

CHAPTER II

THAI MILITARY INVOLVEMENT AND ROLE IN POLITIC

“The soldier is the Army. No army is better than its soldiers. The Soldier is also a citizen. In fact, the highest obligation and privilege of citizenship is that of bearing arms for one's country”

George S. Patton Jr.

Based on the quotes above, we could see that the military which exist in Thailand and Myanmar have a passion and purposes to create unity among people within the country. The most important task of military is securing the country from any kind of threat. Related to the quotes, in Thailand and Myanmar, military become a major important institution to protect the people. It's all about the nationality of a country. The establishment of military is based on the need of a country to protect their sovereignty including the people. Hence, Thailand and Myanmar use the military power to keep stabilization of country since 1932 in Thailand and since 1941 in Myanmar (Report, 2011).

Thailand is situated in Southeast Asia and Bangkok is known as the capital city and it has a huge population as many as 65,047,788 in 2012 (Kelly 2005). This country never experienced the colonialism era. Thailand was never colonialized and controlled by western and any country like what happened in Indonesia and other Asian countries. It happened in the mid 19 century that Thailand adopted the western attention. Hence, Thailand got the style in reform to

become a modern country. Thailand had negotiated with European powers regarding the political term and the style of political system. Being in the middle among Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia, Thailand has made some agreement with colonial states in order not to be colonialized. On the other hand, Thailand must pay a price by giving the sovereignty over Cambodia and Laos to France and northern state of Malay Peninsula to British. From this situation we could see that Thailand has good relation with western (Kelly, 2005).

Basically, the main purpose of junta military is to secure the land of Thailand from attack by another state. Therefore, military tends to wider its zone into another sector like directly enter to the politics. In Thailand, military junta defines itself as a professional institution which has responsibility to protect the state from any kind of threat either domestic issue or from international threat. Therefore, military role remains to have high position and significant influence toward the daily life of Thai society. Military is regarded as the highest authority on which all of decisions making are based and, since the military is involved in politics and take a control in government system, every kind of policy is under military command (Sundarmani, 1999). Thailand has long experienced the military's politically pervasive roles, which cause the interruption of democratization. It was the time when Thailand shifted from the absolute monarchy regime to the democratic and at the same time the military launched its roles in politics (Sundarmani, 1999). Military coups in Thailand during the 74 years since the absolute monarchy was replaced by constitutional monarchy in 1932 until now

and there have been 40 commutations of the prime ministers, with 25 figures of prime ministers, 25 coups and the last military coup occurred in 2014 to Yingluck Sinawatra (Kharabi, 2014).

Junta military seems to give barriers and give a limitation for the societies to create private business, like an export and import activities and free trade (Steinberg, 2014). The purpose is to prevent international influence to come to the country, and to give the protection of the boundaries in order to avoid external influence that could become the negative values for the internal party (Steinberg, 2014). It means, military tries to secure the country from the domination of another country in term of economics.

After the coup done to Thaksin by the junta military in 2006, the last coup happened in the early of 2014. Yingluck watos force step down by the junta military. The main reason was about the introduction of amnesty bill that consist of the new regulation regarding an end of Thaksin persecution that was already punished and exiled. Therefore, by this action, Yingluck made the opposition give a demonstration. The demonstration that happened became the huge demonstration and impacted the political and economic side in Thailand. Hence, it makes the junta military give the reaction by stepping Yinglcuk down as the Prime Minister (Turmoil, 2014).

Military has significant role and participation in politics such as in interest group, political party, executive body and economic issues.

A. Military Role Over Interest Group

In Thailand, there is a group of people categorized as an interest group that has the same purpose to support the existence of the king and military power known as People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD). Known as the Yellow-Shirt, this group strongly opposes the former PM Thaksin Sinawatra and always becomes the counter part of UDD or Red Shirt that strongly support Thaksin sides. Military gained the legitimacy from Yellow Shirt as an alliance. In 2006 when the Thaksin coup phenomenon military cited many reasons as the alibi including corruption, disrespect for the monarchy and inability to serve the society. Therefore, it becomes the main reason of chaos between Red-Shirt and Yellow-Shirt (Buchanan, 2010).

With the existence of Yellow-Shirt, it shows that junta military has taken controlled over interest group that focuses as pressure movement of society toward the existence of Thaksin like Yellow-Shirt. Moreover, the leader of PAD or Yellow-Shirt include media-mogul Sondhi Limtongkul and Major General Chamlong Srimuang. Its membership consist of ultra-royalist middle-class and working class in Bangkok resident. Then, its also becomes the main reason why the military has strong influence over interest group in Thailand.

B. Military Role Over Political Party

In a democratic system, civil society is categorized as the measurement of the succession of the system. It is about the act of civil society that can strengthen or weaken the democratic system within a state. One of the measurements that civil society is active is by seeing those existences of the political parties (Elinor, 2002). Moreover, the basic idea of democracy is about the freedom of civil society to act as they want in social and political arena based on the constitutions in order to create peace and welfare condition within a country. In Thailand, named as democratic country, the development of the country seems under the control of military power. We can see that in political aspect, the development of political party is followed by the military influence, as military is also involved in the election either by joining the party or by staging a coup.

The major function of political parties is the political recruitment. During the domination of military in Thailand, political parties seem to have no authority to choose and provide the good people to become the political elite in society. It makes different concept of leadership. However, in Thailand, the strong and charming leader does not come from the political parties faction or representatives of societies but emerges from the military (Siripan, 2006). In the election, military seems not to give a chance for the other political actors to make any step in order to become the ruling party or become prime minister.

There are several political parties that have a good relation with the military and become a part of military junta, like Democrat Party, Thai Nation Party and New Aspiration Party.

Those all parties are the parties which exist in Thailand, and compete to get the majority in the parliaments and executive. In addition, there are some parties which have support from junta military as an alliance like the Democrat Party, Chart Thai Party and Social Action Party. Actually those three parties exist since early 1974, and are categorized as the old big parties in Thailand at that time (Pasuk and Baker, 1997).

1) Democrat Party

Democrat Party is the oldest party which exists Thailand, and was established in 1945. This party is formed by a group of people that promote the Prime Minister Kuang Aphaiwong, and this party has become the alliance of military junta (Manikas and Thornton, 2003). Basically, Democrat Party was promoting the idea of liberalism in the economy and conservative policy in order to increase the economy rates in Thailand.

Democrat party was developed as the conservative opposition and as the supporter of junta military (Baker, 1997). Furthermore, Democrat party was controlled by the junta military. It means that, junta military uses the party to get the vote from the society in order to gain the seats in the parliament. In 1969

election, Democrat gained 21 seats in Bangkok and gained 28 seats in the south. In the January 1975 election, Democrat captures 23 of the 26 seats in Bangkok and 72 from 269 seats in nation large party (Baker, 1997). Hence we conclude that, junta military was involved in the political party by using power to control the party as the main tool to get its goals. It is proven that, from the data Democrat Party is successful to dominate the election in four times such as in the 1975 by total voting 72 seats in the parliament, in 1976 114 seats, in 1986 gained 100 seats and the last in 1992 got 79 seats in the parliament (Baker, 1997).

2) *Chart Thai Party(Nation Party)*

Chart Thai Party was formed by a military group in 1973. There are three major actors that dominate this party, which are military group and businessperson. Therefore, we can say that those two actors have strong power to influence the party action. Chart Thai Party becomes an active actor in Thailand political arena, it is proven from their action in 1991-1992 election and Chart Thai Party gained 41 seats in the parliament. In addition, Banharn Silapa-Archa as the leader of this party is almost promoted to become the prime minister of Thailand in 1995, but it failed because of administration matter (Manikas, 2003).

3) *New Aspiration Party (NAP)*

New Aspiration Party or NAP was established in 1990. The former leader of this party is General Chavalit Yongchaiyut. The party becomes the powerful party in the election as an electoral machine, which recruits popular politicians from some parties and creates elite organizational structure. In 1997 election, the party captured 125 members of the house of representative and also formed a coalition. The focus point of New Aspiration Party is economics, so, this party suggests that the development of the state will be supported by the development of economic condition. Moreover, NAP is one of the parties which pay more attention toward the corruption issues or fighting corruption. It is proven from several steps that become a formula to prevent corruption like, first, education as the basic point to make every one aware about corruption starting from children. Second, the best way is making some active campaign on social environment which consist of social values and ethical behavior, in order to promote the importance of honesty and respect in life. Third, the societies should have an access to the capital and improve their business capacity.

Therefore, societies will understand about corruption and the negative impact of it and offer the best solution of corruption issues. On the other hands, the role of military in this party becomes the strong point to promote the party ideas. In the structural system, NAP has several committees like executive that consist of almost 70 members. It is divided into several committees such as small

executive board of 10 to 12 people, a general assembly and 267 branch offices (Manikas, 2003).

C. Military Role Over Executive Body

In Thailand, military has been directly involved in political arena since 1932. It happened when General Phot Phahonyotin became the first Prime Minister from military background. At that time, military struggled in order to overthrow the first Prime Minister Phraya Manoprakon after the phenomenon that happened in 1932. This phenomenon was related with the idea of praetorian by Amos Perlmutter. He explains that the involvement of military into political arena is because military notice that civil government can no longer fulfill the need of people. It is like what happened in Thailand and Myanmar political conditions (Crawford Young, 1997-1998). From 1932 until now, the military juntas become the dominant party in Thailand politics and have power to control political system there (Ismail, 2004). Hence, there have been 11 until 12 coups of prime minister staged by junta military starting from 1933 coup and the last coup was staged in 2014 of Yingluck Sinawatra. According to Samuel Huntington, Thailand military involvement into politics was against a military professionalism, as we understand that military role should not give any intervention inside political matter. Viewing the military action inside a political arena and undertaking by pressures toward civilian government, the main motives of military is to maintain its autonomy in order to control the political system (Kharabi, 2014).

Infact, there are political parties that join the election and are involved in the system but they are weak and cannot compete with the military power. However, the military already chosen the general as the next prime minister. It is provenwith the data below, that several prime ministers have ever been in the office since 1932-2014, and most of them are the military members

Table 1. List of Thailand Prime Minister 1932-2014 1.1: List of Thailand Prime Minister since 1932-2014

Order	Prime minister	Years of Administration	Party
1	Praya Manoprakon	1932-1933	None
2	Colonel Praya Pahonpolplay	1933-1938	Khana Ratsadon Military Branch
3	Field Marshal Pibulsogkram	1938-1944	Khana Ratsadon Military Branch
4	Major Kuang Apayong	1944-1945	Khana Ratsadon
5	Mr. Tawi Bunyaket	1945-1945	None
6	Royalty Seni Pramroj	1945-1946	Free Thai
4	Major Khuang Apayong	1946-1946(1 mont/24 day)	Democrat Party
7	Dr. Pridi Phanomyong	1946-1946(2 month/25 day)	Free Thai
8	Rear Admiral Thawan T	1946-1947	Democrat Party
4	Major Khuang Apayong	1947-1948	Democrat Party

3	Field Marshal Pibulsongkram	1948-1957	Military & Free Stone Seat Party
9	Mr. Pot Sarasin	1957-1958	None
10	Lieutenant General Tanom K	1958-1958(9 month/20 days)	Military
11	Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat	1959-1963	Military
10	General Tanom K	1963-1973	Military
12	Mr. Sanya Thammasak	1973-1975	None
6	Royalty Seni Pramoj	1975-1975(27 Days)	Democrat Party
13	Royalty Kukrit Pramot	1975-1976	Democrat party
6	Royalty Seni Pramoj	1976-1976(5 Month/ 16 Days)	Military
14	Mr. Thanin Kraivichin	1976-1977	Military
15	General Kraingsak Chamman	1977-1980	Military
16	General Prem Tinsulanond	1980-1988	Military
17	General Chatchai Coonhavan	1988-1991	None
18	Mr. Anand Panyaranchum	1991-1992	Military
19	General Sujinda Kraprayoon	1992-1992(1 Month/18 Dyas)	None
18	Mr. Anand Panyaranchum	1992-1992(2 Month/12 Days)	Democrat Party
20	Mr. Chuan Leekpay	1992-1995	Chat Thai Party
21	Mr. BanharnSilapa-Archa	1995-1996	New Aspiration

22	(Retired) General Chavalit Y	1996-1997	Party Democrat Party
20	Mr. Chuan Leekpay	1997-2000	
23	Thaksin Sinawatra	2001-2006	Thai Rak Thai Party
24	General Surayud	2006-2008	None
25	Abisit Vejjajiva	2008-2011	Democrat Party
26	Yingluck Sinawatra	2011-2014	Pheu Thai Party
27	General Prayuth Chan-Ocha	2014- now	Military

Based on the figure, we could see and analyze that the majority of Prime Ministers in Thailand come from the Junta military, even until now the military is led by military actors (Siripan, 2006).

After we see the existence of military actors in the political arena and become the PM of Thailand, now those structures automatically influence the policy making. During the military power in politics and under military government, the policy is made by individuals and various actors and groups. Therefore, the system is remaining unstable and ineffective toward the distribution of power in political parties system. Every policy is focused to enhance the military side. Therefore, the implementation of multi-party is not fair (Siripan, 2006). Indeed, the pure idea of democracy has been contaminated by the military junta

existence which control political systems in Thailand using the political matter as the power.

However, the existence of political parties seems to have no influence toward the government system, either to make some coalition, to promote idea and to compete in the election. It makes parties cannot maximize their power to build a structure in the system, because every parties is aware about the existence of military junta. The mind set of military becomes the significant factors that influence the systems. Parties will not be able to win against the military power.

Hence, the constitution becomes the tools of military in controlling government system. Military interfere the constitution and makes a policy based on the military interest. Indeed, it is the worse point in the development of democracy system. We can see in 1978 constitutions, that the military create the regulation regarding requirement to become an executive body and prime minister in Thailand, and the parliament should gain the permission from monarchy institutions and obey the agreement from the military organization. Unfortunately, the domination of military over politics includes political party's serious issues since 1980 and it has been a long time that military takes control and act as the ruling party (Siripan, 2006).

D. Military Role Over Business Sector

The authority of military regimes in the political sectors such as within interest group, political party and executive body becomes the common issues. Related with the political power, of course military junta has the authority in economic sectors as well. Since 1992, the constitutional reform military has a special role in term of economic sector. Originally, junta military is a part of the authoritarian government of the state in the economy issue particularly in the era of Chavalith Yongchaiyud. At that time, the military government made the development of the country, like increasing the economic power which is known as “Macan Asia”.

Meanwhile, there are businesses controlled by the military junta such as telecommunications, transportation, banking (such as Thai Farmer Bank, Bangkok Bank, Thai Bank and so on), port until the airport like Thai Airways. Those all business sectors are owned by the military junta as a form of military power (Septiawan, 2011). Unfortunately, the crises that happened in 1997-98 until 2004 makes military safe their assets by diverting half of it to government and become the private assets of the state. By the support from the civil society, military and elite government perfectly succeed in order to solve the crises. Post the crises era, the government propose the defense industrial program and isconsidered capable of supporting procurement of equipment budget. The development of this industry is also in line with the government economic policies to rebuild the national economy.

Until 2011, there were about 48 even more companies which are moving in field of defense industry which is under the authority of the ministry of defense (Septiawan, 2011).

Futhermore, military junta regime proves its power and becomes the actor who has a strong influence in decision making process in Thailand. (Taken from the report Tempo, Bangkok). In 2014, after overthrowing the previous prime minister Yingluck Sinawatra military junta that ruled Thailand has prepared an emergency economic measures. Junta military plan to solve the problem regarding loan and the difficulties of farmer due to crop failure. Then, the steps are taken by military to have recovery in recession within a political turmoil in the previous period. Hence, military has full power over the economy and political situation in Thailand (Yuniar, 2014).