast Asia. Even before this incident, the Thai Government responded favorably to the new American policy due to the fact that the expanding concern of the U.S. in Southeast Asia converged with Thailand's alarm at hostile Communist powers in China and Vietnam. Not surprisingly, American military and economic assistance to Thailand began when President Truman approved a grant of \$10,000,000 for military and economic aid to Thailand.² This American aid inevitably enhanced Phibun's political position within Thailand's internal power structure. This support revealed once again the major weakness of American interference in post-war political changes in Thailand.³ Had the U.S.

¹ New York Times, February 13, 1950. Also see Edwin Stanton, op. cit., p. 234; Bangkok Post, February 20, 1950.

² Darling, Thailand and the United States, op. cit., p. 70.

³ Ibid., pp. 71-72.

chosen to assist the military factions who support a constitutional Government and wanted the military services to restrict their activities to the legitimate role of defending the nation, and the liberal Government might have survived, and the Thai political system might have continued its slow evolution toward constitutional democracy instead of reverting to the authoritarian tradition.

Phibun's recognition of Bao Dai's Government on February 28, 1950 was actually an attempt to gain material and moral support from the U.S.. This act was followed by recognition of the newly established Governments of Laos and Cambodia and of South Korea in March. Phibun's decisions incurred the strong displeasure of the Communist bloc, the domestic political groups, and of many neutralist nations, which charged that he had become an American puppet. Some Thais were not convinced early in 1950 that the U.S. would use its vast power to defend Southeast Asia against Chinese imperialism and would have liked to see Thailand maintain her independent foreign policy. Even the British had doubts, and it became British policy, following the Communist conquest of China, to bring about a greater American involvement in the defense of Southeast Asia.¹ Nevertheless, at the end of the year, agreements between Thailand and the U.S. for educational exchange, economic and technical

¹See the Chatham House Study Group Report, Collective Defense in Southeast Asia (London: n.p., 1956), p. 16

cooperation, and military assistance were signed. Insofar as the military defense of Southeast Asia was concerned, American involvement in the area until the outbreak of the Korean War was largely economic and cultural.

The outbreak of the Korean War provided Phibun with a chance to associate Thailand's foreign policy with a defensive arrangement with the Western powers in Southeast Asia.¹ Thailand happened to be one of the first countries to respond to the United Nations' call for assistance by offering to give 20,000 tons of rice free of charge to the Korean War relief. Another dramatic pro-Western move by Phibun was the Thai Government's offer to send 4,000 ground troops to the beleaguered UN forces in South Korea.² These cooperative gestures by Phibun created an American trust in him which thereafter paved the way for his dictatorial power in the heightened tension of the Cold War and Communist insurgency in Southeast Asia.³

In the subsequent few years, the changing power politics in Vietnam and in Laos alarmed the Thai leaders. Their fears were based on the conception that Communist China was engaged in supporting the insurgency in remote areas of Northeast Thailand. The fear was later intensified

¹Fifield, The Diplomacy of ..., op. cit., p. 269.

²New York Times, July 23, 1950.

³Darling, Thailand and the United States, op. cit.,

by the announcement by Peking of the establishment of Thai Autonomous Region in the Southern province of Yunnan and the North Vietnamese victory at Dien Bien Phu. Thus, when the U.S. started exploring the possibility of a treaty for collective defense in Southeast Asia, Thailand responded enthusiastically.¹ By then, the destiny of Thailand was therefore drawn closer to that of the U.S., especially when President Eisenhower finally concluded that the best way to prevent Southeast Asia from Chinese Communist domination was for the U.S. to create a military alliance with Thailand and other interested countries and to be prepared to intervene against the Communists in Indochina.²

U.S. Foreign Policy and Thai Praetorian Politics

As a matter of fact, the Communist threat to Thailand in the 1950's was not as serious or ominous as the American or Thai militarists proclaimed. The officials of both governments made the mistake of assessing only the intentions and propaganda of the Chinese without giving sufficient consideration to their capacities and their real intention. Darling commented that the Chinese propaganda attacking the American imperialism had the effect of arousing an intense fear at the expense of logical policy. "In the haste and

¹Nuechterlein, Thailand and the United States, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

²Fifield, Southeast Asia in ..., op. cit., p. 27.

confusion at the time the political implications of the measures taken by the U.S. received little consideration. Contrary to American intentions some of these actions actually increased the vulnerability of Thailand to Communist subversion."¹

Unfortunately, most American officials assumed that the military equipment and training given to the Thai armed forces would promote peace and unity in the country.² There were few Americans at that time who were aware that Communism in Southeast Asia could not be stopped by military means alone. In fact, Thailand faced no serious internal subversive threat since the Kingdom in the 1950's was still able to produce a surplus of rice and had never been faced with the problem of land ownership. As for the common accusations that a Communist regime posed a potential threat to Southeast Asia, it was illogical to expect that an overt invasion from the Chinese would be forthcoming since the PRC was at that time exhausted, if not devastated, after emerging from a long period of civil war.

Yet the Communist threat was exaggerated due to the extreme sensitivity of the Thai military leaders to any possible challenge to their absolute power. Actually, the

¹Darling, Thailand and the United States, op. cit., p. 83.

²Statement by Ambassador Edwin Stanton, in U.S. Department of State Bulletin, October 30, 1950.

major Communist danger to any developing countries (to which Thailand is no exception) is the exploitation of the backward political, economic, and social conditions inside the country which had proved to be more effective in spreading anti-government hostility. Field Marshal Phibun's takeover of the Government in 1948 and the subsequent suppressive measures against all opposition groups in the early 1950's and the increasing funds devoted to the armed forces and secret police had indicated that the country's major weakness would receive less instead of more attention by the Government and its American ally.

Since the early period of the 1950's, the expansion of Thai armed forces by the Phibun Government placed an enormous financial burden on the national treasury in spite of an increasing amount of American military aid to Thailand. The 1950 budget of 1,949,350,355 baht (U.S.\$ 97,500,000) was increased to 3,685,725,783 baht (U.S. \$ 184,300,000) by 1952. Each year it is generally understood that the budgets for the Ministry of Defense and of the Interior were the largest and the most wasteful. Although Phibun had explained that the deficit would be made up by foreign and international loans, the country experienced more inflation, which posed new problems for the Government and placed additional hardships in the people.¹

¹S. Y. Lee, "A Critical View of Thailand's Foreign Trade After the War," FEER 63:13 (March 31, 1955), p. 389.

Further analysis clearly indicated that the impact of the Korean War and the role of American intervention had greatly altered the course of political development in Thailand. Most of all, the U.S. was largely responsible for the intensification of the fear of Communism in Thailand, a country which had traditionally recorded the failure of Communist attempts to indoctrinate the people. Since Thailand had just emerged from centuries of absolute rule and still had made no significant progress in establishing democratic institutions, Darling observed that an attempt by Americans to flatter the Thai leaders on this point was ridiculous. Even worse, American military assistance to Phibun strengthened the executive and administrative structures and further weakened the legislative and judicial branches. It likewise encouraged the military leaders to take even stronger measures in suppressing local opposition, using the excuse that all anti-government activity was communist-inspired.¹

SEATO and the Thai-U.S. Military Commitment, 1955-1960

Subsequent events which have taken place in the Asian continent, e.g., Mao's conquest of China, the Korean War, the Indochina conflict and the establishment of the Thai

¹This strategy has been utilized by military juntas to consolidate their absolute power during the past two decades and is still in effect even at the present time. See also Darling, Thailand and the United States, op. cit., p. 87.

Autonomous Region in Yunnan Province of China had a great impact upon the formulation of Thai foreign policy, to the extent that the Government decided to take the country into the U.S.-sponsored defense pact, the so-called "SEATO" (Southeast Asian Treaty Organization).¹ At the United Nations' conference, the Thai delegations, including one headed by the Foreign Minister, Prince Wan, consistently complained about the aggression from Communist China and North Vietnam. One delegate even declared that "preparations are being made for large-scale communist infiltrations from Yunnan through Vietminh into Thailand" in order to subvert the Government.²

Although the Bangkok Government was pleased to have Pote Sarasin, former Thai Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and ambassador to the U.S., become the first Secretary General of the SEATO and its headquarters located in Bangkok, it was disappointed in the final draft, which it felt was

¹Secretariat of the Manila Conference, The Signing of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (Manila, September 8, 1954), p. 37. SEATO was formed at Manila on September 6-8, 1954 among 8 nations: Australia, New Zealand, the U.S., Great Britain, France, Thailand, Pakistan and the Philippines. This conference provided an additional channel for the Americans to stress the Communist danger to the security of the region. The New York Times, September 6, 1954.

²Speech of Prince Wan Waitayakorn, The signing of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the Protocol to the Southeast Asian Collective Defense Treaty and the Pacific Charter, p. 37, mimeo.; also see United Nations, General Assembly, Ninth Session, Official Records, 481st Plenary Meeting, September 28, 1954, p. 100.

equivocal.¹ Nevertheless, Thailand took considerable satisfaction in the commitment of the U.S. to undertake the defense of Thailand against Communist aggression. This satisfaction was moderated by American reluctance to commit troops or to establish a military command structure in the organization.² Hence, the relationship between Thailand and the U.S. in the aftermath of SEATO agreement was marked by recurring crises of confidence, stemming from the parties' skepticism, especially among the Thais, about the firmness and effectiveness of the commitment. Naturally, these crises have caused both nations to move into deeper commitments with each other, and their increasing level of involvement eventually became untenable.

The decision of Thailand to join SEATO thus clearly showed that Thailand had completely abandoned its traditional and previously effective policy of accommodation and non-provocation. In doing so, the military-dominated Thai Government believed that alignment with the West would, aside from benefiting their own pockets and personal power, be a more effective guarantee of the country's security than a friendly neutrality towards its powerful northern neighbor, Communist China. It is also claimed that the

¹Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, op. cit., p. 272.

²Wilson, The United States and the Future ..., op. cit., p. 36.

Thai Government and other Asian members hoped to achieve Western help in expediting their economic development as the prize for joining SEATO.¹

American Expenditure in Thailand: 1952-1955

U.S. Fiscal Year	Technical Cooperation	Economic Aid (Defense Support)
1952	\$7,200,000	
1953	\$6,500,000	
1954	\$8,800,000	
1955	\$4,600,000	\$29,700,000

Source: U.S.-Technical and Economic Cooperation, 1951-1956, International Cooperation Administration (May 1956), p. II.

Not long after the establishment of SEATO, Thailand took an opportunity to express its anti-Communist commitment and loyalty to SEATO and the U.S.. In February, 1956, the Thai Government took the initiative in offering to hold military exercises in Bangkok and was eager to prove that the organization was not a 'paper tiger', as it was accused of being by the Peking regime.² In spite of criticism from

¹Kramol Thongthammachat, American Policy in Southeast Asia (in Thai), (Bangkok: Text Book Division, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 1961), p. 291.

²Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, op. cit., p. 272.

all SEATO powers except France and Pakistan participated.¹

By the end of 1955 following a brief period of a "hundred flowers campaign" in which Prime Minister Phibun surprisingly allowed the resumption and the revival of democratic experimentation and public criticism of government performance, discontent with the triumvirate regime was intensified. A large number of Western-educated bureaucrats and opposition politicians began to organize and issued statements criticizing government maladministration, corruption, abuse of power and the regime's attempt to use the Communist threat as a justification to attack and arrest its political opponents, not to mention the Government's misuse of American aid funds. This growing alienation was reported in the American press, which published an interview with a junior civilian bureaucrat, who frankly stated that: "... only half of our members of parliament are elected. The others are appointed. And the elections .. such strange things happen that nobody believes in them anymore."²

¹New York Times, May 3-6, 1955.

²James MacGregor, "The Tragedy of Thailand," The Progressive (November 1954), p. 13. A similar situation still exists in Thailand. It clearly suggests the widespread lack of morale among the majority of Thai civilian bureaucrats. For example, following the coup of October 1976, the former Thai Ambassador to the U.S., Mr. Anand Panyarachoon, who was then Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs, was suspended because a certain group of the military junta which had just successfully taken power thought he was too soft the Communist North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao, thus suggesting their suspicion that he is pro-Communist. This incident clearly indicated a type of 'personal vendetta' by exploiting the 'Communist' issue which was so

B) The 1960's U.S. Intervention and the
"Spill-Over" of Indochina War into Northeast Thailand

Security means maintaining national independence and the territorial integrity of the Kingdom. Because of the contingencies of Thailand's geographical and strategic position, as well as the limitation of the Kingdom's own capacity, the elements of security can be broken down into several categories: (1) the defense against possible invasion; (2) the quest for regional stability; (3) the promotion of domestic development and prosperity through foreign economic relations; and (4) the defense against potential or actual subversion.¹ With respect to the fourth category, Thailand's main concern towards invasion has centered on the Lao frontier. Nuechterlein acknowledged that "in 1960 no country in SEA held such historical and strategic importance for Thailand as did the tiny Kingdom of Laos."²

popular in the course of political development in Thailand in the past three decades. Among the Thai intellectuals, Mr. Anand is seen as a devoted career diplomat and an excellent bureaucrat whose way of dealing with the withdrawal of American troops from Thailand might have caused discontent and misgiving among the generals, who had profited immensely from the American presence.

¹Wilson, The United States and the Future ..., op. cit., p. 47. Also see Girling, "Politics Amalgamated:...", op. cit., pp. 263-264.

²Nuechterlein, Thailand and the Struggle ..., op. cit., p. 138.

The Laotian Crisis and the Dispatch
of U.S. Troops to the Northeast

Since the dissolution of French control of Laos in 1953-1954,¹ when that country was finally granted full independence, Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos changed from the desire to maintain its hegemony and sphere of influence to establishing Laos as a buffer area and preventing it from falling prey to any hostile country. As for the American interest in Laos, its intervention has been part of an extensive campaign against Chinese Communist expansion downward to Southeast Asia. From the start, the intervention was based on the consistent support for the pro-Thai Laotian right-wing against the pro-Vietnam Laotian left. Hence, the U.S., realizing that Laotian collaboration would facilitate its continued intervention in Laotian affairs, has consistently sought to ensure that the pro-Thai right-wing would hold the reins of Government in Laos.²

Culturally, the Thais and Laotians share a similar language and religion, as well as similar customs. Premier Sarit justified Thailand's intervention in Laos and its

¹For details, see Lawrence Kaplan and Marvin Gettleman, eds., Conflict in Indochina (N.Y.: Random House, 1970).

²Usha Mahajani, "U.S. Intervention in Laos and Its Impact on Laotian Relations with Thailand and Vietnam," in Zacher and Milne, ed., op. cit., p. 242.

special interest in Laos in the following terms:

The relationship between the kingdoms of Thailand and Laos has special characteristics that distinguish it from the simple neighborliness which would follow from a long common border. For the people are one nation; they have the same language, ... so that there is nothing to distinguish which is Thai and which is Lao. Moreover, the people who have their homes near the border between the two countries have family ties and relatives who live on both banks of the Mekong Because of this special situation, everything that happens in the kingdom of Laos cannot help but affect Thailand.¹

The present recurrence of troubles had its roots and became threatening in 1953 when Vietminh forces were accused by the Thai-U.S. authorities of penetrating into areas near the banks of the Mekong River with little difficulty.

After the declaration from Peking about the establishment of the Thai Autonomous Region and the increasing level of hostility in the area, Thai military leaders became convinced that the greatest threat to its security was from Communist China and North Vietnam. Laos, which stretched for hundreds of miles along Thailand's northern and eastern borders, was the ideal target and obvious route for Communist penetration toward Thailand, from which it could subsequently spread downward to Malaysia and Singapore. It was therefore imperative for Thailand that Laos be preserved

¹Sapadasarn (Bangkok), in Thai, October 1, 1960.

²Paul Langer and Joseph Zasloff. North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao: Partners in the Struggle for Laos (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 34-35.

as a buffer zone between the Communist and the non-Communist states of Southeast Asia.

Naturally, the Vietminh drive into Laos caused such great concern for Thai security that the Thai Government immediately called for the investigation of the Laotian situation in the United Nations Security Council. Unfortunately, in spite of the fact that the majority of Security Council members were in favor of the Thai proposal to send a U.N. team to observe the Indochina situation, the Soviet veto actually prevented its adoption.¹

The first test of SEATO strength over Laos occurred in the summer of 1955, when fighting broke out in the northern Laos between the Royal Laotian Government (RLG) and the Pathet Lao forces. Thailand urged SEATO to intervene and show its commitment to defend nations in the area but was disappointed because no action was taken, due to the rejection of the plea by other SEATO members. The first attempt to mobilize SEATO, observed Modelski, "showed the influence of British and French views upon the organization, and imparted an early lesson in the difficulties of bringing the SEATO machinery into action."²

¹United Nations Document, 4/2665. Letter of July 7, 1954, from Foreign Minister of Thailand to Secretary General, cited in Fifield, The Diplomacy of ..., op. cit., p. 253.

²Modelski, ed., SEATO: Six Studies, op. cit., p. 9.

Thailand's concern over its security and national independence are well described by Fred Greene.

Thai anxiety had deep roots and could not be so easily assuaged. The country's need to depend for defense on distant great powers entailed reciprocal involvement on its part in distant crises that might provoke its powerful neighbor, China. Therefore, though the Thais previously had desired an American military presence, possibly in reaction to American reluctance to grant it, they made a major point in the late 1950's of rejecting bases on their soil, as well as other obligations that would add to their duties or limit their freedom of action.¹

In the face of mounting political tensions from both the Pathet Lao and the pro-West right-wing leaders, Premier Souvanna Phouma decided to go to Hanoi and Peking in mid-1956.² During his visit, the Premier declared that Laos would neither invoke SEATO protection nor permit U.S. military presence on its soil.³

Following the agreement signed on November 12, 1957, a coalition Government was formed which included two leaders

¹Fred Greene, U.S. Policy and the Security of Asia (N.Y.: Mc Graw-Hill Book Co., 1968), pp. 117-118. Also see John Coast, Recruit to People (London: Christophers, 1952), pp. 118-119; Philippe Devillers, "The Laotian Conflict in Perspective." in Adams and McCoy, eds., op. cit., p. 40.

²Sisouk Na Champasak, Storm Over Laos (N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1961), p. 40.

³Bernard B. Fall, in R. M. Smith, ed., Anatomy of a Crisis Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1969), p. 74. Na Champasak, op. cit., pp. 47-49. NCNA, August 25, 1956.

of the Pathet Lao.¹ On the day of the formation of this Government, the Pathet Lao would restore the two provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neue to government control, and the Pathet Lao forces would therefore be integrated into the Royal Laotian Army or demobilized. All war materials were to be turned over to the Government.²

From the time of Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma's visit to Communist China and North Vietnam until the conclusion of the 1957 Agreement, the Thai reaction was rather ambivalent. Although the Phibun regime was suspicious of Souvanna Phouma's sympathy towards the Communists, Phibun's attitude changed somewhat after his decision to seek political power through democratic means.³ Unfortunately, Phibun was overthrown in late 1957 by Marshal Sarit, a militant anti-Communist, who was very displeased with Premier Souvanna Phouma's coalition Government and wanted him removed.⁴

The Laotian general election in May, 1958, in which

¹One of these was Prince Souphanouvong, the Pathet Lao leader and half brother of the Premier.

²Nuechterlein, Thailand and the Struggle ..., op. cit., p. 145.

³New York Times, August 15, 1956.

⁴Mahajani, op. cit., p. 249. Also Press Release, Office of Information Services, Government of Thailand, Headquarters Operation Vayubut, Don Muang Airfield, Bangkok, Thailand, April 21, 1958.

the Pathet Lao victoriously gained more political power as well as parliamentary seats, had resulted in heightening American impatience with the Laotian parliamentary system. The Pathet Lao victory consequently strengthened the U.S. determination to put the right-wing Laotian army into power. In August, substantial U.S. bribes and the withholding of U.S. aid induced the Laotian Assembly to oust Souvanna Phouma in favor of the pro-Western leader, Poui Sananikone.¹ Obviously, the Thai leaders were pleased to have a regime in power in Vientiane which in many ways resembled its own pro-Western and military-dominated character and would likely to be extremely disturbed if something happened that would result in a change of political atmosphere.²

In August 1960, Captain Kong Le unexpectedly staged another military coup d'état in Vientiane, aiming to restore a neutralist regime of former Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma. Immediately, Kong Le declared his discontent with the Thai-U.S. intervention in the Laotian domestic affairs, publicly denouncing the U.S., which he accused of violating Laotian peace and neutrality.³ As the situation turned out, Kong

¹Na Champasak, op. cit., pp. 35, 37, 65. Also see Arthur Dommen, Conflict in Laos (N.Y.: Praeger, 1971), p. 28.

²New York Times, August 6, 1959 and September 9, 1959; Asian Recorder, 1959, p. 2876; Bernard B. Fall, in R. M. Smith, ed., op. cit., p. 127.

³New York Times, August 10, 1960; Na Champasak, op. cit., pp. 157-158; Wilson, "Bangkok's Dim View . . .," op. cit., p. 14.

Le's coup did alter the Laotian political scene from a staunchy anti-Communist and pro-Western policy to a neutralist stand with some forms of socialist ideas.

Thailand, the U.S., and the Laotian right-wing had high stakes in preserving the right-wing's power in Laos. In Thailand, the Sarit Government had tremendously benefited from the military alliance with the U.S.. Besides, Sarit's regime was convinced that North Vietnam and China intended to foment insurrection in the economically backward Northeast region of Thailand as part of "a general Communist strategy" for subjugating the Southeast Asia mainland. This assessment of the Communist threat to the region was shared by many U.S. officials in the early 1960's.¹

The Thai domestic political scene and Sarit's attitude towards Kong Le's coup and towards U.S. aid were very well described as the following dispatch:

Thailand's Sarit Thanarat was extremely close to General Phoumi. His bitter hostility toward Souvanna Phouma was motivated by anti-communist, and self-interest. He hoped to prevent any reduction in U.S. military aid to Thailand by stressing that Thai security was threatened by events in Laos. By mid-September 1960, Sarit shelled the neutralist-held Vientiane from across the Mekong, and threw up an economic blockade against the Souvanna government which caused an acute shortage of rice and petroleum in Vientiane²

¹Poole, op. cit., p. 73.

²New York Times, August 10, 11, 12 and 17, 1960; September 18, 19, 20, 25, and 26, 1960. Some observers feared that the Thai hostile reactions would drive the Laotians to commit themselves deeper to the Communist camp.

The Thai foreign policy toward the Laotian conflict pursued by the Sarit Government after October, 1960 was therefore based on measures to prevent an extension of the influence of the Pathet Lao into Thailand's Northeast. The main reason for Sarit's concern lay in the fact that the possibilities for infiltration in the Mekong Region were many and varied and the situation was complicated by the presence along the Thai bank of the Mekong of a well-established group of Vietnamese, estimated at 70,000 who were responsive to Vietminh influence. Besides, the northeastern provinces of Thailand, as already indicated in the previous chapters, have traditionally served as a base for politicians opposing the Government during the Kingdom's various parliamentary regimes. Moreover, the depressed economic conditions of the region, coupled with hostility to Bangkok domination have nurtured potential oppositionism, which undercuts the Government's control of the region.

Since the Thai leaders, especially Sarit, stubbornly regarded the Pathet Lao Movement as an extension of the Vietminh and other Communist powers, Thailand has always firmly rejected the possibility of neutrality for Laos as unfeasible. In an interview on February 2, 1961, Sarit revealed his skepticism and his country's concern with the development of Laotian neutrality.

As for Laos being neutral, it would be fine if it were true. But a country that is able to be neutral must be a country that is not weak. It must be

economically strong and capable of helping itself, as Switzerland is. As for Laos, it cannot stand on its own feet, so how can it be neutral?¹

As the situation in Laos continued to deteriorate, Sarit reportedly said: "It is certainly without the slightest doubt that if this situation persists in this manner, the Kingdom of Laos would entirely fall into Communist hands. If the Kingdom of Laos were to fall completely under the control of the Communists, how much danger would befall Thailand?"² Shortly after that, Sarit declared that if the situation in Laos developed to the point where Thailand was threatened, "I shall have to fight in defence of it."³

In order to strengthen its own security, Thailand had been ambivalent towards the question of intervention in the affairs of Laos. From time to time, the Thai Foreign Minister, Thanat Khoman, stressed his country's concern over the Laotian conflict and its implication for the security of Thailand. Further, Thanat made it clear that the U.S. was Thailand's foreign policy problem, as it had been for almost fifteen years, and Laos was the local indicator of the state

¹Sapadasarn(Bangkok), in Thai, February 11, 1961.

²For the text of Sarit's statement on Laos, see Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Special Publication, Statement of His Excellency the Prime Minister on the Situation in the Kingdom of Laos, September 21, 1960.

³Ibid.

of this problem.¹

By May 1961 while the Pathet Lao successfully expanded its control to over half of the country's land area, the International Conference for the Settlement of the Lao-tian Question was convened in Geneva on May 16, 1961.² Prior to the meeting, the Thai Government expressed deep anxiety over the drifts of events in Laos; it was believed that these developments would be a prelude to an eventual takeover of the country by the Communists. Mr. Thanat stated:

It is, therefore, clear that the Communists' main objective is to expand their area of occupation in Laos with a view to gaining political advantage and tightening their political stand at the forthcoming 14-nation Conference.³

As far as the role of the Americans was concerned, their refusal to risk war in Laos and their unwillingness at the Conference Table to pressure for a solution that would prevent the Communists from gaining control over all territory of Laos, caused disillusionment among Thai leaders. Hence, in mid-May, 1961, Vice President Johnson was sent over to reassure Asian leaders that the U.S. Govern-

¹Wilson, "Thailand-Scandal and Progress," op. cit., p. 111; Harold Munthe-Kass, "Interview-Thanat Khoman, Foreign Minister of Thailand," FEER 52:7 (May 19, 1966), p. 329.

²There were 14 nations invited to attend this Conference: Burma, Cambodia, Canada, Communist China, North Vietnam, France, India, Laos, Poland, South Vietnam, Thailand, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the U.S.

³Bangkok World, April 29, 1961, pp. 1, 14.

ment was not planning to withdraw its support and commitment to defend Southeast Asia from Communist advances and domination. In Bangkok, Vice President Johnson and Premier Sarit issued a joint statement emphasizing the U.S. policy to defend Thailand, which, however, made no mention of Laos.¹ During the meeting, it was reported that Johnson had offered to send American troops to Thailand, but Sarit had turned down the suggestion by declaring that "we don't want to agree to that because the Thai people will not like it. We support the sending of SEATO troops into Laos if the Geneva Conference fails, but we do not want troops based in our country."² This report was later confirmed by Foreign Minister Thanat who asserted that it was the American idea to station its troops in Thailand. Also Thanat maintained that the dispatch of U.S. troops to Thailand in 1962 was again an initiative of the American Government.³

In the following months, Thai leaders were alarmed at the prospect of having to accept the Communist-dominated coalition government in Vientiane, since the Pathet Lao

¹Department of State Bulletin, June 19, 1961, pp. 958-959.

²Bangkok Post, May 31, 1961.

³Personal interview with Mr. Thanat Khoman, at the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations, New York City, September 1975.

forces were gaining more territory in the North. Shortly before the Geneva Agreement was reached, General Surachit Charusareni, Minister of Agriculture and also Director General of the Thai Public Relations Department, had bitterly predicted the outcome of the Geneva Conference:

At the moment, Thailand feels that the Western nations, especially the U.S., are more interested in solving the Berlin problem than the Laotian problem. If one is forced to choose between Europe and Asia, one will choose Europe - and industrialized area which has greater military power than Asia. Asia has almost nothing.¹

The impact of the Laotian Civil War on the Thai-U.S. relations was that it created a "crisis of confidence" in which the Thai trust in SEATO and U.S. alliances reached its low point. Nevertheless, it would not be too unfair to assert that the Thai military regimes went too far in assuming that the U.S. would go to war to maintain a friendly government in Vientiane. Thailand's obsession with maintaining a rightist Government in Laos caused it to believe that only General Phoumi was capable of preserving peace and Thailand's interests. The Thai conviction went further in assuming that Souvanna Phouma's style of neutralism was only a step along the road to the Communist domination of Laos. Nuechterlein made the point clear when he stated that the major flaw in Thailand's policy was the assumption that the U.S. would support a pro-

¹Seri Thai (Bangkok), June 16, 1961.

Western government in Laos under all circumstances and that it considered the defense of Laos identical with the defense of Thailand. For Thailand, observed Nuechterlein,

Laos was a barometer of Western intensions in SEATO. If the West took a strong stand to preserve a non-communist government in Vientiane, Thailand was confident that its own borders would be protected. When, however, the West faltered in Laos and began to compromise in 1960 and 1961, Thailand feared that Western will had begun to erode, and that eventually these nations would not be able or willing to hold back the Communist menace in Southeast Asia.¹

Prior to the Laotian civil war, in which Thai leaders became disillusioned and skeptical of American intention to defend Southeast Asia from Communist aggression, relations between the U.S. and Thailand were friendly and rather amicable. Several prominent Thai leaders made extensive tours of the U.S., including Marshal Sarit and Kukrit Pramoj, a prominent journalist.² One of the most memorable events was the visit of the King and Queen of Thailand to the U.S. in July, 1960. In Washington, King Phumipol addressed a joint session of Congress, in which he appealed for even closer relation between the two countries.³

The Royal visit and other official visits to the

¹Nuechterlein, op. cit., p. 220.

²Chicago Daily News, December 10, 1958.

³"Proceeding and Debates of the 86th Congress, 2nd Session," Congressional Record, vol. 106, June 26, 1960, pp. 3894-3895. King Phumipol is the only reigning monarch in the world born in the U.S. In Washington, he asserted that he was born in the U.S., "so I can say the U.S. is half my motherland." U.S. Department of State Bulletin, July 25, 1960.

U.S. had in many ways revealed to a considerable degree a possibly distorted impression of Thailand. Unfortunately, many American officials failed to differentiate the Thai intellectuals, whose brief association had commanded their respect, from the ruling generals who were exercising real power in Thailand. Sarit himself while in the U.S. had limited contact with U.S. officials and had no significant exposure to the American public.¹ In fact, Sarit and his military colleagues were far from sophisticated. Their outlooks were rather conservative and authoritarian.

Yet many American officials chose to ignore the fact that the Thai conservative military leaders had no interest in any kind of democracy and basic human rights. Secretary of State Dulles sent a personal letter to Sarit, reiterating his fear of Communism and praising the army chief for his devotion to the cause of the "free world".²

Contrary to officially distorted views of the recent developments in Thailand, the American press seemed to hold a different view. Sarit was referred to as "a relatively clean scoundrel" who was not considered too corrupt before he took power in 1958.³ Also Bernard Kalb wrote in the New York Times, criticizing Sarit's coup and his abolition of the legislature. Kalb argued that the reason for

¹Darling, Thailand and the..., op. cit., p. 178.

²Bangkok Post, December 23, 1958.

³New York Times, November 6, 1957.

Sarit's action was not any serious anxiety regarding internal Communists but it was actually his desire to remove any opposition which had "the potential of growing into a constitutionally based threat to the Marshal's clique."¹

In Fall 1962, when the crisis in Laos erupted once again, leading to the breakdown of the Laotian coalition government, Thai leaders viewed this changing situation as the renewal of Communist pressure in Laos, which of course directly threatened the security of Thailand. Following the Pathet Lao's attack on the town of Nam Tha, the Thai leaders' concern became so heightened that they urged the U.S. to do something to alleviate the crisis.²

Amidst the growing Thai concern, U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy visited Bangkok with the mission to convince Thai leaders that the U.S. "is dedicated to the security of Thailand."³ Sarit took the opportunity to convince Mr. Kennedy that the renewal of fighting in Laos could become a stepping stone for a Communist 'takeover' of Laos and subsequently of Thailand.⁴

Perhaps leaders in Washington had come to realize

¹New York Times, October 25, 1958.

²Thailand, Foreign Affairs Bulletin, (February-March 1962), p. 65.

³New York Times, February 19, 1962.

⁴Thailand, Foreign Affairs Bulletin, op. cit., p. 67.

by then that something had to be done to reassure Thai leaders of the U.S. firm commitment to Thailand's security. Consequently, Foreign Minister Thanat was invited to Washington in early March, 1962. After a week of negotiations, a joint statement by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman was issued on March 6, 1962. The statement re-affirmed the U.S. obligation to preserve Thailand's integrity and independence.¹

Following the U.S. assurance that it would continue to give more military assistance to Thailand, Sarit delivered a speech asserting Thailand's close relations with the U.S..² Insor claimed that this was a turning point in Thailand's attitude in the Laotian political problem and possibly the key factor in Thailand's acceptance of the Laotian coalition government headed by Souvanna Phouma.³

By April, when the Pathet Lao forces increased their attack on the town of Nam Tha to press for the agreement which has been persistently refused by the right-wing groups, the situation in Laos became critical once again.⁴ The sudden collapse of General Phoumi's rightist

¹U.S. Department of State Bulletin, March 26, 1962; New York Times, March 11, 1962; Foreign Affairs Bulletin, *ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

²New York Times, March 11, 1962.

³Insor, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131; Bangkok Post, March 26, 1962.

⁴Oliver Clubb, The U.S. and the Sino-Soviet Bloc in

forces and their panic escape to the Thai border following the Pathet Lao seizure of Nam Tha had a profound impact on the Thai Government. Thailand immediately charged that the Pathet Lao, with Vietminh support, had intentionally violated the Conference cease-fire agreement and urged the U.S. Government to take the action to prevent the Communists from advancing to the Thai border.¹

Finally on May 17, the Kennedy Administration decided to send 4,800 American troops to Thailand. A task force of 1,800 U.S. Marines was landed in Bangkok and later transported to Udorn Province in Northeast Thailand, only 25 miles from the Laotian borders. Additional U.S. Army and Marine forces were flown from Hawaii to reinforce the first Air Force units and an Army engineer battalion in the Northeast. The official communique state that American military forces were sent to Thailand "to help insure the territorial integrity of this peaceful country."²

Peking's reaction to the dispatch of U.S. and SEATO troops to Northeast Thailand was naturally hostile. In Radio Peking's Thai language program, it announced that:

Southeast Asia (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1962), p. 67.

¹Nuechterlein, op. cit., p. 239.

²New York Times, May 16, 1962; see also "Thailand Insurgency: A New Cause?" in Military Review, August 1967, mimeo. by TIC/CU, Bangkok. The statements of Thai and U.S. Governments were published in Department of State Bulletin, June 4, 1962, pp. 904-905; and in Thailand's Foreign Affairs Bulletin, April-May 1962, pp. 29-30.

Now that the U.S. (by landing troops in Thailand) has linked its military strength with South Vietnam, Thailand and Laos, there is a serious threat to China and Southeast Asia. U.S. imperialism has advanced another step by making a crescent-shaped, moon-like encirclement in the Southeast Asian socialist countries and suppressing the people of this region.¹

C) The U.S. Military Build-Up, the Contingency Plan, and the Escalation of Guerrilla Warfare in the Northeast

Throughout 1963 there were continuing indications of subversion in Thailand Northeastern provinces. It was reported in the Thai press that Pathet Lao aircraft had dropped arms over Thai territory and of Thai citizens, mostly Isan villagers, being taken from the villages for training in North Vietnam and Communist China. Nevertheless, although mass arrests were reportedly launched in the Northeast on charges of Communist conspiracy, no violence other than that initiated by the Thai police had been reported by the end of the year.² Also the Chinese denunciation of Thai-U.S. cooperation increased during this period. One article called the Thanom Government "traitorous", and charged that "today Thailand has become a

¹Peking Radio, in Thai, May 26, 1962; Foreign Radio Broadcasts, Daily Report, May 9, 1962.

²New York Times, January 8, 1964.

new-type colony of U.S. imperialism..."¹

The overthrow of President Diem's Government in South Vietnam in 1963 and the subsequent announcement of the formation of the TPF in January 1965 greatly alarmed the Thai leaders. Hence, the Thai and the U.S. Governments came to the conclusion that they had to cooperate closely in order to achieve their objective.

As a matter of fact, after the Rusk-Thanat communique had been concluded, the U.S. successfully obtained the Thai concession to build air bases in Thailand to facilitate its war campaign in Indochina. In return for these secret agreements to use Thai territory, the U.S. apparently bribed the Thai juntas with more military aid as well as political kickbacks of all sorts so that the generals could strengthen their internal position as well as their absolute power. In this respect, while the U.S. kept explaining that its action was meant only to contain Communism, its intervention in Thailand was sharply criticized by many distinguished Thai scholars. For example, Kramol Thongthammachat, the present Dean of the Faculty of Political Science at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, indicated that Kennedy's policy to escalate U.S. military operations in Indochina might stem from a desire to contain Communism in Europe and to move the Cold War theatre

¹SCMP, Hong Kong, no. 3273, August 3, 1964, pp. 35-36.

from the closer and more strategically important Berlin and Cuba to the remote and strategically less important areas of Southeast Asia.¹

The American intervention and military activities in Thailand during this period have been the subject of analysis by a former AID official who asserted that:

There was in 1964 little generally available evidence of communist activity in rural Thailand, and the U.S. military was not overtly concerned with the possible development of guerrilla warfare either ... It has been not implausibly argued, therefore, that the rapid increase in American economic aid to Thailand represented at least in part a form of rent for American use of Thai air bases in conjunction with the Vietnam war.²

As has been revealed and later admitted by the Thai Government at a much later date, despite its staunch denial from the beginning, the U.S. engaged in planning for its Indochina war strategy and base construction in Thailand as early as 1962. From then on, the American involvement in Thailand as clearly first and foremost concerned with the build-up at the five large bases used for the bombing of Vietnam.³ The U.S. air bases were located in Takli, Ubon, Udorn, Nakorn Phanom, Khorat and the Utapao base at

¹Kramol Thongthammachat, in a series of lectures on Asian politics and international relations, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University during the Fall and Spring semesters, 1968.

²Alexander Caldwell, American Economic Aid to Thailand (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1974), p. 64.

³W. Scott Thompson, Unequal Partners (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1975), p. 46.

Sattahip. Of all these bases, four of them were located in the strategic areas of Northeast Thailand.¹ Following the Tonkin Gulf incident, it is believed that U.S. military aid to Thailand were greatly increased and after the conclusion of the Contingency Plan, base construction was expanded to a full scale. The year 1965 was also significant because it was the year in which large numbers of American military personnel first began to appear on Thai soil.²

The U.S. Embassy in Bangkok was apparently under considerable pressure during 1965 and particularly 1966 to acknowledge that the bombing of North Vietnam was being carried out from Thai bases, as was widely reported in the American press. By denying it or evading questions on the subject, the Embassy ran a serious risk of creating a "credibility gap" about its statements. It was also undoubtedly in the interest of Thailand as well as that of the U.S. to make clear the fact that these bases were not there to permit the bombing of North Vietnam, Laos and other territory in Thailand.³

In January 1965, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, publicly declared that he hoped for "a guerrilla war

¹New York Times, December 9, 1968.

²Lovelace, op. cit., p. 49.

³New York Times, June 26, 1966.

in Thailand within a year."¹ Although this story may well be rhetoric, China's involvement with Thailand's insurgency did increase during the year, signaled by a VOPT announcement on January 1 of the formation of the TPF which also indicated its aim to join with "all Thai people who love peace and democracy irrespective of political or religious affiliations."²

Therefore, it is widely speculated that Peking's response to the escalation of American military build-up in Thailand was to elevate the status of insurgency in Thailand from that of "a broad mass struggle" to "a people's war". After the beginning of 1966, the Thai press reported the expansion of guerrilla operations in the Northeast. By the end of the year, assassinations of Government officials and sympathizers in remote areas, especially in the Northeast, averaged ten per month. Yet, the CT's continued to avoid combat whenever possible, and police installations had not been attacked at that time.³

Closer analysis of the Chinese reaction to the U.S. military build-up in Northeast Thailand would indicate that the Chinese press comments on the situation in Thailand

¹FEER 51:6 (February 10, 1966), p. 235.

²Lovelace, op. cit., p. 48.

³U.S. Department of State, World Strength of the Communist Organizations (19th ed.), January 1967, p. 89.

were at first confined to quotations of the VOPT broadcasts and reports from Western news agencies. It was only after the first series of American air raids on North Vietnam in early February that these comments began to criticize the Thai Government's role in the Vietnam conflict. Among these were a statement of the TIM declaring that the "Thai and Vietnamese peoples have a common fate" and a "common enemy" in their struggles against U.S. imperialism. Also a report in the Nhan Dan, an official Hanoi organ, commented that Thailand "certainly cannot escape having to bear the responsibility for the serious consequences of permitting the U.S. use of its territories for 'aggression' against the DRV."¹

While Chinese propaganda continued to attack U.S. colonialism and its danger to Thailand throughout this period, some attention was devoted to the development of domestic Thai politics, especially to the issues of Government failure to institute genuine democracy, political repression, corruption, the economic plight of Northerners and unemployment, as well as police terrorism.² U.S. strategy to use Thailand as an extension of its military campaign in Indochina and the possible "spill-over" of the

¹JMJP, March 12, 1965, p. 3; March 22, 1965, p. 5; April 6, 1965, p. 4; April 8, 1965, p. 4; also see Gurtov, China and Southeast Asia, op. cit., p. 25.

²VOPT broadcast, May 25, 1965.

Vietnam was into the Northeast were discussed also by the Chinese media.

Recently, U.S. imperialism has been intensifying its use of Thailand as a base for expanding its aggressive war in Vietnam, and moreover has exerted all efforts to drag Thailand into the Indochina war. The Thai authorities, following the aggressive policies of U.S. imperialism, have permitted U.S. military personnel and jet aircrafts to enter Thailand continuously. U.S. aircraft have taken off from Thailand one after another to bomb the DRV and Laos. Under the urging of U.S. imperialism, the Thai authorities have also prepared to send military personnel to South Vietnam to participate in the aggressive war.¹

As the air war over North Vietnam moved into high gear, as additional American personnel arrived in Thailand, and as the U.S. prepared to increase its own forces in South Vietnam by about 75,000, the Chinese press also increased its verbal campaign against Thailand. It charged that the Thai leaders had increased military support to the right-wing Laotian army and had permitted a step-up in U.S. bombing runs from Thai bases, thus suggesting that these developments could lead to a full scale guerrilla warfare and the possibility of revolutionary violence.²

It may be more than coincidental that the noticeable intensification of Communist-supported dissidence in Northeast Thailand occurred soon after this denunciation. After it was reported that an armed incident had taken

¹Jen-minh Jih-pao, April 28, 1965, p. 4; see also Gurtov, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

²Ibid., July 8, 1965, p. 3.

place in the Northeast province of Nongkhai in late August of 1965, Peking seized the opportunity to declare that the increasing level of Northeast insurgency was a retaliatory act on the part of Thai dissidents against close U.S.-Thai cooperation. Gurtov offered an interesting remark on this episode:

... in identifying the Northeast rather than the South¹ as the locale of potentially serious Communist revolutionary area, Peking seemed to have selected the region not only where its support of the insurgents would be most credible, but also where Thailand's 'collusion' with the U.S. was of greatest import for developments in Laos and Vietnam. If this assessment is correct, it further supports the proposition advanced earlier that China's decision to support the Thai Communist movement was primarily dictated by developments outside Thailand.²

In addition, Radio Peking announced in mid-1965 that: "Following the Tonkin Gulf incident of last August, the U.S. has greatly stepped up its activities in Thailand. It has sent to Thailand a large number of tanks and various types of aircraft. Northeast Thailand has now become the training and take-off base for U.S. bombing of North Vietnam and Laos."³ Similar themes appeared in the Peking press in October threatening the Thai Government with "punishment

¹For further comparative analysis of the Northeast and Southern insurgencies, see Maynard Parker, "Subversion in Thailand," The Reporter, August 11, 1966, reprinted in Survival, Institute for Strategic Studies, October 1966, vol. 8, no. 10.

²Gurtov, op. cit., p. 26.

³FBIS, Daily Report, May 7, 1965.

for its collaboration" with the American war effort and promising that, as such cooperation continued, "the more widespread and intensified will become the patriotic struggle in Thailand."¹

In the face of Peking's growing hostility towards Thailand, as well as an increasing support to the Northeast insurgency, the Thai leaders concluded another important military agreement with the U.S. in 1965. This "Contingency Plan", signed by Premier Thanom and General Stillwell, embodied a 400-page document which allowed the U.S. to use air bases in Thailand as well as permitted U.S. B-52 aircraft to operate from such bases against targets in both North and South Vietnam and subsequently in Laos.² Girling observed that the 1965 plan was almost certainly drawn up as a quid pro quo for the American use of Thai air-bases to bomb North Vietnam and "occupied" areas of Laos. Because this exposed the Thais to the risk of retaliation by North Vietnam, and perhaps by China, the U.S. agreed to provide assistance contingent in the threat, although the latter only materialized in a minor way.³

In the final outcome, it has been proved that the

¹JMJP, October 7, 1965; SCMP, no. 3556, October 12, 1965, p. 33.

²Richard Butwell, "Thailand After Vietnam," Current History 57:340 (December 1969), p. 340.

³J. L. S. Girling, "The Guam Doctrine," International Affairs 46:1 (January 1970), p. 58.

"Contingency Plan" neither represented Thai interests nor provided benefits for the Thais, as has been declared. Also, it neither guaranteed Thai national security from subversive activities nor gave American protection against Communist aggression. On the other hand, the U.S. gained much benefit from this Agreement, since the Plan allowed the U.S. to station its soldiers and planes in Thailand to conduct bombing and insurgent activities in Indochina. Of course, the U.S. did benefit greatly, both in reducing the material cost of the war operations and in decreasing the number of injuries and deaths for its soldiers. If, however, we look at the problem from the Thai point of view, Thai national security was indeed jeopardized, since the presence of U.S. bases in the country threatened the security of China and confirmed Thailand's role in the destruction of Indochina states. It was likely that China and North Vietnam would retaliate and counterattack, in which case Thailand would inevitably become a target of Communist attack. This matter was even serious when we consider all sorts of social problems attached to the presence of American forces in the country.¹ The presence of a large number of American G.I.'s convinced the Thais that Thailand had become a U.S. colony, not to mention

¹For details, see Herbert Phillips, "Thai Attitudes Towards the American Presence," in W. Caspany Buckout and R. Hazelton, eds., U.S. Involvement in Thailand (N.Y.: Beacon Press, 1968).

their special privileges and diplomatic immunity, formerly granted only to citizens of the mother country in the colonial system. Unfortunately, their presence created great social upheaval and a decline in morality, as well as economic inflation.¹

Perhaps the best evaluation of Thai-U.S. "Contingency Plan" was made by the U.S. Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, on August 21, 1969. On that occasion, Laird had issued a spectacular statement that the Nixon Administration did not feel bound by the 1965 Contingency Plan, and that the Plan had not been approved by the Administration or ratified by the Congress.² Laird's statement caused furious reactions from the Thai leaders, who were not convinced that, in a democratic country like the U.S., there could possibly be a plan carried out openly and supported by a large sum of money but with no proper authorization or prior approval from its government.

In response to Laird's statement, Thanat declared:

... the discharge of the treaty obligation may be, to say the least, contingent upon too many circumstances. If the U.S. Executive and the Legislative agree on the implementation, the obligation will be readily carried out. But if one side, the Administration, is willing or appears to be willing to discharge the obligations but the legislature is

¹Garrett, op. cit., p. 12; see also Khian Thiravit and Suchart Sawassri, Krai lamerd a-thi-pa-tai Who Violates Sovereignty? (Bangkok: Pikkness Press, 1975), pp. 31-47, 93-117.

²The Sun, Baltimore, August 22, 1969.

reluctant or oppose to such a course, the treaty may not be executed and may become void.¹

Since early in 1966, there has been a series of reports in the American press that 45 per cent of the missions flown against North Vietnam originated in Thailand and by July of that year, American Air Force personnel at various bases numbered nearly 25,000 men.² By the end of the year, the number of U.S. military personnel in Thailand had increased to 34,000, and 80 per cent of the bombing missions over the DRV were originating from Thai bases in the Northeast.³

Throughout this period, in spite of the U.S. military escalation in Vietnam and an increase in violence and insurgency in the Northeast, there had not yet been any attempt to sabotage U.S. military installations or to assassinate U.S. personnel on Thai soil. With regard to the much-publicized stories of the U.S. military presence in Thailand, the Thai leaders reluctantly admitted in March, 1967, that Thai bases were being used for bombing missions in Indochina, and stated that the U.S. could use the base at Utapao "so long as ... the threat of Communist aggression

¹Thanat Khoman, "Thailand's Foreign Policy in 1970's" Speech at the Gala dinner of the Board of Trustees of Asia Society in New York City on February 24, 1970, p. 24., mimeographed by the Royal Thai Embassy, Washington, D.C.

²New York Times, July 1, 1966.

³NCNA, Peking, January 14, 1966; SCMP, no. 3620, January 19, 1966, p. 32.

against free nations in Southeast Asia still continues."¹

In addition to its military build-up in Thailand, the U.S. also financed Thai military intervention in Laos. At the rate of \$ 26 million a year, the number of Thai troops engaged in combat operations and advisory mission in Laos had increased from 5,000 in the mid-1960's to 10,000 in 1971 and 20,000 in 1973.²

Again, Peking's concern over Thai-U.S. cooperation and Thailand's role in the Indochina war was expressed in the editorial columns of the Chinese press.

It can be predicted that the more the Thai authorities let the wolf into their house, and the more the Thai territory changes into a new type U.S. colony and military base, so will the patriotic struggle of the Thai people become even broader and more deeply developed.³

The oblique reference to "another Vietnam" soon became more direct and may have been linked to the renewal of intensive air action over North Vietnam after a 37-day bombing "pause".⁴ In the following month, when the Thai Government declared that an additional number of Thai naval and air contingents would be sent to South Vietnam,

¹New York Times, January 19, 1967.

²Testimony by Leonard Unger, U.S. Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Kingdom of Thailand, 91st Congress, Washington, D.C., November 10-17, 1969, pp. 689-690; M. Godley's testimony, Testimony of former U.S. Ambassador to Laos, Facts on Files, May 6-12, 1973.

³JMJP, October 7, 1965, p. 3.

⁴Ibid., April 27, 1966, p. 4.

the Chinese press reported a statement made by Peking Foreign Minister, calling the latest Thai decision a "grave step" and noting that the American presence had increased once more to "over 18,000." Moreover, the Chinese Foreign Minister offered a threatening remark that the Northeast rebellion was bound to intensify in direct proportion to Thailand's involvement in Vietnam and that Thailand could not escape the linking together of the Vietnam battlefield with Thailand itself.¹

What is significant about these statements is that they now specified that Thailand had already lost its sovereignty and was a full-fledged American colony, thus rationalizing a "people's war". Furthermore, the statements made clear that stepped-up dissidence in the Northeast would be the penalty the Thai Government would have to pay for not only permitting the U.S. use of Thai air bases and granting occupation privileges to American personnel, but also for taking on a direct combat role in South Vietnam. Finally, the implication of the Chinese statements was that the penalty would be meted out by the "Indochinese" people in cooperation with the Thai Communists, thus warning of increased North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao support of the Thai insurgents.²

¹Ibid., May 4, 1966, p. 1.

²Gurtov, op. cit., p. 32.

Early in 1966, U.S. Government had reached a decision to enlarge the Utapao naval base for possible use of the B-52 aircraft.¹ By the close of the year, there were nearly 40,000 American military personnel stationed in Thailand. On March 22, 1967, the Thai Minister of Defense announced that as of April 1, American B-52's bombers would be stationed at Utapao air base, although American officials at that time still denied the story.² This latest move was designed to cut the flying distance to targets in South Vietnam from 2,500 miles to 425 miles, suggesting that the B-52's in Thailand could serve a larger purpose. They would "be symbolic of an expanded strategic interest in the Southeast Asia-Indian Ocean area." Obviously, Utapao would slightly cut the flying distance for U.S. aircraft to such potential strategic targets in China, such as the atomic test grounds at Lop Nor and Peking.³

Naturally, Peking viewed this latest tactic by the Thai-U.S. leadership as a design for "directing the spearhead of its aggression against China." In enlarging its military bases in Thailand, the "U.S. has in mind ... that, towards the east, it can attack Vietnam, Laos and other Indochinese countries and toward the north, it can attack the 'soft underbelly' of China."⁴ Peking also charged that

¹Senate Hearings, "U.S. Agreements...", op. cit., p. 668.

²New York Times, November 18, 1966, p. 5.

³Ibid., April 8, 1967, p. 3.

⁴NCNA, April 2, 1967; FBIS, April 3, 1967.

the Thai bases had become part of the American base system that was being used to "encircle" China.¹

In spite of bitter denunciations by Chinese leaders, Thai-American relations continued to be reshaped throughout 1967. Nevertheless, when a Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee disclosed that under a secret agreement signed in 1967, the U.S. had paid Thai Government more than \$ 200 million to send troops to Vietnam, Thai Government spokesman were incensed and the American Government, embarrassed.² By 1968, it also widely known that there were some 43,000 U.S. military personnel stationed in various bases, mostly in the Northeast of Thailand, of whom 33,000 were Air Force personnel involved directly in bombing operations in Vietnam.³ Besides, a large number of American G.I.'s on Rest and Recreation leave from Vietnam were reportedly passing through Bangkok each year.⁴

One thing needs to be made clear in relation to the Congressional attack on the presence of American troops in Thailand. Contrary to the charges, the fact is that there had no American troops engaged in combat operations and

¹JMJP, January 20, 1967, p. 5.

²New York Times, June 18, 1970; Neher, "Thailand: Toward Fundamental Change," op. cit., p. 136.

³New York Times, October 4, 1968.

⁴O'Neil, "Who Says Thailand's Next?" op. cit., p.24.

military counterinsurgency programs in Thailand.¹ Even the U.S. Ambassador, Graham Martin, acknowledged that Thai leaders considered the task of maintaining order and counterinsurgency within Thailand to be a "Thai responsibility which they will meet with their own armed forces."² Accordingly, General Prapas publicly declared that : "We absolutely do not want American involvement in combat against Communist guerrillas. This is a Thai Government responsibility, and we will carry out the suppression ourselves."³

In fact, the closest thing to this situation occurred in 1967 when unarmed American helicopters ferried Thai troops in counter-insurgency operations in the Northeast. When the RTG (Royal Thai Government) forces completed the transitional training for the field operation of the forty-nine Royal Thai Air Force troop - carrying helicopters, the American helicopters were withdrawn.⁴ Additionally, there had been 400 American Special Force troops involved in training Thais in guerrilla warfare, but they were among

¹Richard Lee Hough, "Development and Security in Thailand: Lessons from other Asian Countries," Asian Survey 9:3 (March 1969), p. 178.

²The text of Ambassador Graham Martin's speech, entitled "Thailand and Southeast Asia," was published in the State Department Bulletin, February 6, 1967, pp. 193-199.

³Bangkok Post, December 9, 1967.

⁴Leonard Unger, Speech at the American Chamber of Commerce Luncheon in Bangkok, January 17, 1968, U.S.I.S. Bangkok, Press Release.

the first of the 6,000 American troops already withdrawn from Thailand by July 1968. Besides, there was a U.S. Army Engineers Battalion of about 1,000 to 1,200 men engaged in road building in various Northeastern provinces of Sakol Nakorn and Nakorn Phanom, and a 606th Air Force Medical Detachment engaged in Public Health activities in the same areas.¹

U.S. military aid to Thailand was approximately 60,000,000 annually for the years 1967 and 1968. U.S. economic aid for the respective years was \$ 47,900,000.² Aside from direct military aid to the Thai Government, U.S. military expenditures in Thailand over the previous five years pertaining only to the war in Vietnam had totaled \$ 759,000,000, since 80 per cent of U.S. air operations in Vietnam came from bases in Thailand.³ Indeed, the American presence and its bombing mission over Vietnam carried out solely from bases in Northeast Thailand had grave effects in endangering the security of Thailand and were likely to provoke Chinese retaliatory measures against Thailand. Through the end of 1970, total U.S. grant

¹Washington Post, August 24, 1969; see also S. M. Ali, "Thailand In Transition," The Asia Magazine, February 2, 1969, pp. 8-10.

²Frank C. Darling, "Thailand: De-escalation and Uncertainty," Asian Survey 9:2 (February 1969), p. 117.

³S. B. Perera, "The Star Spangled Spanner," FEER, October 12, 1969, pp. 162-163.

economic assistance added up to about \$ 500 million and direct military assistance accounted for another \$ 800 million for the same period. Viksnins suggested that it is probable that U.S. economic assistance to Thailand would have been phased out in the mid-1960's "had it not been for Thailand's strategic location."¹

Major U.S. Government Expenditures in Thailand, 1965-1972.*

	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>
war expenditure	922.1	2,584.1	4,109.2	4,917.8
mil. assistance	731.0	1,013.0	1,355.0	1,500.0
eco. assistance	357.4	438.8	799.6	1,172.4
	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>
war expenditure	4,629.7	4,192.1	3,788.5	4,000.3
mil. assistance	1,392.0	1,273.0	1,150.0	-
eco. assistance	864.3	613.0	519.0	470.4

* In millions of baht; U.S. \$ 1 = 20.8 baht.

Source: George Viksnins, "U.S. Military Spending in Thailand," Asian Survey 13:5 (May 1973), p. 442.

D) Troubled Partnership
and the Renewal of U.S. Escalation

U.S. military intervention and the military aid program have been a subject of controversy and widely criticized by academic scholars and Government bureaucrats.

¹Viksnins, *ibid.*, p. 441.

As Leifer commented:

... it kept the U.S. tied to a military regime which has long relied on U.S. support to maintain its position and, as the events of November 1971 showed, to abolish the structure of meaningful political opposition. U.S. aid, which increasingly will supply the Thai army with Vietnam surplus equipment, may also - as in Vietnam - so conventionalize the Thai forces that their most readily available counter-insurgency weapons will be highly destructive. The Thai command has already availed itself of U.S. helicopters, napalm, and bomb-carrying jets, with results often counter-productive to the objective of winning hearts and minds.¹

The 1969 debate headlined by Senator Fulbright and focusing on Thailand as another Vietnam, in which American troops would be involved under the SEATO contingency plan,² was countered by the denial of the Thai Government that there was no necessity or desire for American combat troops in Thailand. Thanat bitterly declared that "foreign troops were unsuited psychologically, physiologically and morally for wars of internal subversion."³ Thanat also charged that the campaign in the U.S. presenting Thailand as a second Vietnam had encouraged the Thai terrorists to increase subversive activities.⁴

Increasing allegations in the U.S. Senate that

¹Michael Leifer, "Great Power Intervention and Regional Order," in Zacher and Milne, op. cit., p. 230.

²Washington Post, November 8, 1969.

³New York Times, September 9, 1969.

⁴Siam Rath (Bangkok), September 9, 1969.

Thailand had received more than \$ U.S. 1 billion for sending troops to Vietnam not only injured Thai pride but provoke second thoughts about Thailand's association with the U.S. An American counter-insurgency adviser to Thailand, George Tanham, noted that the Thais who felt they had been loyal allies to the point of abandoning their traditional "middle-of-the-road" policy, were angered and hurt by the attacks. They felt that those who had done nothing to help the U.S. were rewarded, while, they, who had tried to help the U.S. were being attacked and vilified.¹ Resentment was all the stronger because the allegations came so soon after the row over the so-called military "Contingency Plan". Moreover, Thai-American relations further declined as a result of U.S. pressure on the South Vietnamese Government to take American surplus rice instead of buying rice from Thailand as it traditionally did in the past. This event naturally caused the decline of Thai rice market, with a drop of several thousand tons in Thai rice sales.² In response to this deterioration of relations, Thanat declared that "we have had experience with one military alliance and that experience is quite sufficient for us."³

¹Tanham, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

²Leifer, "Great Power Intervention," in Zacher and Milne, op. cit., p. 182.

³"Mice Come Out When Cat Coexist," The Economist 234:6597 (January 31, 1970), p. 30; Chalit Naewpanich, "PL 480 kao kaan muang," [PL 480: The Rice Politics], Social Science Review 11:3 (March 1973), pp. 24-41.

How could the Thai leaders, mostly generals, make such a grave mistake of committing Thailand so closely to the U.S. without reserving any room for some further adjustment? Thompson suggested that it flowed logically, as foreign policy must, from the nature of human tendencies, such as that of seeing action elsewhere through the same lenses as used at home, and not to notice processes, especially latent ones, that do not exist at home; or if one does notice these, to underestimate their importance.¹ The further the Thai had gone with the Americans, and the more frequently they had stopped to consider whether they should get out or go on, the more difficult it became to turn back. As a personal judgement, even in early 1970's, it was still possible for Thailand to re-evaluate its stand and even possible for Thailand to try to protect itself from too much damage. Actually, it was unfortunate that the Thai ruling junta came to realize that it had brought the country too deeply into commitments with the U.S. and that some basic changes could be achieved only after the Nixon "self-help" speech of January 1969.

The Thai leaders' resentment and disillusionment towards the U.S. in the latter part of 1960's could be explained as partly derived from their ignorance in the assessment of foreign policy, as well as by the decisive

¹W. Scott Thompson, op. cit., p. 134.

change of American foreign policy during the latter years of Johnson's and the early years of Nixon's Administrations. In the mid-1960's, as the U.S. became more deeply involved in the war in Vietnam, it was clearly perceived in Bangkok that the U.S. needed its cooperation and participation in that war, more than it needed American help, be it for economic, strategic, or counterinsurgency purposes. At the very least, President Johnson sought the appearance of allied help, and was, as we have witnessed, prepared to pay any price to obtain it. The fact has been brought in to public by a statement of Senator Charles Percy, who had visited Thailand and its Northeastern part in late 1967. In contrast to the erroneous charges by Senator Fulbright, Senator Percy stated: "The U.S. Congress and the American people are very grateful to Thailand for making bases available for the air war against the enemy in Vietnam."¹

As for the ruling junta's inexperience in conducting Thailand's foreign policy and its inability to assess to the changes in world diplomacy and tensions, despite constant cautionary advice by their civilian foreign minister, Thanat, Thompson remarked:

The men in power were incapable of understanding the dilemma adequately. They were sufficiently

¹Statement of Senator Charles Percy, Bangkok, Thailand, December 15, 1967. Press Release, no. 26, Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations, December 27, 1967.

compromised in other areas to limit their freedom of movement: they were not only 'selling out' to the Americans for a lot of sophisticated military equipment ... they were selling out in order to keep the very substantial economic opportunities open to themselves which flowed, directly or indirectly, from the enormous American military presence, and which had made all of them very rich men.¹

Disillusionment and frustration towards U.S. Congress have also been displayed by the intellectual community in Thailand as well as by the Thai bureaucratic circle.² Paul Sitthi-Amnuai, a leading intellectual and a banker, has written an article published in Life Magazine exploring Thai-American relations and their cooperation in Vietnam War.

We tolerate American presence in our country because we believe that with our help you can achieve a quicker solution to the war in Vietnam. Your troops are not in Thailand to help us deal with any problems of Thai insurrection. These, I believe, we can deal with quite well by our own efforts. We tolerate your troops on our soil not out of love for the U.S. or out of any hatred for communism, but because we believe that our national interest at present coincided with yours, because we believe that Thailand will not be the next Vietnam, because we believe that if we help you solve the problem of Vietnam, there will be no more Vietnams.³

¹W. Scott Thompson, op. cit., p. 134.

²Khien Thiravit, "Tha-haan a-me-ri-can mee sit a-rai," [What Rights Do the American Soldiers Have?] in Khian Thiravit and Pansak Vinyaratn, op. cit., pp. 31-47.

³Paul Sitthi-Amnuai, "Yank, Don't Go Home Yet," Life Magazine, Asian edition, reprinted in Press Release, Permanent Mission of Thailand to the U.N., New York City, no. 20, October 2, 1967, pp. 7-11.

President Johnson's decision not to seek re-election on March 1968 was the first of many surprises and shocks to the Thai leaders. Thanat himself, who, apparently foreseeing the inevitability of American withdrawal from Southeast Asia, already sought an alternative for Southeast Asia security through the formation of the ASEAN (Association for Southeast Asian Nations), could not hide his surprise upon hearing about Johnson's abdication. Hence, after President's Johnson de-escalation program was put into effect, Thanat suggested that some sort of accommodation with Peking would have to be reached.

Shortly after his inauguration, Nixon made a speech assuring Thai leaders that the U.S. would continue to help maintain the freedom and stability of the Vietnamese people.¹ In addition, Nixon personally indicated to the Thai leaders that "we will honor our obligations under SEATO and would stand proudly with Thailand against those who might threaten it from abroad and from within."²

Only two months after his speech, Nixon met President Thieu on Midway Island in early June and announced the imminent withdrawal of 25,000 American troops, to be replaced by South Vietnamese troops. The stunned Thai cabinet discussed the implications of this decision for an

¹Chao Thai, May 17, 1969.

²Bangkok Post, July 28, 1969.

hour and was particularly bitter at not having been consulted , or even advised, in advance.¹

Matters became worse when President Nixon gave a press conference prior to his visit to Thailand, denying the existence of a secret agreement with Thailand. Also while Nixon was staying in Thailand, Thanat similarly refused to admit any such Thai-U.S. secret agreement.²

Only hours after Nixon's plane left Thailand, Thanat publicly announced that Thailand wished to withdraw its troops from South Vietnam,³ in addition to his attack against the concepts of foreign troops helping out another nation's counter-insurgency efforts. Editorials in the Thai press during this period also reflected public desire to re-evaluate Thai relations with the U.S.⁴ One such view held that:

Thailand could, but should not, become an object of pity. Could it not become self-reliant? Or had Thai politicians 'throughout the time since we have had a democratic form of government' become dependent on aid from other people to safeguard independence, thus completely forgetting that we, too, have feet on which to stand.⁵

¹Siam Rath, editorial June 13, 1969.

²Kiattisak Bangkok News, August 5, 1969.

³"Thailand Wants To Pull Troops Out Of Vietnam?" The Washington Post, August 2, 1969.

⁴See also Suchart Swastsri, "Lam dap haet kaan la-merd a-thi-pa-tai khong sa-ha-rat taw pra-thet thai," [Chronological Events of American Invasions of Thai Sovereignty] in Thiravit and Swastsri, op. cit., pp. 15-180.

⁵Naewna Daily News, August 5, 1969.

In fact, although Thailand appeared less crucial to the U.S. interests following the cessation of bombing of North Vietnam, it remained vital to the steadily increasing military activity in the rest of Indochina, as many of those criticizing Thailand suddenly realized. The faithful Thai were actually asking the Americans to get out, or so it seemed.¹ Now everyone took notice -- among other things, of the fact that the troops were in Thailand to prosecute the Indochinese war, not the Thai insurgency.

With respect to the Nixon Doctrine, which obviously stirred up resentment from the Thai leaders, it is based on the assumption that nations like Thailand are both able to fill the gap left by a U.S. withdrawal. Nixon was convinced that Asian countries must seek their own destiny and that too much dependence on a protector can eventually erode dignity.² In the words of Charles Yost, former U.S. representative at the United Nations, whose proposals in many ways foreshadowed the Guam Doctrine, "the role of the U.S. will be to assist these governments and elites to meet these political and economic imperatives before it has reached unmanageable proportions."³

¹Robert Keatley, "Red Ears and Black Marks in Thailand," Wall Street Journal, 1968, mimeo/. TIC/CU, Bangkok.

²"The Anxious Thais," Newsweek, August 31, 1970, p. 33. For details, see Richard Nixon, "Asia After Vietnam," Foreign Affairs 46:1 (October 1967), pp. 111-125; Bangkok Post, October 28, 29, 1969.

³Charles Yost, "World Order and American Responsibility," Foreign Affairs 47:1 (October 1968), pp. 1-14.

Of course, Nixon and Yost's advocacy of some sort of Southeast Asian regional defense buffer was made at a time when Washington believed the situation in Vietnam to be well under control. Girling contended that General Westmoreland was at that time planning the four-phase destruction of the Viet Cong forces and infrastructure. Hence it became possible "to envisage the containment of 'Asian Communism' by a series of more or less effective, military-dominated, pact-orientated regimes."¹

Following Nixon's suggestion and a graver weakness of balance of power politics as practiced by the Nixon administration were that they seemed destined further to destabilize the region. Rather than promote or accept the kinds of local accommodations that eventually must be worked out by the contending forces in each area of conflict, the Nixon Doctrine perpetuated great and small power confrontations. Leifer maintained that:

In particular, the emphasis on military assistance and local buildup of strength is bound to intensify old rivalries in Southeast Asia and revive both ancient and modern patterns of territorial diplomacy.²

Prior to Nixon's advocacy of a Southeast Asia Defense Agreement and 'self-reliance', the heightened Thai-U.S. military intervention in Indochina had already actually

¹J. L. S. Girling, "The Guam Doctrine," International Affairs 46:1 (January 1970), p. 55.

²Leifer, "Great Power Intervention," in Zacher and Milne, op. cit., pp. 234-235.

intensified conflictual relations between the two traditional rivals, Thailand and the DRV. Since the Thai and U.S. authorities repeatedly justified their intervention in Laos as a response to RLG (Royal Laos Government) requests to "safeguard Laotian integrity and neutrality", following North Vietnamese "violations of the agreements", it became obvious that their intervention was no longer based on the SEATO commitments and that the RLG's closer relationship with Thailand and South Vietnam had exacerbated its conflictual relations with the Pathet Lao and the DRV.¹

Following Nixon's plea to Southeast Asian governments for local defense pact, it was natural that both Thailand and the DRV sought vigorously to increase their levels of hostility and viewed each other as direct threats to themselves and their allies instead of focusing their attention on some sort of peaceful solution and diplomatic compromise. Thus, it is believed that prior to the escalation of Thai-U.S. intervention in Laos, the Northeast Thai residents, trained by the DRV and the Pathet Lao, avoided direct contact with the ongoing insurgency in Northeast Thailand. This no longer appeared to be the case after 1969, because of Thailand's role in widening the war in Laos and Vietnam, as well as Thailand's attempt to

¹Mahajani, "U.S. Intervention...", op. cit., pp. 266-267.

embark on a military buildup after Nixon's declaration.¹

When the U.S. Government invaded Cambodia in March 1970, Thai leaders discretely welcomed the news, especially about the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk, and therefore became encouraged by the decisive American action. Subsequently, Thailand was asked by Washington to send its troops to Cambodia to halt Communist expansion towards the Northeastern Thai borders. Soon the ruling junta realized that the collapse of Cambodia as an effective buffer would even more endanger the security of Thailand, since it would bring Viet Cong troops closer to the Thai border. By September, due to the recent-imposed Congressional restrictions on the use of military aid to Thailand, the Thai leaders suddenly realized that the U.S. could no longer subsidize the dispatch of Thai troops to Cambodia. Their anxiety was later intensified when Foreign Minister Thanat, upon returning from his Asian tour, hinted that the probable involvement of Thailand in Cambodia would not receive any support from its Asian allies.²

Consequently, by the early 1970's, Thailand's commitment to the West, especially to the U.S., remained very much more dependent on context rather than philosophically

¹New York Times, May 5, September 22, 1969; Gurtov, China and Southeast Asia, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

²Timothy Allman, "U.S.-Thailand: The Lovers Part," FEER 69:33 (August 13, 1970), p. 979.

derived. Thailand's foreign policy during this period was somewhat adjusted and modified to become more independent and neutral as a result of U.S. unwillingness to guarantee its survival. A more independent foreign policy would therefore mean continuing to accept foreign, especially American, advice and support, but also modifying foreign policy statements and actions to fit with the new Asian situation that Thai leaders expected to confront "after Vietnam."¹

Despite fears expressed in Congress that Thailand might turn out to be a "second Vietnam", the diverse insurgencies in remote areas of the countryside, even in the Northeast, in early and mid-1970's posed far from a national threat. In 1969, there were some 48,000 U.S. service personnel in Thailand, including 35,000 from the Air Force, 11,000 support troops, engaged in military campaigns in Vietnam and Laos; and less than 1,000 counterinsurgency advisers.² By July 1970, approximately 6,000 of them were to be withdrawn from Thailand under an agreement reached on September 30, 1969. Several thousand more were scheduled to follow by mid-1971. Thailand's move was clearly an attempt to lessen tensions with Hanoi and Peking, and

¹For comments by Thai leaders on these alternatives, see Thanat Khoman's speech, Foreign Affairs Bulletin 4:1 (August-September 1964), pp. 729-730; see also Pansak Vin-yaratn, "CIA kao chaak sakolnakorn: khong faak thung sa-pha kwaam-man-khong haeng chaat," [CIA and A Message from Sakol Nakorn: A Gift to National Security Council] Social Science Review 11:3 (March 1973), pp. 13-16.

²International Herald Tribune, July 30, 1969.

especially with the former since the North Vietnamese were believed to be mainly responsible for the training and supplying of insurgents in Thailand's Northeast.

Therefore, it would seem that the Thai leaders, especially Mr. Thanat, finally realized that how far Peking and Hanoi would go toward ceasing to support the Thai Communists seemed to depend on how much the Thai Government would be prepared to adjust its foreign policy, principally its interaction with U.S. policy in Vietnam. The 1970 meetings with North Vietnamese officials to discuss repatriation might be the first step in the direction of improved DRV-RTG relations.¹

As far as the Chinese leaders' views are concerned, the major roadblocks to a satisfactory relationships with Thailand at that time probably were the American presence and Thailand's direct participation in Indochina war.² Gurtov consequently claimed that, until the Thai-U.S. cooperation and mutual intervention in Indochina war were abandoned by Bangkok, Peking probably saw very little risk or cost in sustaining the pressure on the Thai Government

¹For details, see Melvin Gurtov, Southeast Asia Tomorrow: Problems and Prospect for U.S. Policy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), pp. 69-74.

²Former Minnesota Senator and the present U.S. Vice President, Walter Mondale, publicly charged that about 1,000 Thai troops had been airlifted into southern Laos and the Administration officials had declined to challenge this accusation. New York Times, January 22, 1971, p. 5.

through support, both actual and potential, of the CPT and other insurgent forces in the strategic Northeast and in other remote areas of the Kingdom. Besides, a "substantially diminished support role on behalf of the Thai Communists would probably be a price Peking would willingly pay for a looser Thai-American alliance.¹ A less clearly aligned Thailand, which would not be without precedent, would probably encourage Peking to attempt to perpetuate a Thai-American divorce through diplomacy.²

Thailand's foreign policy and the internal problems the Government faced were evidently closely connected. What happened internally in Thailand was highly relevant to the way it reacted to the changing situation in Indochina. The rapidly spreading war in Indochina combined with the deterioration of Thailand's balance of payments and growth rate sufficiently to worry the regime that the U.S. Embassy officials predicted that another military coup was in the offing. Finally, in November 17, 1971, the Thai generals engineered a palace coup, dissolved the parliament, banned all political opposition groups and promptly arrested those who criticized the junta's profitable relations with the U.S. This military coup was believed to stem from the rapidly decreasing tolerance the ruling

¹Gurtov, China and Southeast Asia, op. cit., p. 48.

²See, Alex Campbell, "The Feature of the U.S. Military Presence," New Republic, April 5, 1969.

generals had for the new semi-democratic institutions established in 1969 to increase domestic support and legitimacy to its regime.¹

Immediately, after the coup, the ruling generals informed Washington that cooperation would thenceforth be continued on their own terms and that the deposed former Foreign Minister Thanat's proposal to reduce Thai dependence on the U.S. and his pressure for U.S. withdrawal would not be included in the new regime's assessment of foreign policy. By that time, the need for the bases had increased in Washington.

During 1972 the two principal issues in Thai foreign policy focused on relationships with both the U.S. and China, while an attempt at normalization with North Vietnam was not neglected. Throughout the year, while the Thai regime tried to intensify the American alliance, it simultaneously cultivated relations and opened channels of communications with Peking. The major expansion of American air war in Southeast Asia following the Communist Easter Offensive led to massive additions to the capabilities of U.S. air bases in Thailand.

Prior to Communist offensive in South Vietnam in March, the number of American airmen in Thailand had actually dropped to about 32,000. This figure had been falling

¹W. Scott Thompson, op. cit., p. 117.

because the Thais themselves did not then want to rely too heavily on an American presence. Nevertheless, after the Communist offensive which resulted in the greater need for U.S. bombing operations in Vietnam, the slow American withdrawal was suddenly reversed and became a buildup.¹ Hence, it is fairly safe to assert that the American re-escalation of war campaign would not have resulted in greater buildup in Thailand, had the ruling generals not launched a coup d'etat and reinstated their dictatorial rule in Thailand half a year earlier.

Hundreds of new war planes arrived, and Takli Air Base, closed in 1969, was re-opened; while the base at Nam Phong near the province of Khonkhaen in the Northeast achieved operational status for the first time in the war.² Morrell observed that at least the Nam Phong base was initially the site for U.S. Marine Corps air units transferred from Danang, South Vietnam, casting doubt on the meaning of publicized U.S. troops reductions in Thailand.³ All this activity required new inputs of American troops,

¹John Tusa, "Thailand After the Vietnam Cease-Fire," Part II, Asian Affairs 60 (October 1973), p. 280.

²This base has been built in the mid-1960's following the conclusion of secret military "Contingency Plan", but has never before been operational. It became the seventh U.S. airbase in Thailand, the 5th in the Northeast.

³David Morrell, "Thailand ... if you would know how the villagers really feel, abandon intimidation," Asian Survey 13:2 (February 1973), p. 172.

so that by July 1972 troop levels were well in excess of 50,000, more than the number of U.S. troops in South Vietnam. The intimidation bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong in December led to further expansion of the huge B-52's base at Utapao. Tusa argued, therefore, that the number of U.S. combat aircraft in Thailand had doubled to between 700 and 800, including 80-90 of the big B-52 bombers.¹ Throughout the year there was intensified Thai participation in the U.S.-funded war in Laos, as thousands of Thai "volunteers" staffed Special Guerrilla Units and other groups. It seems clear that the Thai leaders, noted Morrell, "made a conscious decision to endorse all American air activity, presumably in the belief that it will enhance Thailand's security. It also seems clear that Hanoi and Peking will not forget the source of these massive air raids."²

The renewed escalation of U.S.-Thai military campaign has been a subject of analysis by Leifer who noted that:

Although the Thai situation is different from Vietnam and although Thai officials and their U.S. advisers are determined that there shall not be another Vietnam in Thailand, the U.S. assistance program runs the risk of helping a military regime with substantial firepower at its disposal to repeat the military solution that failed in Vietnam.³

Similar to the U.S. escalation of the 1960's in

¹Tusa, op. cit., p. 280.

²Morrell, "Thailand...if you ...," op. cit., p. 173.

³Leifer, "Great Power Intervention," in Zacher and Milne, op. cit., p. 230.

Indochina, the revival of U.S. war efforts in Vietnam and Laos in 1972 had a great effect on U.S. thinking that firm base in Thailand was needed in order to conduct the war in Vietnam efficiently. The strategic location of Thailand did not go unnoticed in American discussions with the Thai regimes throughout the period of stress and strain. As the need became more compelling, and as the margin of safety even for the declining number of American troops became thin, "the Thai bases loomed steadily larger in short-term importance. But there was no more talk of the 'heroic Thai', nor any felt concern for Thai security."¹

So the American presence again became tangible; the guarantee was obvious on the ground. It had also been re-inforced in words by both the American Ambassador and Vice President Agnew, who re-invoked the 1962 Rusk-Thanat Agreement, a specific bilateral guarantee between the Americans and the Thais. Senate investigating teams visiting Southeast Asia in 1972 discovered that the U.S. was committed to provide up to \$ 100 million a year in support of the Thai irregular forces fighting clandestinely in Laos. Many U.S. troops "withdrawn" from Vietnam in early 1972 actually regrouped at new bases built in Thailand half a year later for the training of Laotian pilots and Thai irregulars bound for Laos.² As a matter of fact, the history of

¹W. Scott Thompson, op. cit., p. 127.

²Reported by J. W. Lowenstein and R. M. Moose, Staff members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The

U.S.-Thai intervention in Laos and of Thai support of U.S. Vietnam bombing operations during the mid-1960's unfortunately repeated itself once again from mid-1972 and throughout the following year.¹

In spite of the revival of Thai involvement in Indochina War in the early 1970's, Peking's endorsement of Thai insurgency increased moderately, but it was clear that the nature of the Communist insurgency in Thailand still remained largely rural-based; it was confined to outlying sections of the country where there had been guerilla strongholds, such as along the Phupan mountain range of the Northeast, on the lines of the Maoist model. The repeated Government campaigns to wipe out the insurgents have not been successful, but on the other hand, the insurgents have not been able to extend their control beyond some remote villages and rural areas. Nor have they interfered with the American air bases in Northeast and Central Thailand which became once again a principal source of American firepower used in Cambodia and Laos and especially Vietnam.²

Surprisingly, Peking's reaction to the revival of

report was made public by Senator Stuart Symington on May 7, 1972. Also see New York Times, February 13, and May 8, 1972; and Michael Morrow, "Air War: Thai Build Up Continues," American Report (New York), September 22, 1972, pp. 1 & 5.

²Frank Langdon, "China's Policy in Southeast Asia," in Zacher and Milne, op. cit., pp. 310-311.

Thailand's role in the Indochina conflict and the re-escalation of military buildup in Thailand was rather less hostile than in the previous period. In its new policy of the early 1970's, China showed a disposition to improve relations with Thailand. During his brief visit to Bangkok to report on the Kissinger and Nixon's talks in Peking, again the Secretary of State Marshal Green re-assured the Thais that the Chinese had not since raised the question of the American bases as an obstacle to better relations.¹

Throughout 1973 the Government in Peking showed a willingness to increase trade contacts with Thailand and, although Thai laws forbid private trade, the Government was willing to permit government-to-government arrangements. Despite the increase of informal trade and cultural contacts between China and Thailand, the hostilities in Indochina continued to be an obstacle to a substantial easing of relations under the leadership of Thanom and Prapas. Throughout the year until the October 1973 student uprisings, the Thai ruling junta continued to accuse China as well as North Vietnam of infiltrating Communist Terrorists.² General Prapas even went further to declare that American Air Force units,

... must continue to be based in Thailand until

¹Saville R. Davis, "Thai Chinese Feelers Starting to Mesh?" Christian Science Monitor, May 16, 1973, p. 4.

²FBIS, Daily Report (Asia and Pacific), March 22, 1973.

North Vietnamese forces leave Laos and Cambodia and other ceasefire agreements are carried out. We don't lose any national honor, as charged by some persons, by allowing the U.S. Air Force to remain stationed here for regional stability and aid to our security in these uncertainly times. Only when there is real peace in Indochina will there be no more need for an American presence here. At that time we can risk the American to leave and then we can proceed with setting up a neutrality zone in Southeast Asia.¹

Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, came forward with resounding support for the continued presence of American bases in Thailand. This seemed rather incautious and a source of annoyance to some, like Thanat, who wanted to see Thailand take a more non-aligned position.² The reasons for Lee's attitude were probably the fear that any substantial withdrawal of the American presence in the region would upset the role of the U.S. in balancing the presences of the Soviet Union, Japan and China in the area.³

Lee was glad to have U.S. bases in Thailand rather than in Singapore, consistent with the so-called "buffer zone" strategy, whereby his degree of non-alignment would

¹Bangkok Post, March 4, 1973, p. 3.

²Lee Kuan Yew, "Southeast Asia and the New World Power Balance," The Mirror (Singapore), April 9, 1973, vol. IX, no. 15, p. 6; see also Lee's views in "Greatest Danger to Southeast Asia - A Loss of Will," The Mirror (Singapore), January 29, 1973, vol. IX, no. 5, p. 1.

³Robert O. Tilman, "Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines," in Wayne Wilcox, Leo E. Rose and Gavin Boyd, eds., Asia and the International System (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, 1972), p. 214.

not be reduced. Since China was prepared to tolerate American bases in Thailand to offset the Soviet Union and Japan, provided that they were no longer use to carry on hostilities in Indochina, Lee would not necessarily antagonize China any longer by advocating them. As a matter of fact, China is now following a strategy similar to Lee's in entering the balancing game of power politics. In addition, Lee is eager to see that local Communist movements remain checked on the other side of Thailand, especially in the Northeast, so that they will not easily be able to spread to Singapore.

In the final analysis, the conduct of Thai foreign policy and its blind association with the U.S. during the past decade and a half at the expense of losing its independent foreign policy stand and of endangering the security of Thailand has actually drawn the Vietnam conflict into Northeast Thailand and the rest of the country. These decisions have been a subject of criticism by Edward Schuck.

A dangerous element in the Thai position is the lack of neutrality within the context of Southeast Asian regionalism ... While paying lip service to independence and seeking leadership in regional affairs, the Thai government simultaneously became a client/agent of the U.S., irretrievably entwined in American military plan in Southeast Asia ... The military clique benefited materially as the coy mistress of the Pentagon. No amount of protestations of independence by Thai leaders can obscure this politico-military-economic fact of recent Thai existence. And the nature of the Thai commitment

to the U.S. went far beyond the mere superficial diplomatic liasons in which Thai governments long sought security when they were caught in the battle-grounds and battles of the greater-powers.¹

¹L. Edward Schuck, "Thailand: Groping Toward Neutrality," Current History 65:388 (December 1973), p. 258.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The course of political development and modernization in the Northeast of Thailand during the past four and a half decades of constitutional experimentation is obviously far from impressive. According to the French political scientist, Pierre Fistié, the problem there is not one primarily of local separatist desires, but of alienation from and despair of the Bangkok regime.¹ Political movements in the Northeast are doubtless connected to objective economic conditions and political discrimination. It is a well-known fact that, until the recent emergency arose, the Northeast had been consistently underallocated in the national budget. Regional distribution of income and an attempt to improve the standard of living and recognize the political identity of the Northerners have never really been the policy and intention of the Bangkok leaders. Even casual observers of the region would be able to conclude that recognition of the regional development needs and the political identity of the Northeast have

¹Pierre Fistié, "Thaïlande: Danger au Nord-Est,"
op. cit.,

lagged behind the consolidation of Thai control. Hence, Michael Williams contended that the Northeast's separatist desires should be seen as the result of its shabby treatment by the Central Government.¹

Historically speaking, rebellious activities in the Northeast could be traced back to the early 19th century when the region was first incorporated into the city-state of Siam. Prior to the Administrative Reforms of King Chulalongkorn, the Northeast was administrated by Bangkok through some kind of tributary system, having been governed by their hereditary rulers but loosely directed by Bangkok officials. Following King Chulalongkorn's "Administrative Reforms", troubles arose, and one of the consistent political difficulties has been the integration of political life in the Northeast into the national political life. A kind of integration exists but it has always been incomplete and characterized with conflict.

As a matter of fact, the Reforms were put into effect to achieve political centralization and total integration; then resulted in a shift of the locus of all important political powers from the provinces to Bangkok, and hereditary rulers were replaced by Bangkok officials. In the Northeast, the leaders and villagers were subjected to the drastic change of the local power structure; they came to

¹Michael Williams, op. cit., p. 432.

realize that political power and authority no longer resided with them, and then experienced for the first time the subordination of local political interests to central Thai objectives. Also, they came to realize that the newly-appointed Bangkok officials had attempt to maximize the Central Government's self-interest at the expense of local needs and identity. These political discontents and grievances turned into misgivings and resentment when the Isan leaders found themselves totally excluded from high office following the Reforms, much as were local leaders from other regions of the Kingdom. Presumably, Bangkok's different treatment and prejudice, as well as the political discrimination against Isan elites, stemmed from the fact that Bangkok elites were convinced that leaders from the North-east were too independent, traditional-bound and inclined towards local particularism and regionalism.

How do minorities become involved in politics in their quest for cultural identity, or in an effort to preserve that identity? If minorities assume that they are being economically or politically deprived because of the cultural or racial difference between themselves and the larger society, they can become involved in politics because they believe that the exertion of influence on government is necessary to achieve their objectives. Because effective political action requires unity among people suffering from the same deprivations, minorities can become concerned with

a need to define their distinctive claims to status.

The coup of 1932 was apparently the main factor in creating the sense of political identity among the Isan elites through the formation of National Assembly. David Wilson contended that:

it (politics) provides a possible pathway for provincial notables to maintain positions of prestige in the capital to give vent to their regional grievances. To the extent that the Assembly performs this function, it is an apparatus which links parts of the country to the center and in large measure siphons off pressures which might lead to the development of more irascible proponents of localism.¹

Consequently, the coup of 1932 provided for the first time an opportunity for Isan leaders to express themselves in a national forum on issues affecting the future of both their region and the nation as a whole.

Modernization brings about great transformation's producing significant social, economic, political and psychological changes in the society. In Northeast Thailand, administrative reforms of King Chulalongkorn and the 1932 coup have resulted in changes in old social relationships, and customary patterns of social and economic activity. Former attitudes and values are being gradually eroded, replacing or being joined by new and different social and psychological patterns. This transformation, bringing about an expansion of political awareness, political

¹Wilson, Politics in Thailand, op. cit., pp. 215-216.

participation and wider exposure to the mass media, not only creates new freedom and opportunities but also produces new uncertainties, stresses and conflicts.

According to Huntington, the common factor giving rise to the problems of national integration and political assimilation is the expansion of political consciousness and participation produced by modernization.¹ This was certainly the case of the modernization of Northeast Thailand. From the period following the Administrative Reforms of King Chulalongkorn until the present time, the Northeast region has been typically regarded by Bangkok leaders as a source of difficulty, center of political dissidence and socialist opposition. Aside from its predominantly and culturally Thai-Lao population, its geographical isolation and its economic backwardness, the region's strategic location with no natural barrier and porous and permeable frontiers with Laos and Cambodia also give rise to great concern on the part of the Thai Government.

Throughout the period of constitutional development and parliamentary politics, a predominant number of Isan elites have established themselves as the most effective and influential vocal opposition to the Governments from the thirties to the seventies. In the 1940's, Isan representatives, led by Thong-in Phuripat, Tiang Sirikhan and

¹Huntington, Political Order in ..., op. cit., p.397.

Thawin Udon created a lobby against alleged economic and political discrimination by the Central Government. In the 1950's, Isan MP's, under the leadership of Thep Chotinuchit, Krong Chandawong, and Klaew Norapathi¹ continued to raise the charge of economic discrimination against the Northeast. Many Northeast MP's opportunistically played upon a growing sense of regionalism to put pressure on the Bangkok Government throughout this period, until Marshal Sarit took over the Government and established absolutist rule. Mostly their demands consisted of appeals for the Bangkok Government's direct attention toward the "Northeastern Problem," as well as for the halt of the Government's anti-Isan campaign. These Isan politicians also regularly charged the Central Government with not doing enough to stimulate Northeast development and with suppressing Isan regionalism and political identity.

During World War II, the Northeast region gained national political significance for the first time, since it was the headquarters of the Free Thai Movement. After the war, the Movement which was heavily staffed with Isan MP's,

¹In the 1970's Klaew Norapithi and Kaisaeng Suksai, both elected to the National Assembly from the Northeast, established themselves, similar to their predecessors in the 1940's and 1950's, as the most vocal critiques of the Thanom-Prapas-Narong dictatorial regime. Following the "Savage Coup" of October 6, 1976, these two prominent Northeast MP's had to go underground. Some government reports even hinted that both have fled to join the Pathet Lao forces across the Mekong River.

mostly Dr. Pridi's ardent followers, was credited with playing a crucial role in helping the Allied during the War and hence helped preserve Thailand's independence from the British and French imperialist designs. Pridi's attempt to establish Thailand as a leader of Southeast Asian nations and his anti-colonialist policy turned the Northeast into an effective sanctuary for anti-French rebels and a center for independence movements. Unfortunately, following the mysterious death of King Ananda, Rama VIII, the fate of the Isan region and its leaders drastically changed. Due to the rising power of the military under the leadership of Phibun its successful exploitation of the issue of Communism and its subsequent attempt to link Pridi and his Isan supporters with the Communist and republican plots to overthrow the monarchy, Thailand had witness the downfall of one of the most dedicated leaders the country ever had, coupled with the loss of a number of dedicated Isan politicians who genuinely devoted all their efforts to promoting constitutional rule as well as socio-economic reforms that would benefit all.

The post-1957 history of the Thai Communist movement and activities of other radical and anti-government groups is intimately connected with the Northeast region of Thailand. Generally speaking, Communism is but one mode of adjustment, a product of a much larger process of modernization which forced the people to emulate, or at least to

an advanced "West", and to which minority and other under-privileged groups are attracted and subscribed enthusiastically. In fact, the issue of Communism has been repeatedly raised by the Thai Government since the overthrow of absolute monarchy in 1932. In an attempt to destroy Dr. Pridi and his progressive civilian supporters, the conservative military groups aligned themselves with the old monarchists, charging Pridi and his "Economic Plan" as Communist. Again in the 1940's, in order to justify the coup, the military group led by Phibun produced stories of Communist and Republican plots. It was finally successful in driving Pridi out of the country, suppressing his programs for economic reforms and his plan to establish some forms of political institutionalization. This plan would in time have established branches of the newly-established "Constitutional Front" and the "Cooperative 'Sahacheep' Party," composed largely of former Free Thai Movement politicians from the poverty-stricken areas of the Northeast, throughout the country. After the collapse of Pridi's political power and his subsequent exile to China, the Northeast politicians who were supporters of Pridi became instead targets of Phibun's attack. Many of them, including Pridi's former Ministers, Thong-in, Tiang, Thawin and Chamlong, were arrested, jailed and later executed by special order of the Chief of Police, Police General Phao Sriyanond. This whole episode and especially in the case of "Kilo 11" incident, was

viewed by Charles Keyes as constituting an extremely critical factor in shaping subsequent political attitudes in the Northeast.¹

Unfortunately, the success of the ruling junta to exploit the issue of Communism to the extent of destroying Pridi and his Isan supporters, who advocated the restoration of constitutional democracy and some forms of political participation and institutionalization through the establishment of the "Constitutional Front", the "Cooperative Party", and their village branches, had a great impact upon the future political development of the Northeast and of Thailand itself. The point is well supported by Huntington who argued:

A state without parties is a state without the institutional means of generating sustained change and of absorbing the impact of such changes. Its ability to modernize politically, economically and socially is drastically limited.

... as they developed strength, parties became the buckle which binds one social force to another and which created a basis for loyalty and identity transcending more parochial groupings. Similarly, by regularizing the procedures for leadership succession and for the assimilation of new groups into the political system, parties provide the basis for stability and orderly change rather than for instability.²

Political development is incomplete if it halts with

¹Keyes, Isan Regionalism ..., op. cit., pp. 33-34.

²Huntington, Political Order in ..., op. cit., pp. 400 and 405.

the stimulation of ethnic awareness and group pride. Relatively speaking, the Northeasterners seem considerably more interested in political and governmental administrative affairs than villagers residing in the North or the South and in the rest of the Kingdom. The main reason for this is doubtless the political discrimination and neglect displayed by the Bangkok Government, coupled with the extreme poverty of the region and perhaps a common feeling that only a political and administrative mechanism is powerful enough to bring about economic development and further the political identity of the region.

The issue of separatism seems to have based on Bangkok's belief that Northeastern dissidents, because of their presumed ethnic similarity to the Lao, and their open criticism and opposition to the Central Government in Bangkok, shared hopes and even planned with the Vietminh and later with the Pathet Lao and the Khmer Rouge leaders in order to realize the goal of union with Laos and with the Communist Vietnamese states. Sarit, who took power in late 1958, became convinced that the North Vietnamese and the Chinese intended to foment insurrection in the economically backward Northeast region of Thailand as part of a general Communist strategy. Hence, under Sarit's absolutist rule, the "Northeastern Problem" was redefined in Thai ruling circles from having been one of minor provincial complaints to one of potential danger to the continuing existence of

the Kingdom of Thailand itself.

The cause of insurgency in Northeast Thailand and the real issue driving villagers to Communism stem rather from a sense of hopelessness in a society where administration and the legal system deal with the rich and the privileged differently from the poor and the underprivileged. The relationship between the region's relative economic deprivation and peasant political discontent and grievances can, therefore, be traced to an increased awareness by Northerners of the disparity between their own standard of living and that enjoyed by other parts of the country especially by Bangkok.

An example of the comparative development of Bangkok and the countryside during the 1960's represented an extreme case of Bangkok's boom and of regional economic disallocation and backwardness. Throughout this period, while Bangkok increased its material wealth, a great number of villages in the Northeast, and, to a lesser extent, villages in the rest of the Kingdom, deficient in the bare necessities of life, are slowly disintegrating. The inhabitants are beginning to emigrate, to seek other places, mostly in Bangkok, in which to make their living. Their reasons for migration indicate clearly that the deterioration of the villages in the Northeast is due to the decrease in opportunities for making a decent living. Also, the villagers became frustrated at not having any political channels

open to them to which they can legally complain and present their cases, as during the constitutional era, when the MP's filled this position.

Advances in communication and transportation which resulted in the temporary migration of Isan villagers to Bangkok and other commercial centers are basically processes of socialization and modernization. They tend to increase ethnic awareness by making members more conscious of the distinctions between themselves and non-members. In Bangkok, Isan villagers found themselves confronted with "superior" and more sophisticated Bangkok people who tend to look down upon them everywhere they go. Therefore, they usually live close together and are prone to riot and rebellion as a result of similar experiences of racial prejudice, discrimination and frustration. When they return home, they have to obey and practice laws and regulations implemented by the authorities in Bangkok. Unfortunately, an increase in contact and relationship between Northeast villagers and the Bangkok people, which is largely a product of modernization, has resulted in further alienation and disillusionment, leading to the strengthening of Isan regionalism, political identity and ethnic particularism of the Northeast.

Hence, it has become increasingly apparent in the contemporary era that major gaps do exist in the effective socialization of important segments of the resident

population. These gaps tend to become an obstacle to further national political development and modernization and threaten national security. The alienation which is usually derived from these gaps prevents large numbers of people from making positive and appropriate contributions to the total national policy development and defense through effective participation in the primary structural and functional system of society.

Communist insurrection in Thailand, especially in the Northeast, has acquired some success through the anti-Thai resentment and as well as through the issue of economic exploitation and backwardness harbored by many of the country's minorities. It has gained ground in areas largely ignored by the Thai Government, which has so far done little to improve the status of the minorities or to take into account their basic requirements and quality of life. For years, Communism has been used as an excuse for this neglect, as well as suppression, with the result that Thailand is now faced with a real Communist rebellion although, still largely on a small scale.

Successive Thai Governments often view the Northeast insurgency not as a purely local phenomena but as externally instigated. In its attempt to mislead the Thai people and divert their attention from domestic official corruption and the inability of military regimes to administer effectively and progressively, the Thai generals persistently

and stubbornly charged that Communist insurgency in the Northeast was solely originated and supported by Communist agents from neighboring China and North Vietnam; thus they often found an excuse not to become effectively engaged in programs which would lead to full scale economic reforms and political recognition of Isan ethnic identity.

This reluctance to recognize that domestic rebellions could largely be the result of economic deprivations and the failures of the Government to integrate the non-Thai minorities into a political system defined mainly by the ethnic Thai majority has significantly retarded the problem's resolution. It has contributed to a reliance on repressive military methods, which in effect often served only to further alienate the already sullen population. As Welch and Smith have maintained, military coups and military regimes seldom result in significant changes in the socio-economic status-quo. More often, "they produced a further featuring of the military's own institutional nest or merely serve the personal ambitions of individual officers."¹

With respect to the Thai military's interest in modernization, Welch and Smith also contended that it is ambivalent and that they have shown little evidence of pursuing any programmatic design for the overall modernization

¹Welch and Smith, op. cit., p. 58.

of the Kingdom. To them, the various insurgencies "are seen as military rather than social problems, emanating from the activities of foreign 'agent provocateurs' rather than from local conditions of social injustice or from the ineptness and exploitation of government administrators in the provinces."¹

The Thai Government must allow for a greater degree of not only of local authonomy but also of ethnic particularism to be able to solve this minority problem. Changes in the present policy of intense assimilation are therefore necessary, if the political loyalties of these subjects are to be secured. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that the minority issue must be treated as a social problem instead of a military one, providing that the minority's political ambition must equally be provided with some sort of political participation and institutionalization. In Keyes' judgment, "continued suppression of indigenou political opposition without concomitant mechanisms whereby such opposition can legitimately present its wishes in a national forum could drive more and more Northeastern political leaders underground. Political liberalization including the reestablishment of the National Assembly could reduce this danger."²

¹Ibid,. p. 99.

²Keyes, Isan Regionalism ..., op. cit., p. 61.

An evaluation of the role of Thai military in the process of political development and modernization deserves special consideration in our context since in Thailand the various military groups have dominated and dictated the political life of the nation throughout the past four decades of pseudo-democratic experiences. Huntington's analysis of the role of the military in developing countries has, nevertheless, proved to be inaccurate and misleading when we try to apply his model to the empirical situation in Thailand. The military officers, in Huntington's point of view, play a highly modernizing and progressive role. They promote social and economic reform, national integration, and, in some measure, the extension of political participation. They assail waste, backwardness, and corruption, and they introduce into the society highly middle-class ideas of efficiency, honesty, and national loyalty. They become receptive to foreign ideas of progress and they become more and more disgusted with corruption, incompetence, and passivity of the ruling oligarchy.¹

This assumption proves to be far from the empirical facts and represents a kind of "comic opera" to the Thai scholars, whose views of the Thai military and its role in the process of the nation's political development seem to be contrary to Huntington's observation. In fact, the

¹Huntington, Political Order in ..., op. cit., pp. 201 and 203.

military in Thailand, especially the army, appears to be the most disruptive force and the most important obstacle to national integration, socio-economic reforms, political development and participation, not to mention its notorious corrupt practices, dishonest, self-serving, conservative, and politically retarded minds, as well as its inability to handle effectively modernizing national programs, and profitable and intelligent foreign relations. Further analysis of this subject should, therefore, provide us with some answer to the recently-emerging question: "Is the military a school for political virtue or a retrograde force in society?"

Since early in the 1960's, social scientists increasingly expressed the belief that the armed forces were agents of modernization. Lucian Pye, like Huntington, has been an early advocate to this view that the army is a modernizing force in the society. In Pye's judgment, the military leadership is "dynamic and self-sacrificing who committed to progress and the task of modernizing transitional societies that have been subverted by the 'corrupt practice' of politicians."¹

Pye's argument has been criticized by Willner as follows:

... statements by Pye and others that army

¹Lucian Pye, "Armies in the Process of Political Modernization," in Johnson, ed., op. cit., pp. 69-70.

experience is not only a modernizing but a politicizing experience, thus providing a basis for participation in national politics and paving the way for democracy ... all of which processes would appear to be relatively absent from most of the roles that the army provides.¹

The dramatic failures of many military "takeovers" and regimes which occurred in recent years have actually driven the military-minded political scientist to reconsider their promilitary stand, as well as to re-examine their information and data concerning the role of military officers in political development. They finally conceded that some of the myths associated with the military must be discarded or re-evaluated. The vital point to be considered, then, is that failures of military regimes are not unique. In fact, the failure of political development and modernization is typical of many newly developing states governed by elected civilian regimes. Hence, it is imperative to assert that the military leaders are also prone to failure, and that their failure can be traced to specific consequences of military coup d'état and rule.

For many casual observers of the military in Thailand, it would seem that employment of the military is primarily in the political realm. The appointment of military officers to cabinet posts, bureaucratic positions, and seats in the National Assembly, when allowed by the politics of the day, is the method by which the political process

¹Willner, op. cit., p. 479.

is dominated and controlled.¹ In spite of all these political techniques employed by the military to influence and to coerce the civilian bureaucrats to cooperate with them, analysis of the role of the military in developing countries, in which Thailand is no exception, points to the fact that military leadership, even when it enjoys monopoly over the use of force and internal cohesion, cannot by itself rule a nation; it thus must either turn to a political party or to a bureaucracy.

Dankwart Rustow's analysis of praetorianism clearly reflects the political situation of Thailand, especially when we have repeatedly experienced a series of successive coups, factional politics, political alienation of the populace and the predominance of force and bureaucratic corruption in the society. As observed by Rustow:

The junta's ardor and inexperience may have done more to aggravate than to resolve the political and economic problems that gave rise to the initial coup ... Might having become fight, it remains for some new groups of conspirators to possess themselves of greater might. A second coup has been less chance of effecting fundamental changes or of restoring legitimacy than did the first ... In such situations, army forces become politicized just as politics become militarized ... Politicians seek power not by rallying popular support but by cultivating military connections. The country has turned into a praetorian state.²

¹W. Scott Thompson, op. cit., p. 124. Morrell, "Power and Parliament ...," op. cit., p. 1.

²Dankwart Rustow, A World of Nations (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1967), pp. 193-194.

In his modified stand, Huntington, therefore, later argued that "instead of relying on the military, American policy should be directed to the creation within a modernizing course of at least one strong non-Communist political party." He admitted, finally, that our studies show that, in many cases, at least, "the military does not mobilize and does not develop non-political spheres. It fails in organization and institution-building, and it fails as well to increase economic development, political participation, and other aspects of the modernization process."¹

Using similar reasoning, Lissak concluded his analysis of the role of the military in the process of political development and modernization, which very much the case of Thailand, that the experience of the officers is limited, even in comparison with that accumulated by administrators in civilian occupations. Often the officer corps is simply not able to handle complicated administrative problems efficiently -- much less establish a more effective administration than the civilian bureaucracy. In other words, "one should expect that the army often will fulfill the role of a pseudo-modernizer. In some extreme cases, the army must be defined as a deceptive agent of modernization."²

¹Huntington, in Bienen, *Military Intervenes*, op. cit., p. XIX.

²Lissak, op. cit., pp. 30-31, and 33.

U.S. intervention in Thailand during the postwar period, marked by continuing flows of American military aid and war supplies to the ruling generals, coupled with the American good intentions to prevent Thailand from falling victim to the British imperialist and its policy of demilitarization had a significant impact upon the Thai domestic political development by strengthening the power of the military clique vis-à-vis civilian leaders and hence further weakened and ruined the chance to create a strong tradition of civilian supremacy in politics.

As a matter of fact, Thailand in the 1950's faced no serious Communist threat, since China and North Vietnam were too busy with their own domestic problems, economically and politically, and were both exhausted, if not devastated, by a long period of civil war. Yet the Communist threat was exaggerated due to the extreme sensitivity of the Thai ruling generals to any possible challenges to their absolute power. As for the American officials, as a result of Communist scares spread throughout the McCarthy era, few of them realized that Communism in Southeast Asia could not be stopped by military means alone and that their military aid actually helped to strengthen the power of the military, whose goals were not socio-economic development. They thereby increased the vulnerability of Thailand to Communist subversion, especially among the politically alienated and economically backward Northeasterners.

The very presence on Thai soil of American military bases and the close cooperation between Thai-U.S. military leaders in directing war operations in Vietnam throughout the 1960's and the early part of the 1970's actually provided a ready pretext for Chinese and North Vietnamese propaganda to incite the masses into armed insurrection against the Government in Bangkok. Peking's response to the escalation of American military build-up in Thailand was to elevate the status of the insurgency in Thailand from that of a "broad mass struggle" to a "people's war".¹ Following the Tonkin Gulf Incident and the conclusion of the U.S.-Thai military "Contingency Plan" which allowed the U.S. military to operate the air war and bombing raids of North Vietnam and Laos from bases in Northeast Thailand, the Thai press reported the expansion of guerrilla operations in the Northeast. By the end of the year, assassinations of government officials and sympathizers in remote areas of the Northeast averaged ten per month.²

Of course, U.S. strategy to use Thailand and its bases in the Northeast as an extension of its military campaign in Indochina and the possible "spill-over" of the Vietnam war into the Northeast were also discussed by the Chinese press. A typical statement claimed that:

¹Lovelace, op. cit., p. 48.

²U.S. Department of State, World Strength of ..., op. cit., p. 89.

... U.S. imperialism has been intensifying its use of Thailand as a base for expanding its aggressive war in Vietnam, and moreover has exerted all efforts to drag Thailand into the Indochina war ... U.S. aircraft have taken off from Thailand one after another to bomb the DRV and Laos.¹

Soon after the Chinese press comment suggesting that these developments could lead to a full scale guerrilla warfare and the possibility of revolutionary violence in Thailand, it may be more than coincidental that the noticeable intensification of Communist-supported dissidence in Northeast Thailand occurred soon thereafter. As Gurtov commented, in identifying the Northeast as the locale of potentially serious Communist revolutionary area, Peking seemed to have selected the region not only where its support of the insurgents would be most credible, but also where Thailand's "collusion" with the U.S. was of greatest import for developments in Laos and Vietnam.²

Following the coup d'état of October 6, 1976 which resulted in the collapse of the popularly-elected civilian government of Prime Minister Seni Pramoj and which has caused an outbreak of political violence and extreme brutality, along with the violence deaths of close to 100 innocent university students, the new military-backed civilian regime headed by Thanin Kraivichien was formed.

¹Jen-minh Jih-pao, April 28, 1965.

²Gurtov, China and Southeast Asia: ..., op. cit., p. 26.

Although it appeared from the beginning that this Government received the popular support of the conservative middle-class urbanites, soon the people came to realize that this Government is also incompetent, corrupt, repressive and unable to handle effectively serious economic and political problems.¹ By using strict press censorship and heavy punishment against all opposition, the Thanin Government could temporarily suppress political demands and halt the process of "rising expectations" as well as cover up its failure to handle the country's development. The issue of insurgency is again used as an excuse to suppress nay political opposition and to increase military spending which in turn would tremendously profit the generals, whose support is badly needed by this regime.

The danger which is facing the Thanin Administration inevitably comes from both the extreme right and the moderate left. An abortive coup d'etat led by General Chalard Hiranyasiri in March, 1977 was but one example representing the restlessness of the extreme right-wing and ultra-conservative cliques, who apparently desire more power and the central position denied to them by this present regime.

¹For further details of the recently-emerged intellectual alienation and dissatisfaction with the present regime, see Somchai Rakwichit, "Rao cha-pai thaang nai: sam-phaas Dr. Somchai Rakwichit" [Which Way are We Going: An Interview with Dr. Somchai Rakwichit], Patinya (Bangkok) 1:20 (January 1-15, 1977), pp. 4-33. Also see the socialist viewpoint of the Thai political development prior to the October 1976 coup d'etat in Boonsanong Punyodyana, "The Socialist Viewpoint," FEER 87:3 (January 17, 1975), pp. 26-7.

From the remaining democratic and progressive forces will come proposals for reform, modification, and compromise.¹ Nevertheless, judging from present trends, Thanin and his military supporters will likely continue to reject demands for social reforms and politico-economic development from the moderates, hence effectively pushing this progressive force towards the arms of the revolutionary left. This has been the case with a large number of intellectuals, students and Isan politicians who had to escape political repression and automatically joined the Communist forces following the October "Savage Coup".

Huntington's analysis of the development of political parties in developing countries could very well be applied to the political situation in Thailand during this period. Huntington asserted that in most modernizing countries the government at one time or another follows a policy of suppression vis-a-vis parties. At a subsequent stage, all efforts may be made to reduce the amount of political power in the system to restrict both political parties and the organizations associated with that participation. Huntington states that:

Prolonged periods of party suppression hence generate forces which, when the authoritarian rule come to an end, burst with explosive energy. A rapid

¹For further details, see Bradley, Morrell, Szanton, and Young, op. cit., p. 33.

escalation of political participation occurs with hitherto submerged or underground parties coming into daylight. The more unexpected the end of repressive rule, the more extensive and variegated the expansion of political participation. This expansion then typically leads to a rightist reaction and the renewed efforts by conservative authoritarian groups to reduce political participation and restore a narrow-based political order.¹

In the case of Thailand, the student uprisings of October, 1973 which led to the overthrow of Thanom-Prapas-Narong dictatorial rule, temporarily marked the end of military dictatorship which, during the past one and a half decades, has set the pace of political development in Thailand back for several decades. Political instability, stalemate and the suppression of political participation was replaced by a new era of constitutional development and some forms of political institutionalization initiated by successive civilian Governments of Prime Ministers Sanya, Kukrit and Seni. Throughout this enlightened period, the "power to the people" slogan received priority in the Government's development policy. Thousands of students went to rural villages, especially in the security "sensitive" Northeast, to attempt to instill the ideals of "democracy" and representative politics in the mass of the people. In the parliament, a new group of Isan politicians, such as Klaew Norapathi, Kaisaeng Suksai, Col. Somkid Srisangkom,

¹Huntington, Political Order in ..., op. cit., p. 407. Also see Myron Weiner and Joseph LaPalombara, eds., Political Parties and Political Development (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 400.

and Dr. Krasae Chanawong, established themselves as the most vocal and dedicated opposition to Government's maladministration, especially its unwillingness to solve the "North-eastern Problem". Like their predecessors in the 1940's and 1950's, they advocated some forms of political institutionalization and socio-economic reforms which would lead to a more equal distribution of wealth and a better standard of living of the Isan villagers. Soon, a number of labor unions and farmer federations emerged, and a series of political demonstrations organized by the underprivileged groups of peasants and factory workers with the support of university students became the order of the day. Although this outburst of political activities was conducted peacefully and legally, the conservative military and business community and a small group of the Bangkok middle-class viewed them as a threat to their continued social privileges and to the state of pseudo-political order characteristics of the long period of military rule.

With respect to foreign relations, the Kukrit and Seni Pramoj's Governments were relatively successful in the attempt to establish friendly relations with both the Communist neighbors and the ASEAN nations. formal diplomatic relations between Thailand and the People's Republic of China have been established shortly after Premier Kukrit's state visit to the Chinese mainland in the mid-1975.

Also, high level official talks and negotiations have been conducted with some success between the North Vietnamese and the Seni Government over issues ranging from the repatriation of several thousand Vietnamese refugees from the Northeast to the possibility of establishing formal relations, presumably after the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Thailand. Even after the collapse of Cambodia, South Vietnam and Laos and the subsequent take-over by Communist forces in the early part of 1975, some forms of negotiations and informal diplomatic contacts were still carried out between the Seni and Communist Governments. Throughout this period, in spite of some minor border clashes, the level of insurgency in the Northeast appeared to decrease and become less dangerous than ever. Unfortunately, all these encouraging signs of development in both domestic and international came to an abrupt end following the coup d'état of October 6, 1976.

At present, the future of Thailand and its prospects of becoming a fully developed, progressive and independent state look more dim and discouraging than ever. The return of military supremacy in politics, disguised behind the facade of the Thanin civilian Government, has had a great impact upon the future political development of Thailand and of its Northeast region itself. Following the coup, the period of "one hundred flowers campaign" had to come to an end, coinciding with the escape of progressive

forces, mostly students and Northeastern politicians, to the Communist camps. The failure of Thanin's Government to achieve economic development, especially in the "security sensitive" Northeast, following the withdrawal of U.S. troops has resulted in the mass migration of Isan villagers to Bangkok and hence to the creation of more economic grievances and political frustrations. The continued suppression of socio-economic and political demands, the absence of a representative body and of political organizations, and the excessive military expenditures could only lead to further weakening of the security of Thailand vis-à-vis its Communist neighboring states. One can only hope that some forms of political change will emerge and that the Thai military leaders will come to realize that the future survival of the Northeast and of Thailand itself do not depend upon the military forces alone and that an attempt to improve the socio-economic and political conditions of the country would only help to strengthen the country's position in order to counter Communist expansion. In the final analysis, one must also hope that this realization will be arrived at soon enough before the neighboring Communist states can achieve their own development, domestically and internationally, and can afford to launch an expansionist adventure towards Thailand and the rest of Southeast Asian nations which would inevitably be the final stage of the "Domino Theory."

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Current History.

Daedalus.

Daily News, Bangkok (in Thai).

Eastern World.

Economic Development and Cultural Change.

Economist.

FEER--- Far Eastern Economic Review.

Far Eastern Survey.

Free Labor World.

Foreign Affairs, U.S.

Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Bangkok: Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

FBIS--- Foreign Broadcasting Information Service.

Geographical Review.

International Affairs.

International Journal.

International Perspectives, Canada.

International Studies.

Investors, Bangkok

Jaturas, Bangkok. (in Thai).

Journal Asiatique.

Journal of Conflict Resolution.

Journal of Contemporary Asia.

Journal of Developing Areas.

Journal of Development Administration, Bangkok.

Journal of Rural Community Development, Bangkok. (in Thai)

Journal of Siam Society, Bangkok.

Journal of Social Sciences, Chulalongkorn University,
Bangkok. (in Thai and English).

Journal of Sociology, Bangkok. (in Thai and English).

Journal of Southeast Asian History.

Kiatisak Daily, Bangkok. (in Thai).

Military Review.

The Mirror, Singapore.

The Nations, Bangkok.

NCNA--- New China News Agency.

New Leader.

New Republic.

New York Times.

New York Times Magazine.

Orbis.

Oriental Economist.

Pacific Affairs.

Patinya, Bangkok.

Peking Review.

People's Daily, the People's Republic of China.

Phim-thai, Bangkok (in Thai).

Politique Etrangère.

Prachathipatai Daily, Bangkok. (in Thai).

Prachachat Daily, Bangkok. (in Thai).

Prachachat Weekly, Bangkok. (in Thai).

Progressive.

Ramparts.

Reporter.

Review of Politics.

Sapadasarn, Bangkok. (in Thai).

Sciencetific Review, Bangkok; or Withayasarn Parithas.
(in Thai).

Siam Rath, Daily, Bangkok. (in Thai).

Siam Rath Weekly Review, Bangkok. (in Thai).

Social Research.

Social Science Review, Bangkok; or Sangkomsatr parithas.
(in Thai and English).

Strait Times, Singapore.

Studies in Comparative International Development.

SCMM--- Survey of China Mainland Magazine.

SCMP--- Survey of China Mainland Press.

Survival, London.

Thai Rath Daily, Bangkok. (in Thai).

U.S. News and World's Report.

Wall Street Journal.

Washington Post.

World Affairs.

World Politics.

World Today.

Yale Review.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an attempt to apply analytically various theoretical approaches of the study of political modernization to a case study of Northeast Thailand. One chapter is devoted to the discussion of concepts, characteristics and critiques of, as well as approaches to political modernization. The four main approaches in the study of political modernization, which are constantly applied to the empirical findings of Northeast Thailand, consist of Cyril Black's "comparative-historical" approach, Samuel Huntington's "institutional" or "neo-functional" approach, Lucian Pye's "political culture" approach, and David Easton's and Gabriel Almond's "functional" approach. These approaches are intermittently employed and evaluated in the analysis of various phases of the Northeast political development, with the emphasis on Huntington's "institutional" approach.

Two succeeding chapters involve an exploration of the Northeast mass political culture and socialization, as well as the Isan villagers' needs and problems. The "Northeastern Problem", which largely derived from the Central Government's centralization policy, - the maximization of the Bangkok political interests at the expense of

local demands and regional political identity, the region's economic dislocation, geographical remoteness, and a history of political dissidence, - are discussed in relationship to the ineffectiveness of successive ruling military regimes to initiate full-scale socio-economic reforms and political institutionalization.

Another aspect of the process of political modernization is the integration of the society. Walker Connor's and Cynthia Enloe's analyses of ethnicity and integration are also examined in detail in relation to the Northeasterners' quest for political identity and some forms of ethnic particularism.

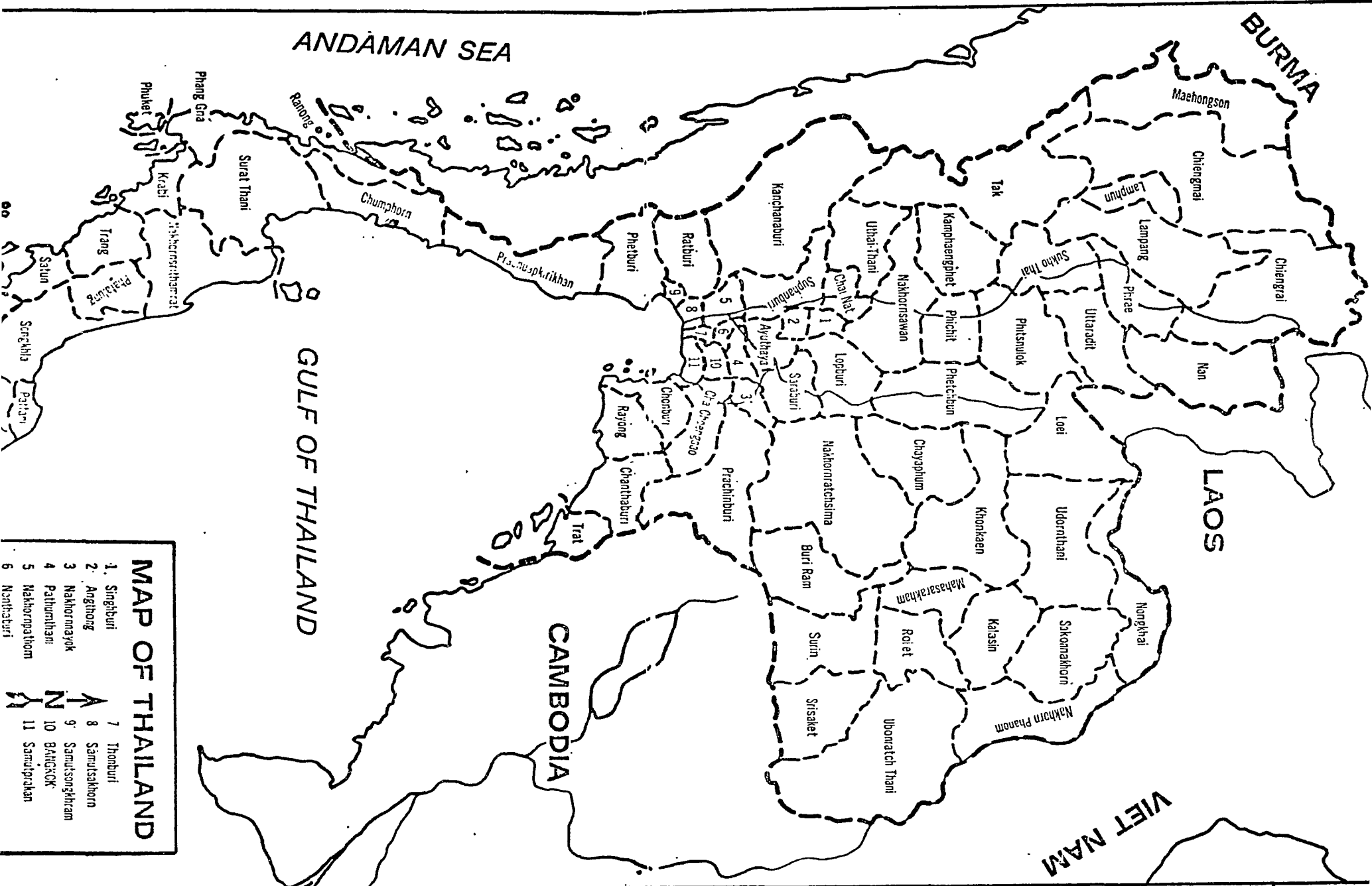
An attempt has also been made to examine the subject of Northeast political development and its potential threat to the security of Thailand from the elite standpoint and from the analysis of the elite political culture. Successive military coups and military interventions in the Thai political process have effectively retarded the already slim chance to integrate the Northeast. The outspoken Isan political elites who advocated equal economic development and who demanded some forms of political identity for the Northeast region found themselves brutally suppressed and even executed. These episodes have greatly endangered the Northeast political situation and have triggered the emergence of "Isan regionalism" and a

Northeast political identity.

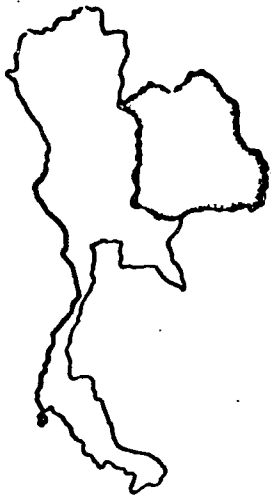
Communism, which is but one aspect of the process of political modernization, has finally gained some support from these alienated, poverty-stricken, but politically-conscious Northeast peasants. The "spill-over" of the Indochina military campaigns, the American intervention and the attempt to employ Thailand as a military base for the bombing of Indochina have inevitably provoked strong hostility by the North Vietnamese and the Chinese. They, in turn, gave more support, in the forms of military assistance and training to the Northeast insurgents as the retaliatory procedures and as punishment for Thailand's role in the Laotian and Indochinese conflicts.

Judging from this extensive research, one may conclude that the Thai leaders must come to recognize that the roots of political problem in the Northeast are basically domestic rather than an externally inspired Communist plot. These problems can, therefore, be alleviated through the improvement of economic conditions in the region as well as by allowing for some forms of political participation and some degree of ethnic identity and particularism. If the Thai leaders wish to avoid the danger of creating a "Second Vietnam" in their country, the worsening socio-economic conditions and further political alienation of the Northeast villagers must be prevented at all costs. Hence, the





destiny and future of Thailand as an independent nation is largely dependent on an attempt by the Bangkok Government to solve this "Northeastern Problem" and thereby discredit the long-term fears propounded by the "Domino" theorists.

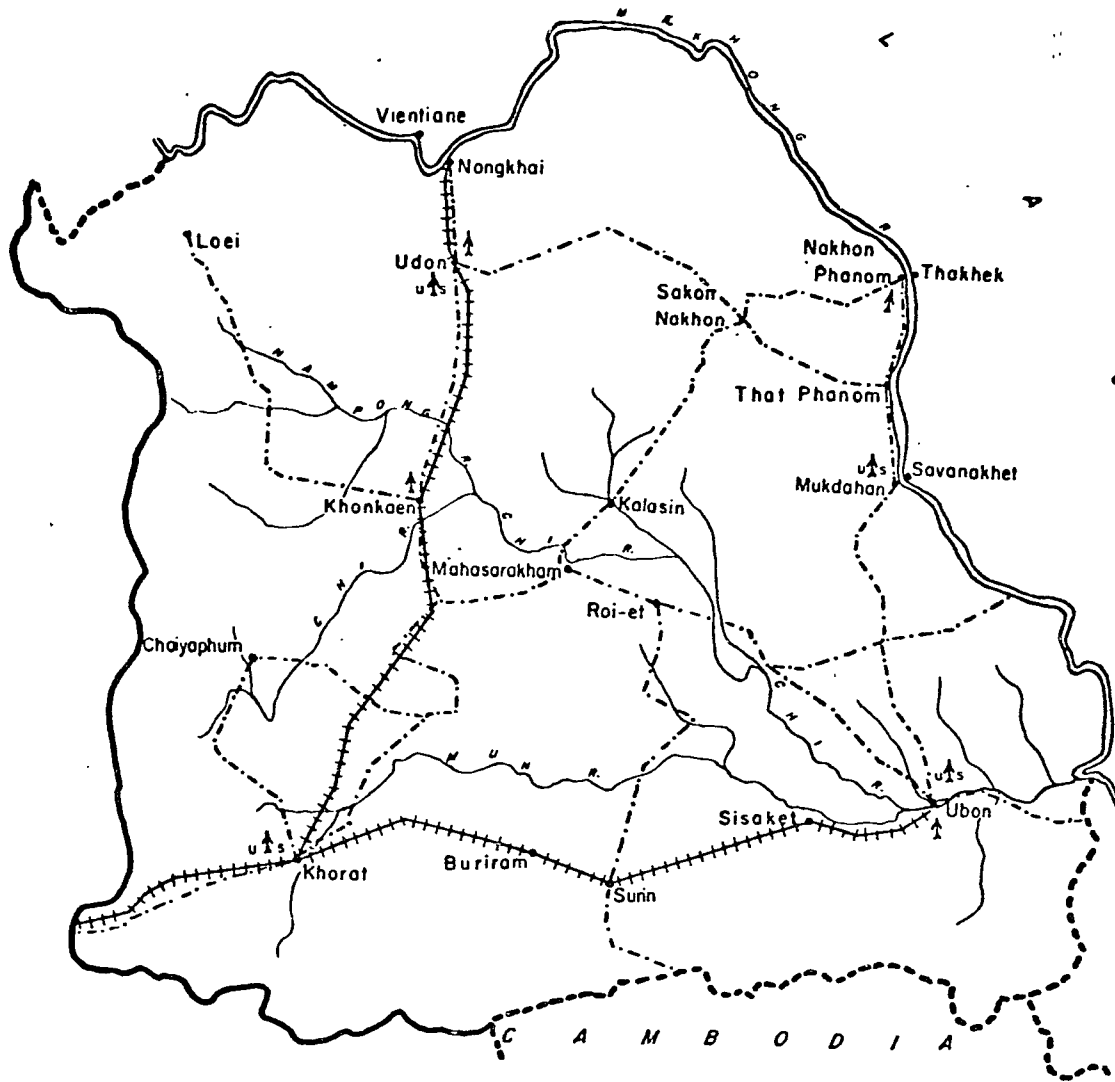
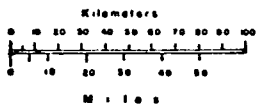


Source: Daniel D. Lovelace, *China and "People's War" in Thailand, 1964-1969*, Center for Chinese Studies, China Research Monograph, no. 8, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 96-97.



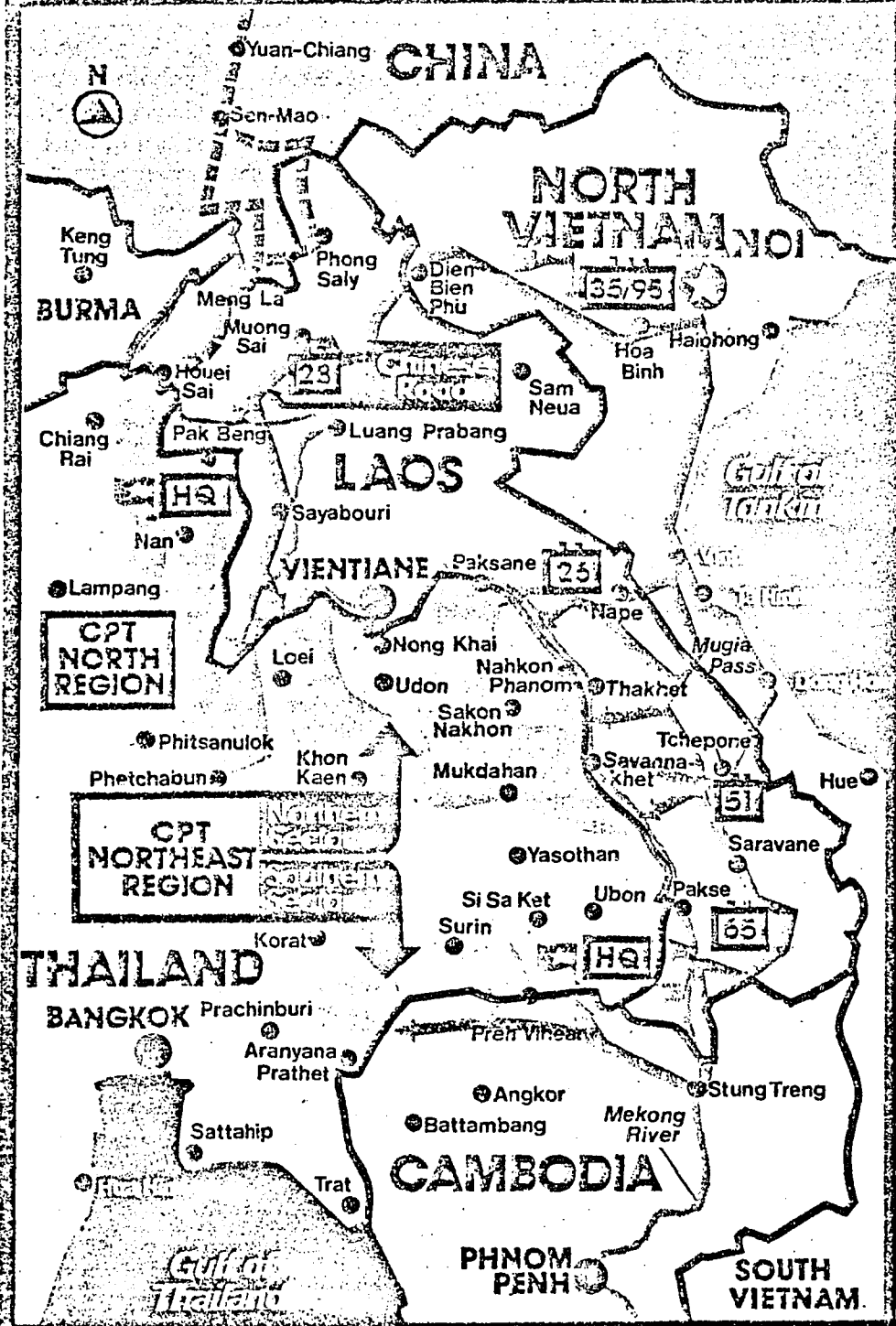
N O R T H E A S T
T H A I L A N D

-  Main Roads and Highways
-  Railroads
-  Commercial Airports
-  United States Air Bases



Source: Charles F. Keyes, Isan: Regionalism in Northeast Thailand, Southeast Asia Program, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. XI.

The External Logistics Apparatus of The Communist Party of Thailand



35/95 Pathet Lao/North Vietnam Combined Command
 People's Liberation Army of China routes
 Area Headquarters
 35/95 CC HQ units Unit base
 Areas of regular armed Communist terrorist activity in north and northeast Thailand
 Scale 0 100 200 300 Kilometres

Source: The Far Eastern Economic Review 89:34 (August 22, 1975), p. 10.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AID	Agency for International Development
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCPT	Chinese Communist Party of Thailand
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
CSOC	Communist Suppression Operations Command
CT's	Communist Terrorists
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
FEER	Far Eastern Economic Review
FM	Field Marshal
ISOC	Internal Security Operations Command
JMJP	Jen-minh Jih-pao
NCNA	New China News Agency
RLG	Royal Laotian Government
RTG	Royal Thai Government
SCMM	Survey of China Mainland Magazine
SCMP	Survey of China Mainland Press
SEATO	Southeast Asian Treaty Organization
SSR	Social Science Review
TIC/CU	Thailand Information Center, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.
TIM	Thailand Independent Movement
TPF	Thai Patriotic Front
TPLAF	Thai People's Liberation Armed Forces