Assess the effectiveness of democracy in establishing and maintaining political stability in Southeast Asia.

In Southeast Asia, the prevalent experience with democracy has largely been shaped by the Western concept of parliamentary democracy. While the Western model of parliamentary democracy was adopted, its success and longevity have been markedly inconsistent and short lived. Democracy failed to gain significant civilian participation in Southeast Asia due to a lack of political tutelage by colonial masters and a deep-rooted history and familiarity of authoritarian rule. Furthermore, ineffectual leadership also contributed to the downfall of democracy, with the military emerging as the more capable institution in achieving political stability in Southeast Asia. That said, when colonial masters adequately prepared these countries for democracy, it fared better in achieving political stability. However, the success of democracy in such cases was largely due to the adoption of authoritarian measures.

The absence of political tutelage and a deep-rooted history of authoritarian rule hindered the longevity of democracy in Southeast Asia. Indonesia serves as an example, where the introduction of democracy after the civil war between the Republic of Indonesia and the Dutch empire from 1945 to 1949 was met with limited voter participation. A lack of awareness and strong ideological divisions resulted in no major party gaining strong support in the 1955 general elections. Similarly, Thailand, without a colonial master and accustomed to monarchic authoritarian rule, experienced low electoral participation during its brief democratic period from 1932 to 1938. The political elites held little regard for the poor, and the "People's Party" prioritized personal interests over political engagement. These instances underscore the challenges faced by nascent democracies in Southeast Asia, where historical and societal legacies significantly impeded the implementation and sustenance of democratic systems.

The efficacy of democracy in fostering political stability was significantly compromised by ineffective leadership, leading to the military often being perceived as a more capable guardian of order and stability. This pattern is starkly evident in Burma under U Nu's leadership from 1948 to 1962. His government's controversial efforts to position the country as a Buddhist state ignited separatist movements and escalated ethnic tensions. When violence spiralled out of control, the military intervened, forming a caretaker government in 1958 and eventually supplanting the democratic regime in 1962. A similar scenario unfolded in Thailand between 1932 and 1938, where the democratic government grappled with issues of credibility, compounded by allegations of communist leanings and rampant corruption. The military's role became increasingly prominent, initially defending the government during the 1933 Borowadet revolution and ultimately seizing power in 1938. These instances clearly illustrate how leadership failures in the democratic systems paved the way for military intervention, casting a shadow over the effectiveness of democracy in maintaining political stability in the region.

Nonetheless, democracy experienced more success when there was adequate preparatory groundwork laid by colonial powers. In countries like Malaysia and the Philippines, the enduring nature of their democratic systems can be attributed to the methodical transition

overseen by their respective colonial rulers. Malaysia's smooth transition of power from British rule culminated in the formation of the Merdeka constitution, a well-crafted document that delineated legislative and executive powers with precision. Crucially, the inclusion of Article 153, which addressed the economic and social rights of the Chinese and Malay

populations, was pivotal in maintaining the equilibrium of Malaysia's democratic fabric. In the Philippines, the United States played a seminal role in shaping the country's democratic trajectory through the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act. This legislation laid the foundation for a US-style presidential democracy, paving the way for a seamless transition to self-governance post-1946, which lasted until the imposition of martial law in 1972. These instances underscore how strategic and thoughtful preparation by colonial powers significantly contributed to the longevity and stability of democratic systems in Southeast Asia.

However, the success of democracy in such cases was largely due to the adoption of authoritarian measures. In Singapore, for instance, while free elections were a norm, the government's use of the Internal Security Act to detain political opponents without trial was a key authoritarian tactic. This approach effectively curtailed opposition, ensuring electoral dominance for the ruling party, as starkly illustrated by the arrest of left-wing activists during Operation Cold Store from 1976 to 1977. Similarly, in Indonesia, the post-1971 political landscape was rigidly controlled with only three permitted political parties, and dissenting voices were often silenced through imprisonment or worse. In these contexts, democracy paradoxically sustained its longevity not through the free and fair electoral processes typically associated with democratic systems but through authoritarian practices that manipulated and steered electoral outcomes.

In conclusion, the foundational absence of political tutelage, coupled with a series of ineffective leadership, profoundly impeded the flourishing of democratic systems in the region. This vacuum often led to military interventions as democratic governments struggled to assert their credibility and maintain order. Nonetheless, instances where colonial powers laid the groundwork for democracy showed more promising outcomes. Crucially, however, the necessity to employ authoritarian measures for the success of democracy in these contexts underscores an inherent limitation in the effectiveness of democratic systems alone.

Examine the factors which led to the rise of the military in Southeast Asian states in the independence years.

In the years following independence, Southeast Asian states found themselves grappling with a formidable force that would significantly shape their political landscapes: the military. This essay dissects the factors that propelled the rise of military influence in Southeast Asian nations. To begin, it is crucial to establish a clear definition of what constitutes a "military government." A military can be deemed dominant when it wields substantial authority in political decision
making, often eclipsing the influence of civilian leaders. This dominance, had implications for the democratic aspirations of these nations. This essay will argue how the inherent weaknesses of democratic systems, the historical backdrop of decolonization, and the formidable organizational strength of the military vis-à-vis civilian governance coalesced to usher in an era of military governments. However, the presence of societal groups and middle-class influences, coupled with the military's inability to impose its will on politics, ultimately curtailed its dominance in the long-run. By the 1980s, the rise of societal forces and evolving political dynamics led to a shift away from military dominance.

One cannot underestimate the pivotal role that historical context and the military's involvement in the decolonization process played in the rise of military dominance. The Burmese and Indonesian militaries, born out of the crucible of World War II and at the forefront of their nations' nationalist movements, emerged with a unique historical legitimacy. These militaries were not only instrumental in the struggle for independence but also played

central roles in shaping the very foundations of their respective nation-states. Consider, for instance, the Indonesian military's heroic efforts against the Dutch during the establishment of the Republic, including their unwavering resolve in the face of Dutch actions such as the notorious "Police Actions." Similarly, the Burmese BNA's contributions in aiding nationalist forces, first against the Japanese and later against the British, underscored their indispensable role in the fight for sovereignty. Against this backdrop, it becomes evident that these militaries were not just actors in history; they were architects, catalysts, and defenders of their nations' independence, imbuing them with unparalleled historical legitimacy that dwarfed the fledgling democracies struggling to take root. In this historical context, the rise of the military as a dominant force in Southeast Asian states during their independence years is a logical and compelling outcome.

Furthermore, the ascent of the military as a dominant force in Southeast Asian states can also be attributed to the glaring instability and weaknesses inherent in their constitutional governments, particularly during the early years of independence. These fledgling democratic governments found themselves ill-equipped to contend with the centrifugal forces of ethnic separatism and political turmoil, which frequently necessitated military intervention as a means of restoring stability. The military often perceived itself as the only bastion capable of effectively countering these destabilizing factors, including the looming spectre of Communism. For instance, in Burma, the internal fractures within the U Nu government, compounded by its inability to quell intra-party disunity and address the instability wrought by Communist forces, laid the groundwork for the military's appointment as the caretaker government. Similarly, in Thailand, the disunity among the elite and the constitutional government's weaknesses sowed instability within the state, culminating in a November 1947 military coup that unseated the democratic government. These instances underscore how the

inadequacies of democratic governance in the face of challenges compelled the military to step in, leading to its ascendancy in Southeast Asian states during the critical years of independence.

Moreover, ascendancy of military influence in the nascent post-independence Southeast Asian states can be substantially ascribed to the strategic reliance placed upon the military apparatus by the civilian governments of the time. In a bid to consolidate their own power, political leaders often extended invitations to the military to become involved in politics, creating a symbiotic relationship. For instance, U Nu's decision to invite the military to assume the role of caretaker government in 1958 exemplified this dynamic, as he sought to maintain stability and assert control. Similarly, Sukarno's deliberate co-optation of the military in various actions, including military campaigns against the Dutch in West Irian and the policy of Konfrontasi, showcased the intertwined nature of civilian and military authority in shaping the nation's destiny. These instances underscored the deliberate reliance on the military as a means of achieving political objectives, ultimately fuelling the rise of the military as a pivotal force in Southeast Asian states during their formative years of independence.

Another factor contributing to the rise of the military's influence in Southeast Asian states during the early years of decolonization was the absence of robust societal groups and a middle class that could effectively check the power of the military. In these nascent nations, such social elements were notably lacking, only emerging in force during the 1980s. This absence allowed the military to wield unchecked authority. However, as exemplified by Thailand, the military's adoption of increasingly democratic practices in the 1980s stands as a testament to the subsequent emergence of a middle class, which began to assert its influence as a counterbalance to military dominance. Similarly, in Indonesia, the rise of various societal

groups, including religious organizations, NGOs, and the burgeoning middle class, collectively played a pivotal role in influencing the military's actions. Their concerted efforts ultimately culminated in the removal of Suharto from power. These examples underscore the transformative power of the emergence of societal groups and the middle class, serving as effective checks on the military's authority, and marking a significant shift in the political landscape of Southeast Asian states.

That said when there was structural subordination of the military to civilian government institutions, despite procedural influence, this prevented the ascendency of the military. Unlike military-dominated regimes in countries like Burma and Thailand, where the Revolutionary Council and Senate wielded substantial political power, non-military regimes in these nations maintained a significant degree of subordination to civilian institutions, including constitutional arrangements and electoral processes. In Indonesia, for instance, Suharto effectively depoliticized ABRI after the 1965 coup, making the military dependent on him for positions in state enterprises and economic arrangements. Similarly, in the Philippines, the military's authority ultimately hinged on Marcos, who had the final say in matters of military expansion and budget allocation during martial law. Even in Thailand, where the military played a prominent role, it remained subordinate to the institution of the monarchy, as evidenced by General Suchinda's resignation in 1992 following the King's intervention in support of democratic forces. These examples underscore how the structural subordination of the military to civilian institutions prevented their unchecked rise to dominance.

Moreover, a pivotal factor that prevented the continued rise of the military's dominance states was the evolving dynamics of the political landscape, particularly evident by the 1980s. The military's ascendant role during the early years of independence was a response to the political

chaos and instability of the time. However, the subsequent emergence and strengthening of societal forces by the 1980s led to the erosion of the military's leading position. In the Philippines, the 1986 EDSA Revolution, driven by pressure from influential entities like the Church and the Manila business community, resulted in the installation of Aquino's democratic government, effectively sidelining the military. Thailand saw a similar shift in 1992 when student protests led to the exile of General Suchinda, marking a clear departure from military rule. Burma's 1988 and 8888 student protests paved the way for the May 1990 elections, won by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD), although the results were eventually invalidated. These examples highlight the impact of societal forces, leading to the diminishing influence of the military and the restoration of civilian authority by the 1980s.

Finally, another factor that curtailed the military's ascent to political dominance was its inability to effectively impose its will on politics. This demonstrated that the military's leading role had waned by this time. In the Philippines, for instance, a series of seven failed military coups against President Aquino between 1987 and 1989 underscored the military's inability to assert control over the political landscape. Similarly, in Thailand, there were unsuccessful coup attempts against General Prem's semi-democratic government in 1981 and 1985, as well as the failure of General Arthit's endeavour to amend the Constitution in 1983. These instances serve as evidence of the military's diminishing capacity to dictate outcomes, signifying a significant shift away from military dominance in the post-1980s era.

In conclusion, the rise of the military in Southeast Asian states during the early years of independence was shaped by various interrelated factors. The historical context of decolonization, marked by the role played by military forces in the struggle for independence, bestowed upon them a unique historical legitimacy over the nascent nation-states.

Furthermore, the weaknesses of democratic governments in dealing with internal divisions often compelled political leaders to depend on the military as a means of maintaining stability and consolidating power. However, the presence of societal groups and middle-class influences, coupled with the military's inability to impose its will on politics, ultimately curtailed its dominance in the long run. By the 1980s, the rise of societal forces and evolving political dynamics led to a significant shift away from military dominance in several Southeast Asian nations.

Assess the significance of the Cold War on the domestic stability of the independent Southeast Asian states.

The Cold War had a multifaceted impact on the domestic stability of independent Southeast Asian states. While it brought stability to some nations, such as Thailand and Indonesia, through economic and military aid, it also precipitated instability in others, notably Vietnam. However, to fully assess the Cold War's impact, one must consider the pivotal role of national leadership. The actions and decisions of local leaders were often the most significant factors in achieving domestic stability. These leaders navigated the complex Cold War dynamics, managing internal centrifugal threats and adeptly manipulating political structures to maintain or restore stability. Therefore, while the Cold War undeniably influenced Southeast Asia's domestic stability, it was the strategic responses of the region's leaders to these global tensions that ultimately determined the course and nature of stability within their respective states.

The Cold War context significantly influenced political stability in Southeast Asia, as the region became embroiled in Cold War struggles due to the presence of Communist insurgencies, notably the Vietnam War. Fearing the destabilizing effects of Communism, the United States offered support for maximum government in countries like Thailand, viewing them as a crucial bulwark against Communist expansion. This support was tangible, as evidenced by the substantial military aid provided to Thailand, amounting to $222 million between 1951 and 1957, which enabled the modernization and training of its armed forces. Furthermore, the US military utilized Thailand as a base for its troops and aircraft from the mid-1960s onwards, necessitating upgrades to Thai military facilities. In addition to these indirect roles, the Thai military directly participated in the Indochina conflict, with over 11,000 troops in Vietnam assisting American efforts by 1969. Moreover, it conducted independent operations in Laos. The Cold War, therefore, not only heightened concerns over Communist influence in Southeast Asia but also played a pivotal role in reinforcing the

military's significance and influence in the region, as it became a key player in the broader geopolitical struggle of the era.

While it is true that the Cold War did provide political stability in certain Southeast Asian states, it is essential to acknowledge that it also contributed significantly to instability in others, such as Vietnam. The U.S.'s involvement and choice to support leaders like Ngo Dinh Diem had a destabilizing impact on the country. Diem's policies and actions further exacerbated the internal turmoil. Although the U.S. aimed to democratize politics in South Vietnam after Diem's tenure, the contextual challenges were formidable. The emergence of numerous political parties in 1963 and their proliferation by the end of 1969 was a step towards democracy. However, South Vietnam lacked a history of democratic traditions, resulting in these parties often being built on personal connections and loyalties rather than strong ideological foundations. Consequently, attempts at democratic reforms faced limitations. Leaders like Thieu maintained their grip on power by placing allies in key positions and manipulating elections, as evidenced by his 1971 re-election with an implausible 94% of the vote. Ultimately, in 1973, as American forces prepared to withdraw from Vietnam, Thieu abandoned the democratic experiment by establishing his own "Democratic Party," which bore resemblance to Leninist-style parties and required all civil servants to join, mirroring the North Vietnamese Lao Dong model. In this context, the notion of democracy in South Vietnam was undeniably challenged by both external and internal factors.

Hence, it must be noted that the presence of the Cold War was merely a contributing factor towards domestic stability, but that the role of leaders was the most significant aspect that gave rise to domestic stability, as their actions have served to enable them to deal with centrifugal threats within the country, as well as their abilities to make use of modified political structures to provide the conditions for stability within Southeast Asian States.

The personal characteristics and political styles of political leaders played an indispensable role in shaping political stability in Southeast Asian states, laying the foundation for robust and enduring political structures. An example is Singapore's iconic leader, Lee Kuan Yew, who masterfully employed a combination of "soft" and "hard" control methods to forge a stable state. Lee's unwavering control over the People's Action Party (PAP) minimized internal dissent, predominantly stemming from differences between the "Old Guard" and Lee over the pace of political change. His adept management allowed him to sideline dissenting voices like Toh Chin Chye, Ong Pang Boon, and Lee Khoon Choy, who resisted retirement and expressed concerns about the party's alignment with the majority Chinese and dialect-speaking population. Additionally, Lee institutionalized political control through mechanisms such as the elected Presidency, the subordination of the military, depoliticization strategies, an emphasis on economic development, state-regulated media, and the utilization of the Internal Security Act, among others. Similarly, Suharto's leadership in Indonesia showcased the critical role of personal characteristics and political strategies in fostering stability. Suharto effectively integrated the military into the government and depoliticized society through a vigorous economic development agenda, thus remedying Indonesia's historical instability. His early actions, following the PKI coup, involved purging suspected leftists from the military ranks and placing loyalists in key positions. Centralizing the military's command structure under the Ministry of Defence, temporarily under his control, further consolidated his authority. Suharto also skilfully fomented factionalism within the military, establishing civil and military intelligence units to maintain surveillance and sow distrust among potential adversaries. His ability to discipline high-ranking military officers

who deviated from his directives exemplified his mastery over the armed forces.

That said presence of weak leaders can undeniably precipitate political instability within a state, as illustrated by the case of Ferdinand Marcos. Marcos struggled to effectively manage the diverse political factions within his government, a deficiency that ultimately led to his downfall. In stark contrast, Suharto skilfully prevented elite factionalism from spiralling out of control, while the Burmese military government notably maintained unity within its ranks. However, the primary source of opposition to the Marcos regime stemmed from the political elite he had sought to marginalize, a feat in which he proved far less adept than Suharto. Political scientist William Case emphasizes this distinction, highlighting that Suharto adeptly managed the elite collectively, balancing factions, whereas Marcos disunified and alienated many elites, simultaneously undermining some factions and cultivating new cronies. Elite opposition took various forms, encompassing disenchanted business elites like Eduardo Olaguer, who initiated the "Light-a-Fire Movement" to target the properties of Marcos' cronies, disgruntled military officers exemplified by the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), and politicians such as Benigno Aquino and Salvador Laurel, who formed opposition parties. Additionally, the Catholic Church, led by Cardinal Jaime Sin, played a crucial role by condemning the government's handling of socio-economic issues and resisting its campaign against the church's freedom to address matters of Catholic morality. Marcos's inability to

effectively manage these elite opposition forces exacerbated the political instability that ultimately brought about his downfall.

The role of constitutional processes and elections in the maintenance of long-term political stability and leadership transition is another critical aspect. In the case of Singapore, parliamentary elections have been consistently held since 1965, with the People's Action Party (PAP) consistently winning and maintaining a strong grip on power, often securing over 61% of the popular vote. While the opposition managed to make inroads, such as the Workers' Party's victory in Anson in 1981 and subsequent wins in various constituencies and seats, the electoral system in Singapore has, over time, served to strengthen the ruling party rather than facilitate free and fair competition. The introduction of Group Representation Constituencies in 1988, ostensibly to ensure ethnic minority representation, has hindered the opposition, as only the PAP possesses the resources to contend in these larger constituencies. This system has also enabled gerrymandering, further consolidating the PAP's advantage. Similarly, in Malaysia post-1969, the electoral landscape was characterized by the reconstitution of the Alliance into the Barisan Nasional (BN) in 1974, a move that disadvantaged parties like the Democratic Action Party that remained outside the BN. The BN also employed gerrymandering and exclusionary tactics, such as disqualifying opposition candidates on minor technical grounds, to maintain electoral dominance, ultimately resulting in less fair electoral system despite regular elections. These practices contributed to the BN's consistent electoral victories, allowing UMNO to amend the constitution and curtail civil and political freedoms with its two thirds parliamentary majority. Thus, while constitutional processes and elections are essential components of political stability, their impact varied significantly depending on how they are utilized.

The ability of governments to effectively address various threats and challenges, whether they are centrifugal forces in the early period or popular opposition in the later period, has been pivotal in shaping the development of political stability. An illustration of this dynamic can be found in Burma, where the military's historical role in resisting colonial powers, combating ethnic separatists, and maintaining internal order contributed significantly to its legitimacy.

Nevertheless, as in many regimes characterized by centralized control, political opposition emerged to challenge the regime's legitimacy, highlighting the tension between traditional culture and democratic values. In the case of Singapore, elections have paradoxically served to consolidate the ruling party's dominance rather than promote free and fair competition. The introduction of Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) and gerrymandering have hindered the opposition's prospects, coupled with the People's Action Party's effective maintenance of internal unity. While schemes like the Non-Constituency MP introduced in 1984 and the Nominated MP scheme introduced in 1991 ostensibly offered a semblance of opposition representation, they also served to pacify the electorate and co-opt potential sources of opposition. This underscores how responses to political challenges and popular opposition can both bolster and undermine political stability, contingent upon the strategies employed by those in power.

In conclusion, the Cold War, while offering crucial stability through economic and military aid in countries like Thailand and Indonesia, also paradoxically fuelled domestic instability in nations like Vietnam. However, it is imperative to recognize that the Cold War's influence was but one contributing factor to domestic stability. The paramount aspect that fostered stability was the leadership of these states. Leaders played a pivotal role in addressing internal

centrifugal threats and adapting political structures to establish stable conditions in Southeast Asian states. To achieve enduring political stability, leaders and states had to demonstrate a proficiency in harnessing democratic processes and institutions, ensuring long-term stability, and facilitating seamless leadership transitions and power sharing. In essence, while external factors like the Cold War had their impact, it was the vision and actions of leaders that truly defined the course of domestic stability in these Southeast Asian nations.

Essential Examples

Effectiveness of Democracy in Southeast Asia:

- ❖ 1945-1949: Indonesian struggle for independence from Dutch colonial rule.
- ❖ 1955: General elections in Indonesia with limited voter participation. ❖ 1932-1938: Thailand's brief period of democracy.
- ❖ 1948-1962: Burma under U Nu's leadership.

- ❖ 1962: Military coup in Burma.
- ❖ 1976-1977: Singapore's Operation Cold Store.

Maximum Governments in Southeast Asia:

- ❖ 1965-1988: Ne Win's rule in Burma.
- ❖ 1968 onwards: Lee Kuan Yew's electoral victories in Singapore.
- ❖ 1947-1948: Military coups in Thailand.
- ❖ 1965: Alleged communist coup in Indonesia.

Mass Political Participation in Southeast Asia:

- ❖ 1986: People Power Revolution in the Philippines.
- ❖ 1998: Reformasi Movement in Indonesia.
- ❖ 1973 and 1992: Student-led protests in Thailand.

Southeast Asian Governments Addressing Political Stability:

- ❖ 1947-1948: Malayan Emergency.
- ❖ 1970s-2000s: Moro Rebellion in the Philippines.
- ❖ 1946-1954: Hukbalahap Rebellion in the Philippines.

Rise of the Military in Southeast Asian States:

- ❖ 1962-1988: Military governance in Burma.
- ❖ 1947: Military coup in Thailand.
- ❖ 1965: Military's response to the alleged communist coup in Indonesia. ❖ 1980s: Emergence of societal forces challenging military dominance in Southeast Asia.

Cold War's Impact on Southeast Asian States:

- ❖ 1951-1957: US military aid to Thailand.
- ❖ 1965-1988: US support for maximum governments in Thailand and Indonesia.
- ❖ 1973: End of US involvement in Vietnam War.

Personalities of Political Leaders in Southeast Asia:

- ❖ 1965-1988: Lee Kuan Yew's leadership in Singapore.
- ❖ 1965-1986: Ferdinand Marcos' presidency in the Philippines.
- ❖ 1962-1988: Ne Win's rule in Burma.

Question Bank

Here is a list of key question to prepare for (do take note that the least is not exhaustive and other questions can also come out as this is a broad topic):

- ❖ To what extent was democracy effective in establishing and maintaining political stability in Southeast Asia in the post-colonial era?
- ❖ To what extent were maximum governments effective in establishing and maintaining political stability in Southeast Asia in the post-colonial era?

- ❖ How successful was the military in establishing and maintaining political stability in Southeast Asia in the post-colonial period?
- ❖ Evaluate the influence of mass political participation on politics of Southeast Asia in the post-colonial period.
- ❖ Assess the significance of leaders in establishing and maintaining political stability in Southeast Asia in the post-colonial period.
- ❖ Evaluate the consequences of decolonization on the political landscape of Southeast Asian states.
- ❖ How significant was communism in establishing and maintaining political stability in Southeast Asia in the post-colonial period.
- ❖ Assess the effectiveness of constitutional processes in establishing and maintaining political stability in Southeast Asia.
- ❖ Evaluate the importance of the Cold War context in shaping the political landscape of Southeast Asia.

Comprehensive Review Notes

Political Stability in Indonesia

Parliamentary democracy after independence

During the tumultuous era of Japanese occupation, a dramatic reversal of political fortunes unfolded for Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta, contrasting starkly with their pre-war existence under Dutch colonial rule. This period presented an unprecedented opportunity for them to advance their nationalist objective of securing Indonesia's independence. However, the Japanese decision to grant autonomy to Indonesia in August 1945 was ultimately dashed by Tokyo's sudden surrender, leaving the Indonesians hesitant to accept Japanese sponsorship of independence, knowing that Allied victory was imminent.

Seizing the military vacuum, Sukarno boldly declared independence on August 17, 1945,

an act that established him as President and Mohammad Hatta as Vice-President. This golden opportunity allowed Indonesian initiative to grasp independence before the arrival of Allied forces in September 1945. The formal achievement of independence from Dutch colonial rule finally came on December 27, 1949, following a protracted decolonization process known as the Indonesian Revolution (1945-1949). This arduous journey, spanning over four years, required Jakarta to provide guarantees for Dutch investments in Indonesia and assume responsibility for the debts incurred during the Dutch attempts to quell the nationalist revolution. Additionally, the Netherlands retained sovereignty over Papua.

In 1949, the Republic of the United States of Indonesia (RUSI) was established, with Sukarno serving as President and Mohammad Hatta as Vice-President and Prime Minister. However, due to strong pro-Republican sentiments in the Dutch-created federal states and the discrediting of federalism as a Dutch stratagem, RUSI was replaced by the new unitary Republic of Indonesia on August 17, 1950. This transition reflected the deeply rooted anti Dutch sentiments prevalent in Indonesia. The question of whether the provisional constitutional system should be presidential or parliamentary in form sparked a significant debate within the Indonesian nationalist leadership at the dawn of independence. Ultimately, the parliamentary system prevailed, entrenched by the 1950 Provisional Constitution, which paved the way for the election of a Constituent Assembly tasked with crafting a permanent constitutional structure.

The political history of Indonesia between 1945 and 1957 can be viewed as a period where the leaders of independent Indonesia aspired to forge consensus among diverse political structures through contention within a broader liberal framework. However, establishing parliamentary democracy faced significant challenges, given the limited foundations on which representative democracy could be constructed. Indonesia inherited from the Dutch and Japanese the traditions, assumptions, and legal structures of an authoritarian police state. Moreover, most of the population, impoverished and lacking education, lacked the means to hold Jakarta's politicians publicly accountable for their actions.

During the fight for independence, the revolution served as a rallying point, fostering consensus among various nationalist parties, ideological, religious, and cultural groups within Indonesia against their common Dutch adversary. However, with the success of the

revolution, Indonesia reverted to a state of fragmentation, and the new Republican government grappled with the task of establishing a political structure capable of generating consensus. Unfortunately, parliamentary democracy only served to reinforce divisions among political parties and accentuate their ideological differences, ultimately posing a threat to the state's legitimacy.

In the early years of independence, Indonesia's political landscape was dominated by four main parties: the Masyumi Party, Nahdlatul Ulama, the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), and the Indonesian National Party (PNI). The divisions between these parties were glaringly apparent during the 1955 general elections, further highlighting the failure of parliamentary democracy to foster consensus. These elections, characterized by vigorous campaigning and high voter turnout, showcased the significant role played by patrons in influencing registered voters. The results of these elections revealed the prominence of the PNI, Masyumi, NU, and PKI, alongside the election of 79 other political parties.

Parliamentary democracy also accentuated political and ideological tensions between Java and the Outer Islands. While Java predominantly supported the PNI, NU, and PKI—more leftist parties—the Outer Islands leaned towards Masyumi, a more rightist party. As time progressed, the divisions between Java and the Outer Islands grew more

pronounced. Resentment against the Republic's centralizing tendencies brewed among regional factions, with outer islanders dissatisfied by the overwhelming presence of Javanese individuals in government positions. Following the 1955 elections, these regions believed that the political system favored Javanese interests and leftist policies, leading to a series of revolts aimed at asserting their own rights.

The ineffectiveness of civilian leadership exacerbated the shortcomings of the parliamentary system, which failed to address Indonesia's myriad political, economic, and social challenges. Frequent changes in cabinets every few months hindered the continuity of government policy, while the proliferation of political parties with irreconcilable agendas impeded economic recovery and contributed to a state of political chaos. Furthermore, the nation's territorial integrity faced threats from various separatist movements.

The 1955 general elections resulted in a political deadlock, as no party secured a clear majority. Rather than uniting to form a strong, cohesive government, the political landscape remained fragmented, hindering policy implementation and exacerbating societal divisions. The Constituent Assembly, tasked with drafting a new constitution, faced significant differences among political parties regarding the nature of the newly independent state.

The pressing economic challenges confronting ordinary Indonesians were neglected due to incessant bickering among political parties. Urgent attention was required to address the economic chaos resulting from the Indonesian revolution, including food shortages due to wartime destruction and population increases, diminishing land holdings that failed to sustain even subsistence agriculture, rapid inflation, and sluggish economic development. For example, the cost of living rose by approximately 100% between 1950 and 1957, while food production struggled to keep up with the rapid population growth from 77.2 million in 1950 to 85.4 million in 1955.

Indonesia faced serious threats to its parliamentary democratic system and unitary structure, exemplified by several armed separatist rebellions in the 1950s. These challenges

arose from Outer Islanders' concerns over Javanese domination within the new state and growing regionalist aspirations fueled by the centralizing tendencies of the unitary state structure.

One such rebellion was the Republic of South Maluku (RMS) in Ambon, which occurred from April 1950 to November 1950. The resistance, led by proDutch Christian Ambonese, opposed the demise of federalism and their assimilation into the Javanese- and Muslim dominated Republic of Indonesia. Although Republican troops managed to suppress the RMS after intense military campaigns, small-scale guerrilla resistance persisted on the island of Seram until the early 1960s. Another notable rebellion was the Darul Islam Movement, which spanned from 1948 to 1962. This movement sought to replace the Republic with an Indonesian Islamic state, led by the charismatic Kartosuwiryo, underpinned by Islamic law and administered by experts. The Masyumi party was perceived to be sympathetic to its cause. The rebellion, starting in southwest Java and spreading to other parts of Indonesia, including Aceh, presented a formidable and sustained armed challenge against the Republic until the 1960s. These events discredited politicians from Islamic parties and reinforced Jakarta's commitment to secularism.

The military played a prominent role in containing and suppressing these armed separatist challenges during the early years of independence. Their successful efforts bolstered national prestige while exposing the incompetence of civilian governance in safeguarding

Indonesia's territorial integrity. Viewing themselves as the guardians of Indonesian independence, the military held a dim view of corrupt and inept civilian politicians. Notably, military leaders, such as General Sudirman, General Nasution, and Simatupang, accepted Sukarno's leadership and authority due to his high national prestige and widespread popularity.

The military resented civilian attempts to control military affairs, which led to factional divisions among army commanders and limited their independent political role. These perceptions prompted the military central command, led by Nasution and Simaputang, to advocate for military professionalism and the institutionalization of clear hierarchical structures. This push culminated in the re-emergence of the military as a powerful and united political force by the late 1950s. During the period of parliamentary democracy, the Indonesian military sought a political role but was denied one within the existing democratic structure. Factionalism within the army prevented them from directly influencing political affairs, resulting in numerous military rebellions throughout the Indonesian archipelago in the 1950s. The unifying appeal of Sukarno and his personal political ambitions played a significant role in shaping the military's sentiments.

Sukarno grew increasingly dissatisfied with his figurehead role under the parliamentary system. Although he initially accepted the ceremonial position of president to facilitate postwar decolonization negotiations with the Dutch, his charismatic personality and craving for real power soon put him in open conflict with political parties. Many regional military commanders sympathized with Sukarno and the PNI, viewing them as committed to the spirit of the Indonesian revolution.

Critical of the ineffective parliamentary system, Sukarno believed he was the only leader capable of bridging the deep-seated political divisions in Indonesia. He successfully quelled the military's attempt to dissolve parliament in 1952, known as the '17 October affair.' However, faced with political instability stemming from parliamentary democracy, Sukarno

considered the Western political model as an obstacle to building a strong Indonesia, given its lack of alignment with Indonesian mentalities. Instead, he advocated for a more Javanese form of government that could reconcile opposing viewpoints and eliminate the fundamentally divisive nature of party politics.

In early 1957, Sukarno launched his 'bury the parties' campaign, aimed at dismantling parliamentary democracy in favour of a more authoritarian regime known as "Guided Democracy." The outbreak of the Permesta rebellion in March 1957provided General Nasution with an opportunity to secure Sukarno's approval for proclaiming martial law in Indonesia. As a result, parliament was suspended, effectively signalling the demise of parliamentary democracy and the ascendency of the military in Indonesian politics.

1957-1965 Guided Democracy

From 1957 to 1965, Sukarno embarked on a transformative endeavour known as Guided Democracy. However, this approach to governance deviated from the traditional Western concept of democracy. Sukarno discarded individualism and introduced an abstract notion of democracy, emphasizing the general expression of political will through consultations and consensus. His motivation stemmed from a belief that Western parliamentary democratic structures had left Indonesia in a semi-colonial state. Sukarno's ultimate goal was to secure complete independence for the nation.

In pursuit of Guided Democracy, Sukarno suspended the 1950 Constitution and reinstated

the pro-presidential system outlined in the 1945 Constitution through a presidential decree. This constitutional shift provided Sukarno with a solid foundation for his dominant role in Guided Democracy. He also restricted the number of political parties to ten and curtailed press freedom. Elections were abolished, and representative bodies were relegated to advisory roles. To replace the representatives of political opinions, Sukarno established the National Advisory Council in 1959, which consisted of 'functional' groups within society.

Furthermore, in 1963, he declared himself "President for Life" through a legislative assembly resolution. Power during this period was divided among three entities: Sukarno, the military, and the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI). Sukarno's political strength stemmed from his personal charisma and persuasive abilities. However, lacking a solid power base of his own, he constantly had to navigate the army and PKI, persuading and manipulating them to carry out his desired policies. Over time, the power balance among these three institutions shifted, resulting in a narrowing of the political elite, which shifted from a diverse range of parties to the presidential palace, the military, and the PKI.

Sukarno skillfully exploited the antagonistic relationship between the PKI and the Indonesian military, playing both parties against each other. The military harbored deep ideological and historical differences with the rising political influence of the PKI. Sukarno saw himself as the director of this delicate power balance between the army and the PKI. While he initially maintained control by pitting the two against each other, he eventually lost his grip on both entities, leading to his eventual downfall.

The Indonesian military enjoyed a privileged position within Sukarno's Guided Democracy. This was primarily due to its monopoly on force, which was crucial for establishing

maximum government control. The military actively defended Sukarno against various regional Islamic and military leaders, as well as Masyumi. In return for their support, Sukarno granted the military key positions in national civil administration and economic management. This newfound political status was welcomed by the military, which had long believed in its central and influential role in Indonesian politics. They saw themselves as the best-organized and most powerful institution in the country, capable of ensuring stable, effective, and corruption-free governance.

The Indonesian military adopted a concept known as the Middle Way to define its political role. During the revolution, the military positioned itself as a para-political institution, acting on behalf of the Indonesian people rather than engaging in power struggles among political parties. However, during the parliamentary democratic period, the military became increasingly entangled in politics, albeit unofficially. In 1952, General Nasution led a group that attempted to dissolve the parliament, citing obstruction of measures to professionalize the military (known as the 17 October Affair). Some army officers even provided leadership for regional revolts in the early years of the republic.

In 1958, the Indonesian military declared its commitment to the Middle Way. This approach represented a compromise between the army's theoretical neutrality and its active political involvement. The military aimed to avoid establishing a military government while retaining some autonomy and influence. The vague nature of the Middle Way allowed for flexible interpretation according to the prevailing circumstances. Under Guided Democracy, the military not only became a political structure in its own right but also assumed a prominent economic role by seizing control of Dutch investments.

The PKI also experienced a significant increase in status and influence within Guided Democracy. Sukarno viewed the PKI as a counterbalance to the growing power of the

military. Despite his dependence on the military, Sukarno aimed to prevent it from becoming excessively dominant and challenging his authority. The PKI proved suitable in this regard, as it had achieved significant electoral success in Java during the 1957 provincial elections, surpassing its previous results by securing 37.2% more votes. It emerged as the leading political party, with 34% of the votes, surpassing NU's 29% and PNI's 26%.

Sukarno deftly manipulated the strengths and weaknesses of the PKI to his advantage. As a mass party, the PKI provided a broad audience and support base for Sukarno's policies. By the end of 1962, the party boasted around 2 million members, making it the largest communist party in a non-communist country. In exchange for the PKI's support, Sukarno allowed the party to operate with minimal hindrance. However, he had no intention of granting the PKI real political power. Instead, he incorporated the party into his regime, ensuring that it remained reliant on him for protection against persecution by the military. Although the PKI did not formally participate in the government, Sukarno's patronage made its actions and influence more conspicuous and objectionable to its adversaries. Consequently, the party shares responsibility for the problems that arose during Sukarno's Guided Democracy.

In practice, Guided Democracy proved largely unsuccessful. While Sukarno's main objectives were to unite the diverse divisions within Indonesia and establish the country as a prominent international force, his policies often exacerbated existing problems rather than resolving them. Sukarno restructured the political landscape by eliminating competition and conflict among political parties. He formed a cabinet representing major

parties and created a National Council under his leadership. His aim was to make decisions based on general consensus, thereby garnering the support of the entire nation. The cabinet operated on the principle of "gotong royong" (reciprocity), employing authoritarian political structures to forge consensus. However, these efforts achieved only limited success.

Guided Democracy also deepened geographical divisions, particularly between Java and the Outer Islands. Sukarno's proclamation of Guided Democracy was seen by the Outer Islands as a Javanese ploy to further centralize power in Jakarta. This perception led to escalating tensions and regional revolts in Sumatra and South Sulawesi. Although the rebellions were swiftly suppressed, they heightened separatist sentiments and culminated in the establishment of a counter-government in West Sumatra in February 1958.

Sukarno also faced mounting economic challenges. His prioritization of Indonesia's self reliance and resistance against Western dependence had unintended consequences. In 1957, following the failure of the West Irian motion at the United Nations, the government supported the seizure of Dutch property. This dealt a severe blow to the Indonesian economy, triggering widespread chaos such as rampant unemployment, hyperinflation (reaching 600% per year by 1966), and systemic corruption.

As Sukarno struggled to balance competing political forces, particularly in controlling the military, his position became increasingly tenuous. The implementation of policies perceived as leftist by the military eroded Sukarno's support within their ranks. In late 1963, Sukarno backed the PKI's radical land redistribution program aimed at addressing rural poverty. This involved taking rice fields from landowners, many of whom supported Islamic parties, and allocating them to tenants. Additionally, in 1965, Sukarno allowed the PKI to provide its members with military training, which alarmed the military. They interpreted it as a threat to their monopoly on the use of force and the arming of their communist adversaries. These factors culminated in the alleged Communist coup of 1965, known as the 30 September Movement, and the subsequent downfall of Guided

Democracy. The government's control of the press and the PKI's monopoly of the streets had concealed the growing opposition against Sukarno. The breakdown of political balance led to the violent eradication of the Communists from Indonesian politics and the end of Guided Democracy. The military, taking matters into their own hands, launched a brutal crackdown on the PKI, resulting in state-sponsored mass murders and the rise of General Suharto. Sukarno was effectively deposed on March 11, 1966, and the PKI was banned. Sukarno spent his remaining years under effective house arrest until his death in 1970.

Sukarno's nationalist and unifying efforts ultimately resulted in failures. By late 1964, Java's rural scene was deeply divided between a radical left faction that sought to continue the revolution alongside Sukarno and a military-Muslim alliance fearful of communist domination. The consensus that Sukarno had hoped Guided Democracy would achieve proved to be nothing more than an illusion.

1966-1998 The New Order

Suharto, the successor to Sukarno, embarked on a transformative mission to distance himself from the failed economic policies and super-nationalist agenda of his predecessor. In 1966, he aptly named his regime the "New Order," signalling a fresh approach to

governance. Suharto's claim to legitimacy rested on his commitment to pragmatic economic development, which would soon become the cornerstone of his administration.

During the New Order era, Indonesia experienced a remarkable period of both political and economic stability. Suharto's political structures were carefully designed to minimize the potential for political mobilization, diverging from Sukarno's preference for mass politics akin to the PKI. A highly centralized government took shape, concentrating political power in the hands of the president. No parliamentary bill could become law without the president's signature, and genuine influence was gained through intense interpersonal competition within the elite circle that surrounded the president.

As a result, the Indonesian parliament gradually diminished in significance when compared to the presidency. It was replaced by the People's Consultative Assembly, comprising parliamentarians and military officials, as outlined in the 1945 constitution. This Assembly held the power to elect and remove the president, effectively acting as the president's custodian. However, in reality, its influence was limited, convening only once every five years and largely dominated by the Golkar party. Similar to Sukarno's Guided Democracy, a power shift occurred between the president and parliament within the Indonesian political landscape.

Under the New Order, adherence to a single state ideology, known as Pancasila, became a cornerstone of the political structure. Originally enshrined in the 1945 constitution, Pancasila was further promoted during Suharto's regime. In 1983, Suharto secured a parliamentary resolution that obligated all organizations in Indonesia to embrace Pancasila as a fundamental principle.

Pancasila consisted of five interlocking principles: nationalism, internationalism, democracy, social justice, and belief in God. This de-ideologization of the Indonesian political structure compelled all societies and political parties to subscribe to this overarching guiding principle.

The electoral system itself was manipulated to legitimize Suharto's New Order. Elections were held merely to ratify power arrangements that had already been predetermined by competing elite circles in Jakarta. After 1973, only three political parties were legally

permitted to exist, depriving Indonesians of genuine political choices. Furthermore, political parties were forbidden from organizing in the villages and sub-districts, where 80% of the population resided. Instead, functional groups, notably Suharto's own electoral vehicle, Golkar, emerged as replacements for political parties. With branches permeating every level of administration, Golkar enjoyed overwhelming dominance. The remaining political parties were restructured into two groups: the Islamic United Development Party (PPP) and the non-Islamic Indonesian Democratic Party (DPI). However, all three political parties were effectively marginalized under the new regime, perpetually aligning themselves with Suharto's presidential nomination. General elections took place every five years starting in 1971, yet Golkar consistently emerged victorious, exemplified by their resounding win in the 1971 elections, securing 66% of all contested seats.

The most formidable challenge to the New Order government came from the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), which was ultimately eradicated following the horrific massacres of 1965. Suharto skillfully balanced the influence of Muslim and nationalist factions by using the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) as a counterweight to the increasingly fervent Islamic

parties. He purged the PNI and replaced its leader with a trusted confidant. Government censorship and arbitrary shutdown orders tightly controlled newspapers, while labor unions were either closely monitored or silenced through government-sponsored secret societies. Political opponents were either imprisoned or mysteriously eliminated by government agents. Consequently, a climate of fear permeated among potential adversaries of Suharto's regime.

Suharto systematically eliminated political opposition, consolidating his personal support base within the army. He ensured that loyalists held dominant positions within the military, while transferring opposition or potential opposition military officers to peripheral locations or foreign countries as ambassadors. A centralized formal chain of command was established within the military to maintain control. By bestowing military and economic privileges upon key military leaders and offering them appointments in government ministries and major enterprises such as the state oil company Pertamina, Suharto fostered loyalty and secured the military's unwavering support. The military now saw itself as having two distinct roles—military and civilian. This duality was epitomized by Suharto himself, who held top positions in both the civil and military hierarchies. By 1969, over half of all local governments were under military control. Military personnel occupied half of the seats in the People's Consultative Assembly and held key leadership positions in Golkar, solidifying the military's status as the most potent political and economic force in Indonesia.

Suharto's regime ushered in a period of rapid and sustained economic growth, lifting Indonesia out of the economic turmoil caused by Sukarno's policies. The government's proactive role in the economy attracted multinational corporations, transforming Indonesia into a significant exporter of manufactured goods and laying the foundation for improved living standards.

In summary, Suharto's New Order represented a departure from Sukarno's failed policies. It introduced a period of stability, marked by a highly centralized government, reduced political mobilization, and the prevalence of Pancasila as a unifying ideology. The electoral system was manipulated to ensure Suharto's continued dominance, while political opponents were silenced through censorship, imprisonment, or elimination. Suharto solidified his control by consolidating support within the military and implementing a centralized chain of command. This era also witnessed significant economic growth, bolstered by the government's active role and the influx of multinational corporations.

The New Order had undeniably reshaped Indonesia's political and economic landscape.

Political Stability in Malaysia

Achievement of Malaya's independence

Malaya's achievement of independence on 31 August 1957 came at the end of a transition process which was guided by its colonial power, Britain. The British strategy of granting self-government followed by independence to Malaya was carried out through the framework of the British parliamentary democratic system. This system provided for the holding of municipal and federal elections since 1952, coupled with the 1957 Merdeka Constitution that provided for a strong central government with clearly defined legislative and executive powers.

These few years of political tutelage by the British in parliamentary democracy were invaluable in ensuring a relatively smooth transition from a paternalistic (interference with the liberty or autonomy of another person, with the intent of promoting good or preventing harm to that person) and authoritarian colonial regime to a representative and democratic government after independence. Tunku Abdul Rahman served as the first Prime Minister (19571970), with the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) as the dominant ruling party along with its two alliance partners, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). The Yang di-Pertuan Agong (Malaysian King) took on the ceremonial position as constitutional monarch and was elected from among the 9 Sultans of the Malay states to a single 5-year term, usually on the basis of seniority and rotation principle.

Parliamentary democracy in Malaysia

The initial success of democracy in Malaysia can be attributed to a multitude of factors, each playing a crucial role in establishing stability and legitimacy within the independent state. One pressing concern that demanded attention was the management of racial diversity, and remarkably, the government tackled this challenge with great effectiveness.

Through the implementation of communal policies within a parliamentary democratic framework, Malaysia adopted a political structure that proved highly effective in seeking consensus among its principal ethnic groups in Malaya. This not only ensured political stability but also fostered social harmony within the country. The Alliance model of communal politics played a pivotal role in taming communal discord and conflict through a strategic alliance between the dominant Malay, Chinese, and Indian parties. Each party firmly believed that their respective communities' interests were best safeguarded through this alliance.

Flexibility and astute leadership played key roles in resolving sensitive communal issues. The Alliance leaders embraced the "avoidance principle," opting for private compromises rather than public debates that could escalate tensions. This approach allowed them to navigate communal challenges effectively while maintaining social cohesion.

Stability in Malaysia also emerged from an informal agreement enshrined in the Constitution. The Merdeka Constitution, particularly Article 153, ensured the political primacy of the Malays. As a reciprocal arrangement, the Chinese retained their dominant position in the Malayan economy. These provisions, designed to strike a delicate balance,

created a framework that benefited all major ethnic groups.

The Alliance emerged as the representative of the interests of Malaysia's three major ethnic groups, earning them an indisputable mandate to shape a cohesive society from the diverse competing factions. Their remarkable electoral success further solidified their position. In the 1955 federal elections, the Alliance secured 51 out of 52 seats, marking a crucial step toward self-government. Subsequently, they continued to secure comfortable victories in the 1959 and 1964 general elections, demonstrating the sustained success of communal politics.

The long-term success of the Alliance can be attributed to the substantial support enjoyed by its leaders within their respective ethnic communities. UMNO, as the dominant Malay party, held significant influence and support at the grassroots level. Its unwavering commitment to defending Malay interests won the loyalty of village elders, teachers, and religious leaders, who encouraged their followers to support the party. Additionally, the Malay states had proUMNO Menteri Besars (Chief Ministers) whose influence galvanized support for UMNO at the national level.

Similar support was enjoyed by MCA and MIC leaders, who held undisputed control over Chinese and Indian votes, respectively. The leaders of the various political parties forming the Alliance maintained close personal relationships, facilitating closed-door negotiations and compromises. These relationships were fostered by their shared educational experiences in English schools, forming strong bonds. For example, the friendship between Tunk Abdul Rahman and Tan Cheng Lock, followed by Tun Abdul Razak and Tan Siew Sin. Initially, informal interactions characterized their relationships, but over time, a more formal and business-like approach replaced these personal ties.

The formation of Malaysia in September 1963 presented a significant challenge to Malaya's political structure due to the changing demographics of the country. The influx of non Malays, particularly Chinese immigrants from Singapore, posed a threat to the delicate communal balance carefully crafted by the Alliance formula. Accommodating these changes necessitated the exploration of alternative political structures.

Moreover, the federation arrangement meant that Malaysia had to accommodate political parties with different styles and perspectives from those of the Alliance. In Borneo, political parties with ethnic emphases emerged but tended to be short-lived. The dominant People's Action Party (PAP) in Singapore, urban, socialist, and non-communal, practiced open debate on significant issues. These differing perspectives strained Malaysia's political structure, which was founded on the principle of Malay primacy. The proposal to form the Federation of Malaysia faced external threats to the state's stability and territorial integrity. Opposition from the Philippines and armed confrontations from Indonesia, labeling the political structure as a neocolonial construct, added to the challenges. However, the Alliance government remained relatively unperturbed due to defense agreements with Britain and the ability to call upon British Commonwealth troops for support. The fall of Indonesian President Sukarno in 1965 brought an end to the confrontation, strengthening domestic support for the government.

The refusal of the PAP and UMNO to compromise on their differing approaches to racial issues exacerbated communal tensions. While the Alliance ensured Malay primacy through the Merdeka Constitution, the PAP advocated for equality among all races, striving for a "Malaysian Malaysia." Neither side was willing to restrict their own political influence. The Alliance initially reduced Chinese representation in the House of Representatives, but the PAP gained greater autonomy over education and labor matters

in return. The Malay government also sought to confine Singaporean politics to the island itself. Nevertheless, both sides continued their political campaigns.

The deteriorating situation led to heightened communal tensions, culminating in the racial riots of 1964. These riots, coupled with the outcomes of the 1969 elections, showcased the failure of the parliamentary democratic system to address communal tensions within Malaysia's plural society. Extremist elements, emboldened by the gains made by the DAP,

fanned the flames of discord. The Malay extremists felt betrayed by the Chinese defection from the Alliance.

Contrary to the Alliance's communal politics, political alternatives emerged, seeking a different approach to Malaysia's plural society. The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party aimed for the establishment of a theocratic state, the recognition of Malay as the sole official language and nationality, and the restriction of nonMalay privileges. The Democratic Action Party (DAP), as the successor to the PAP, opposed the special position of Malays enshrined in the constitution. As the MCA's popularity waned, the DAP gained significant support among Chinese voters, especially those residing in the New Villages who yearned for improved living conditions and better employment opportunities.

Both parties made substantial progress in capturing Chinese and Malay support in various federal elections, leading to a decline in the Alliance's share of the popular vote. The 1969 elections witnessed a significant drop from 58% to 48%, depriving the Alliance of the two thirds majority required for constitutional amendments. In some electorates with Malay majorities, DAP candidates emerged victorious due to the split of Malay votes between UMNO and PAS.

The racial riots that broke out on May 13, 1969, were a direct response to the outcomes of the 1969 elections. These riots highlighted the shortcomings of the parliamentary democratic system in resolving communal tensions within Malaysia's diverse society. Chinese extremists were emboldened by the DAP's gains, while Malay extremists felt betrayed by the Chinese defection from the Alliance's communal approach.

In summary, the early success of democracy in Malaysia was driven by a range of factors. The Alliance's communal politics, founded on strategic alliances and compromises, effectively managed racial diversity and ensured political stability. The Alliance leaders enjoyed substantial support within their respective ethnic communities, aided by grassroots endorsements and personal relationships. However, the changing demographics and external threats challenged the established political structure. The refusal to compromise and the rise of political alternatives heightened communal tensions, ultimately leading to the racial riots of 1969, exposing the shortcomings of the parliamentary democratic system in resolving Malaysia's complex communal dynamics.

The election results of 1969 in Malaysia revealed deep-seated frustrations and grievances among the Malays and Chinese communities. The Malays felt that their privileges were insufficient, while the Chinese were frustrated by the existence of these privileges. The outcome of the elections led to significant consequences for the country's political structure.

Following the racial riots that erupted in 1969, the Malaysian parliament was suspended, and the National Operations Council (NOC) was established as a caretaker government. This move reflected the fragility of parliamentary democracy in the face of such communal tensions, even in a politically stable and mature country like Malaysia. The NOC functioned for nearly two years, from 1969 to 1971, before the parliamentary government was formally restored in February 1971.

The government responded to the riots by recognizing the need for greater domestic stability and revising the Alliance's model of communal politics. The legislative authority of the reconvened parliament was reduced, and a stronger bureaucracy and a clearly defined

hierarchy within the political structure were established. State control over the mass media was increased to prevent the incitement of ethnic hostilities.

In 1971, a constitutional amendment was passed to ensure the special position of the Malays. This amendment prohibited the public discussion of sensitive issues, such as the special position of Malays and the status of the Sultans. It also increased the representation of Malays and other bumiputera (indigenous people) in the civil service and strengthened the position of Malay as the sole national language. The constitutional amendment used legislative means to enforce and protect the special rights and privileges of the Malays.

The same year saw the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP), which aimed to address the economic disparities between the Malays and the urban Chinese. The NEP sought to eradicate poverty among all races and eliminate the association of race with occupation. However, it primarily focused on uplifting the economic status of the Malays through urbanization and statesponsored programs that created a bumiputera middle class. The NEP necessitated a dominant government role in the economy and reinforced the need for a strong government to provide the resources for lasting economic affirmative action. To promote national unity beyond ethnic divisions, the government created the Department of National Unity and introduced a set of principles called the Rukunegara in 1970. These principles emphasized allegiance to the nation and included beliefs in God, loyalty to the king and country, upholding the constitution, the rule of law, and good behavior and morality. The Rukunegara was instituted by royal proclamation.

In 1973, the Alliance evolved into the Barisan Nasional (National Front), an UMNO dominated coalition comprising about 10 parties, including former opposition parties. The formation of the Barisan Nasional allowed for a more inclusive government and further solidified UMNO's dominance in the political landscape. The relationship between the federal government and the Malay sultans underwent changes under Mahathir Mohammad's leadership, who became Prime Minister in 1981. Mahathir emphasized meritocracy rather than loyalty to traditional Malay rulers in political appointments. The government removed the right of the head of state to veto legislation and eliminated the sultans' immunity from criminal prosecution. These actions diminished the sultans' influence and further strengthened Mahathir's position as Prime Minister.

The federal government wielded control over the states by providing or withholding state funds, effectively using them as leverage to maintain political alignment. This control over the political structures reduced the significance of the states as independent political entities. In the late 1980s, a split within UMNO led to a faction known as Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) challenging Mahathir's leadership. Although S46 was narrowly defeated, the subsequent court case resulted in the declaration of UMNO as illegal, leading to its re-registration and rebirth as UMNO Baru. This internal contest between Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah highlighted Mahathir's ability to resolve political threats to his leadership within UMNO.

The Malaysian government ensured firm civilian control over the military by establishing the Malaysian Armed Forces Council, responsible for the command, discipline, and administration of the military under the Supreme Commander, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

In the 1990 general elections, Barisan Nasional retained power but with a reduced share of the popular vote. The declining popularity of Barisan Nasional compared to opposition

parties, particularly the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), indicated the shifting political landscape. In the 1995 general elections, Barisan Nasional comfortably won with 65% of the popular vote, aided by redrawing political boundaries to favour Malay majority electorates.

Overall, the period from the late 1960s to the 1990s in Malaysia witnessed significant changes in the political structure, including the suspension and restoration of parliamentary government, constitutional amendments to protect Malay privileges, the implementation of the New Economic Policy, the formation of Barisan Nasional, increased federal control over states, diminishing influence of the Malay sultans, and the consolidation of power under Mahathir's leadership. These developments reflected the country's attempts to address communal tensions, promote national unity, and secure stable governance.

Political Stability in Singapore

Parliamentary democracy since 1958

Singapore's journey to independence unfolded as part of the grand tapestry of British decolonization plans, yet its path was far from mundane. The transformation commenced with a meticulous orchestration of power transfer within a framework of parliamentary democracy. Embarking on this trajectory, Singapore witnessed the gradual introduction of limited representative institutions in 1951 and held elections in 1955, culminating in the formation of a government that would pave the way for self-governance. The pivotal moment arrived when Singapore formally achieved independence through its incorporation into the Federation of Malaysia in September 1963, only to be unceremoniously expelled from Malaysia a short year later, in August 1965.

The choice to embrace parliamentary democracy gained further momentum in light of the People's Action Party (PAP) emerging as a dominant force in Singaporean politics. Established in 1954, the PAP swiftly rose to prominence and assumed the mantle of Singapore's ruling party in 1959 under the sagacious leadership of Lee Kuan Yew, a Cambridge-educated lawyer whose vision was indelibly shaped by Western political ideals. As Singapore disentangled itself from Malaysia, Lee emphasized the principles that would define the new nation— a "multi-racial, noncommunist, non-aligned, and democratic socialist state." These principles were enshrined in the Constitution, which provided for a cabinet, an elected parliament, and an independent judiciary.

The PAP, with its astute leaders, deftly gleaned insights from their procommunist counterparts, harnessing mass support prior to the government's division in 1961. The British, recognizing Lee Kuan Yew's unwavering commitment to securing independence through merger with Malaysia, entrusted him with the monumental task. However, Singapore's sudden independence in 1965 caught many off guard. The government was gripped by concerns centered on the nation's very survival, given its diminutive size and lack of abundant natural resources. This existential predicament would eventually become the cornerstone of the government's policies, domestically and internationally, galvanizing the populace in an ardent fervor for their country's advancement.

The remarkable effectiveness with which the fledgling government confronted internal and external challenges provided the bedrock for the enduring legitimacy of the People's Action Party (PAP) government and the political structure of parliamentary democracy. Over time, the de facto one-party state became firmly institutionalized through successive general elections since 1968, as the PAP garnered an increasing number of parliamentary seats, essentially establishing a dominant-party state within the framework of a parliamentary liberal democracy. The triumph of parliamentary democracy in Singapore stems from its sturdy and stable foundation of legitimacy. The PAP itself epitomized a cohesive political structure, buoyed by effective leadership. Guided by pragmatic objectives and driven by a resolute commitment to produce tangible and efficient results, the PAP maintained ideological cohesion under the firm stewardship of Lee Kuan Yew. The party embraced a pro-Western and pro-capitalist stance, recognizing that the state's heavy reliance on capital was indispensable for its survival. Furthermore, the PAP's unwavering dedication to maintaining a reputation for cleanliness and incorruptibility added to its appeal.

The PAP's legitimacy derived from its ability to ensure Singapore's economic survival and prosperity. Its audacious decision to shift focus from an entrepôt trade economy to robust manufacturing and service industries propelled the nation to sustained double-digit GDP growth during the initial two decades following independence in 1965.

The government adeptly fostered effective governance through continuous feedback loops between the ruling elite and the general population. This participatory approach was primarily facilitated by the Citizens' Consultative Committee, established in 1965, with grassroots committees present in each constituency. Their pivotal role involved disseminating government policies to the people and conveying grassroots demands to the government. Consequently, a capable local leadership emerged, bolstering the capacity of political leaders to govern effectively. The PAP extended its influence deep into society, with weekly meet-the-people sessions providing a direct conduit between the government and the electorate, ensuring that the former remained attuned to public concerns.

The ruling party meticulously crafted an authoritative style of governance that emphasized the paramount importance of law and order, domestic stability, and economic development while discouraging the perils of competitive politics. During periods of economic uncertainty, the leadership demonstrated an impatience with the diversion of energies into politics, urging citizens to focus their attention on bolstering the economy.

The absence of a viable political opposition played a significant role in enabling the government to adopt such an approach. By employing the Internal Security Act, which was extended to Singapore in 1963, the government took a tough stance against opposition political leaders, detaining them and thereby dissuading potential recruits. Notably, the execution of Operation Coldstore in 1963 resulted in the mass arrests and detentions of prominent anti-government left-wing activists, including figures like Lim Chin Siong, who were accused of communist leanings. Furthermore, suspected communists were also apprehended under the Internal Security Act from 1967 to 1977

In addition, the PAP effectively consolidated control over political structures, mitigating challenges and checks on the government's authority. Notably, trade unions, which had been strong supporters of left-wing political opposition since the 1950s, were brought

under the control of the PAP-supported National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), established in 1961. The NTUC urged trade unions to cooperate with the government and employers, curbing dissent.

The opposition, lacking effective strategies to challenge the PAP's political hegemony, found itself at a disadvantage. The Barisan Sosialis (Socialist Front), the sole opposition party in parliament, chose to boycott the electoral system in April 1968, a strategy that ultimately backfired. In 1967, the population overwhelmingly stood behind the ruling leadership in their struggle for national survival. Consequently, the PAP won all parliamentary seats in the first of four consecutive elections. The Barisan Sosialis, having splintered from the PAP in 1961, was a precarious alliance between two ideologically divergent groups. While the PAP, led by Lee Kuan Yew, embraced pro-Western and pro-capitalist ideals, the left-wing of the Barisan Sosialis strongly opposed these positions and viewed Singapore's merger with Malaysia with suspicion, perceiving it as a neocolonialist endeavor.

The failure of the Barisan Sosialis to seize power in the 1960s, compounded by their ill fated strategy of boycotting the 1968 general elections, ultimately solidified the de facto one-party dominance, relegating the opposition to the sidelines of Singaporean politics.

The Singaporean government also achieved remarkable domestic political stability through the establishment of a robust bureaucracy that stood firmly behind the ruling leadership. The Civil Service underwent strategic reorientation and retention, exemplified by the establishment of the Political Study Centre, which provided courses to senior bureaucrats, familiarizing them with the tenets and strategies of the PAP government. This approach proved remarkably successful. When internal party strife erupted in 1961, pitting the pro communist faction against the ruling party, the government adeptly mobilized the Civil Service to overcome the challenge and minimize disruptions to governance. Moreover, the PAP government defused the allure of communism by implementing comprehensive programs that encompassed affordable housing, healthcare, and education.

Furthermore, the Singaporean government effectively maintained firm civilian control over the military, ensuring that the armed forces played a vital role in the political structure without dominating it. By implementing key constitutional safeguards, such as requiring a referendum with a two-thirds majority for any surrender of sovereign power to the police and military, the government curtailed the potential for military overreach. Additionally, the government fostered links between the armed forces and civilian segments under its control, allowing high-ranking police and military officers to participate in national politics or serve in the bureaucracy.

In essence, Singapore's journey to independence and subsequent development as a thriving nation defied expectations and showcased the astute governance of the People's Action Party. From carefully navigating the intricate realm of decolonization to fortifying the foundations of parliamentary democracy, Singapore's leaders adeptly capitalized on their ideological cohesion, commitment to effective governance, and relentless pursuit of economic prosperity. These elements, coupled with a lack of viable political opposition, enabled the PAP to establish and consolidate its authority, transforming Singapore into a prosperous and stable nation on the global stage.

The Parliamentary Democracy

The Siamese Revolution, also known as the Siamese Coup d'état of 1932, marked a pivotal moment in Siam's political landscape, transforming it from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. A group of Siamese civilians, alongside senior and junior military officers, orchestrated a bloodless coup under the banner of the People's Party. This swift seizure of power relegated King Prajadhipok to a constitutional monarch within a parliamentary democratic system. Notably, the coup plotters were heavily influenced by their education in Europe, particularly in Britain and France.

The establishment of parliamentary democracy in Siam hinged on the triumph of the civilian faction within the People's Party. Led by Pridi Phanamyong, the Western-educated elites of this faction criticized the absolute monarchy, advocating for greater public participation in governance. In contrast, the military faction aimed to establish a strong and stable government, irrespective of its democratic nature.

The June 1932 Temporary Charter and December 1932 Constitution introduced a constitutional monarchy infused with elements of liberal democracy. Initially, a 70-member appointed assembly governed the nation, but it was replaced six months later by a National Assembly consisting of half appointed and half indirectly elected members. A fully representative government would only be established once half the population had completed primary education or within ten years, whichever came first.

However, as the permanent constitution took effect in December 1932, conflicts and power struggles emerged within the ruling People's Party. Within a year of the revolution, five major factions vied for influence in the new regime, notably the civilian faction led by Pridi Phanamyong and the junior army and navy faction led by Phibun Songkhram.

While the civilian faction initially dominated the first constitutional regime, the late 1930s witnessed the ascendancy of the junior military faction in this power struggle. Political divisions within the State Council (cabinet) plagued the leadership, with Prime Minister Phraya Phahon serving as the only cohesive force holding it together.

The absence of democratic traditions in Siam posed a challenge to the implementation of parliamentary democracy from 1932 to 1938. The concept of democracy, known as "prachathipatai," was unfamiliar to most Thais, with some even mistakenly associating it with King Prajadhipok's brother. Consequently, there was limited active participation in democratic institutions, as people only attended rallies and demonstrations when ordered to do so by their traditional patrons. Moreover, electoral participation remained exceptionally low, with fewer than 10% of eligible voters participating in the first parliamentary elections in November 1933.

The lack of popular support for democratic institutions and the absence of a mass membership or following hindered the People's Party's influence compared to the Thai military. The party's membership primarily sought government jobs rather than meaningful political engagement. Furthermore, the Thai political elites' commitment to democratic ideals was undermined by a deep-rooted tradition of authoritarianism. They held a low opinion of the poor, uneducated peasants who comprised the majority of the population, resulting in a notable disinterest in establishing truly representative institutions as part of

their "democratic" reforms. Consequently, despite the creation of a constitutional monarchy, Siam effectively functioned as a single-party state.

Elite politics and authoritarian institutions were widely accepted as the norm, characterized by patron-client relationships, reverence for the monarchy, the prestige of the bureaucracy, and the military's role in supporting this elite structure. The widespread acceptance of such political structures formed the basis of consensus within the Thai state. The bureaucracy had long held firm control since its establishment, further strengthened by its expansion during Thailand's modernization program. The monarchy consistently served as the source of political legitimacy and a unifying force for national unity, allowing charismatic political leaders to legitimize their authority through the monarchy and bureaucracy.

The lack of genuine commitment to democratic ideals is exemplified by the government led by Phraya Manopakorn from June 1932 to June 1933. Phraya Mano, a royalist, was appointed as the first Thai Prime Minister due to his acceptability to both the People's Party and the royal palace. However, he later attempted to consolidate his power by employing the military to intimidate the National Assembly, shutting down the judiciary, exiling Pridi Phanamyong, and removing Pridi's supporters from the cabinet. Phraya Mano swiftly passed an Anti-Communist Law, known as the April 1933 Silent Coup, to justify his repressive measures. These actions provoked young military officers within the People's Party to stage another coup, overthrowing the Mano government and appointing General Phraya Phahon as the new Prime Minister from 1933 to 1938. This event marked the first successful military coup against a civilian constitutional government.

The inefficiency of civilian leadership further exacerbated the weaknesses of the parliamentary democratic system, primarily due to the absence of constitutionalism and the rule of law. Constant allegations of corruption eroded the civilian government's credibility. A scandal involving the mismanagement and sale of crown property at below-market prices nearly caused the government's collapse in August 1937. In September 1938, acrimonious differences over the budget bill forced the cabinet's resignation, initiated by some of its own members.

The civilian government's lack of substantial control over the army and the instruments of force prevented the establishment of a strong and stable state as the foundation of their legitimacy. In contrast, the military held great promise in the eyes of most Thais. Pridi Phanamyong's influence waned following his proposal of the March 1933 Draft National Economic Plan, which was widely perceived as communist in nature. Pridi aimed to intertwine democracy with social welfare, advocating for nationalization and central planning in the economy. However, his plan faced rejection and backlash. Conservatives rallied against it, enlisting the king's support, resulting in the introduction of an anticommunist law in April 1933. This law made it illegal to challenge the right to private property based on communist principles of state ownership. Amidst power struggles, Pridi Phanomyong witnessed his influence in domestic and economic affairs diminish, while Phibun Songkhram's star rose during Phraya Phahon's government.

The military's structure presented it as a suitable political entity to address the prevailing political chaos. Unlike disunited civilian politicians scattered throughout Bangkok, lacking

physical force, the military adhered to a strict hierarchical military organization built on traditional patron-client relationships. It exhibited high social cohesion, with its members undergoing a shared socialization process within the same military academy. Additionally, the military possessed a monopoly on force, enabling it to impose authority and stability.

Phibun Songkhram, appointed as Defense Minister in Phahon's government, steadily bolstered the military's strength. During civilian rule, the number of military personnel doubled as the military budget expanded, reaching its peak between 1933 and 1938. These measures aimed to safeguard Siam's independence amid widespread concerns. Notably, the military received 26% of the national budget annually, even in times of financial constraint. Phibun gained prominence for successfully quelling the October 1933 royalist coup, known as the Boworadet Rebellion, which sought to restore the absolute monarchy. This incident showcased the civilian government's reliance on the military's power for its survival and ultimately strengthened the government's position. The military's appeal and support in Thailand must be understood in the context of the international rise of militarism and authoritarian regimes during the early 1930s.

Western democracies had lost prestige due to their perceived inability to address the economic challenges of the Great Depression, while assertive and militarized states like Germany, Italy, and Japan appeared capable of effectively dealing with these issues. Phibun Songkhram particularly admired Japan as a model for Siam, embracing a strong, militarized form of nationalism and further dismissing the Western-style parliamentary system.

The Military Government

The December 1938 general elections marked the retirement of Phraya Phahon and the ascent of Phibun Songkhram as Prime Minister. Shortly thereafter, under the pretext of uncovering a major royalist plot to restore the absolute monarchy, Phibun dissolved the National Assembly, instituting a fasciststyle military dictatorship and leading to the demise of Siam/Thailand's first democratic experiment.

During Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram's first military government between 1938-1944, structures of maximum government were established in Thailand. Phibun took swift actions to consolidate his power and ensure the stability of his regime. He arrested army rivals, elected members of the National Assembly, and other opposition figures, accusing them of plotting against the government and executed some of them. Phibun also ensured that a significant portion of his cabinet comprised military personnel, maintaining control over the armed forces. He personally held the positions of Minister of Defense and Minister of the Interior, consolidating the state's instrument of force under his control.

Phibun made amendments to the 1932 constitution, extending the period of political tutelage from 10 to 20 years. During this period, half of the members of the National Assembly would be appointed rather than elected, further consolidating his power.

The fall of Phibun's military government in 1944 was primarily due to external forces rather than internal weaknesses. The government's active collaboration with the Japanese during World War II led to its removal. Following the conclusion of the war, the international context favored liberal regimes, and military regimes were generally

discredited. As a

result, a civilian government led by Khuang Aphaiwong and covertly directed by Pridi Phanomyong was installed in August 1944.

However, the civilian democratic government faced challenges in Thailand. Despite the 1932 Revolution, which aimed to establish a civilian democratic system, there was limited domestic support for such a government. Authoritarianism was deeply rooted in Thai political tradition. Additionally, the civilian government faced problems such as inflation, corruption, and its association with leftist policies, particularly in the context of the Cold War. The military regained power in 1947 under Phibun's second military government, which lasted until 1957. During this period, the military received increasing support from the United States, and the military's prestige and strength grew. Phibun's government maintained parliamentary democratic structures, albeit with a reality of military rule. The Democratic Party dominated both houses of the legislature, and the government rigged the 1949 general elections to ensure its control.

In 1957, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat staged a coup and took power, overthrowing Phibun's corrupt and unpopular government. Sarit sought a political philosophy based on indigenous principles of authority, emphasizing the role of the monarchy in promoting the fundamental values of "King, Religion, and Nation." He promoted the monarchy as the focus of loyalty and legitimacy, strengthening its political institution. Sarit abolished the constitution, declared martial law, and ruled by decree, creating a paternalistic and hierarchical political structure.

Following Sarit's rule, Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn led the military regime from 1963 to 1973. Despite military rule, parliamentary democratic structures continued, and a new constitution in 1968 provided for an elected parliament. This was a response to increasing discomfort from the United States in supporting an authoritarian military regime. However, challenges to the military regime arose in the early 1970s, including the violent student demonstrations in 1973. The monarchy played a significant role in the fall of the Thanom regime, demonstrating its potency as a political structure and a source of legitimacy.

Parliamentary Democracy

Subsequently, a period of liberal democracy followed, characterized by frequent changes in governments and a proliferation of political parties. However, the monarchy's support for liberal democracy diminished, and political instability in Thailand and the region contributed to its collapse. The military seized power in a coup in 1976, but by this time, the military was weaker and less authoritarian than before. Thailand witnessed periods of civilian government between 1988 and 1997, but the military remained active in.

Communism in Thailand

During the initial years, communism did not find significant support in Thailand. The country did not experience a severe land tenancy problem, and the commercialization of the rice trade provided ample opportunities for peasants to cultivate and exploit land. As a result, there were no serious rural grievances that could have served as a basis for communist mass support. Moreover, communism was seen as contrary to traditional Thai values and Buddhist principles, further diminishing its appeal.

The post-war international environment also worked against the growth of communism in Thailand. With the onset of the Cold War, Thai political elites were inclined to oppose communist movements. Their primary concern was preserving Thailand's independence and viability, which led to an alliance with the United States, which was becoming increasingly anti-communist. Bangkok actively sought continued U.S. support and aid by adopting a strong stance against communism. For instance, Sarit's ban on trade unions in 1958 was aimed at appeasing the U.S. and positioning Thailand as a bulwark against communism in Southeast Asia.

However, from the 1960s to the early 1980s, the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) gained some appeal among the peasant masses. The views on communism differed between urban political elites and rural populations. While the urban population focused more on livelihood issues, the peasants were increasingly drawn to the communist party due to diminishing land availability for cultivation. Sarit's policies, such as removing limits on landholding and encouraging large-scale speculation, resulted in rising land tenancy, rural indebtedness, and absentee landlordism, pushing peasants towards the CPT.

The CPT also had favorable conditions for party recruitment. The neglect of impoverished regions like the northeast, primarily inhabited by ethnic minorities, by Sarit and his successors allowed the CPT to quickly become the largest communist party in mainland Southeast Asia after Vietnam. By 1973, the CPT had become an alternative political structure with an ideology distinct from the traditional pillars of Thai society—king, religion, and nation. From 1965 onward, the CPT posed a threat to the government through rural insurgency in the northeast, north, and south regions. Following the suppression of the left by the Thanin government in October 1976, many individuals sought refuge with the communists in the jungles, which further increased the CPT's following. The Thai military engaged in regular conflicts with the insurgents until the early 1980s.

However, in the early 1980s, the CPT began to decline. The loss of support from the People's Republic of China (PRC) deprived the movement of ideological backing and material assistance from a powerful communist patron. Internal ideological differences within the party also led to dissatisfaction and desertion among CPT members. Concurrently, the Bangkok government implemented an open arms policy in an effort to resolve the rural conflict. It offered amnesty to CPT insurgents and welcomed dissidents back to the cities, expressing an understanding of their grievances. By the early 1990s, the CPT had been essentially eliminated as a political and military force.

Political Stability in Philippines

Parliamentary Democracy

From 1946 to 1972, the Philippines witnessed a period of feeble yet consistent electoral democracy. However, the political landscape during this time was characterized by ineffectiveness and unresponsiveness of the governing bodies. As the United States paved the way for the Philippines' eventual independence, they established a quasi-bicameral legislature, resembling the structure of the US constitution, and a robust elected presidency. These institutions operated under American guidance from 1935 to 1946 and continued after independence.

The political framework in the Philippines has deep roots in familial ties, which have historically played a significant role. Early local settlements were organized around kinship

groups, and Spanish colonialism further strengthened families with extensive landholdings. During American colonial rule, wealthy families were well-positioned to capitalize on the growing agro-industrial business and resource export opportunities fueled by American investments. With their economic might, this elite class exerted control over the government after independence, resulting in the entrenchment of conservatism and familial influence in politics. These affluent families vied for political power among themselves, with congressional members and senators exploiting state resources to benefit their associates and supporters. This system of patron-clientelism became deeply ingrained.

Patron-clientelism obviated the need for national leaders to establish direct connections with the population. In the race for the presidency, the ability to dispense rewards and secure the support of voting blocs became the most critical factor. Party loyalty held little significance, eliminating the necessity for parties to present coherent platforms. Both the Nationalist Party and the Liberal Party, the two major parties at the time, were conservative in defending private property and maintaining the existing social order. Party switching was rampant as members pursued personal interests rather than allegiance to a specific party.

Consequently, the absence of genuine democracy, in the sense of allowing alternative political structures to influence national policies, became apparent. While the regular turnover of leaders through elections might have suggested the functioning of democracy, it was, in fact, a monotonous power struggle among the elites, who controlled the votes through the patron-client system. However, two exceptions deserve mention: the election of Ramon Magsaysay, who pioneered grassroots approaches as a presidential candidate, and Diosdado Macapagal in 1961, which marked a genuine contest between the party machinery and grassroots support. Nevertheless, the fact that six presidents from rival parties were elected, with none serving a second term, demonstrated that the electoral process had received a reasonably fair trial.

The Japanese occupation of the Philippines from 1942 to 1945 served as a catalyst for the emergence of the Hukbalahap. The discontent among farmers, caused by Japanese troops confiscating food grains and rampant inflation, was exploited by the Communists, who formed the Hukong Bayan (People's AntiJapanese Army) in 1942. The appeal of the Huks grew as many members joined to address social inequalities and challenge oppressive elements in society rather than out of adherence to communist ideology. The Huks gained significant support from peasants and non-communist individuals because they revolted against genuine socioeconomic issues. For instance, despite the passage of the Rice Share Tenancy Act guaranteeing cultivators 70% of the crop, rice farmers continued to pay half of their harvest to absentee landlords. The lack of implementation of these laws, coupled with frustration towards the government machinery, pushed dissatisfied individuals to resort to violence under Huk leadership.

The Huks capitalized on the mounting frustration when the massive US economic aid provided to the government in 1950 failed to translate into tangible benefits for the people. Consequently, the Huks changed their name to Hukong Mapagpalaya Ng Bayan (People's Army of Liberation) with the aim of overthrowing the government. From 1946 to 1953, the Huks launched a full-scale rebellion in central Luzon. President Elpidio Quirino

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