

Lecture 4: Phase 1 – Democratic Governments

SAJC History Unit, 2023

- 1. Possible question types for this lecture**
- 2. Case Study 1: Burma**
- 3. Case Study 2: Indonesia**
- 4. Case Study 3: Philippines**
- 5. Case Study 4: The Federation of Malaya / Malaysia**
- 6. Case Study 5: Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)**

The focus for this lecture is on the case studies. This is how SEA notes are organised. For every major topic, you will have an overview lecture which discusses all the key terms, ideas and concepts. This will be followed by a country-by-country case study set of lecture notes which will provide the content and examples to support the big ideas and concepts.

How you should make use of the case studies:

Step 1: Read through all the case studies at least once to gain an overall understanding of what had transpired in each SEA country.

Step 2: Using the framework and templates provided, look through the case studies again with a view to select the most relevant examples to support the given factors that will be identified. You need two case studies to support each given factor.



1. Possible question types for the lecture

1.1 Assessing effectiveness of democratic govts in consolidating power

- Criterion to assess effectiveness in consolidating power
 - a) Ability to harness traditional institutions
 - b) Ability to maintain order and stability
 - c) Ability to promote constitutional forms and practices
 - d) Ability to promote socio-economic development

1.2 Evaluate significance of each factor in determining whether SEA governments could consolidate power

- Factors influencing the consolidation of power:
 - a) Role of Government Leaders**
 - Positive: capacity to consolidate power based on political ideology and nationalist credentials
 - Negative: Incompetent and driven by self-interest
 - b) Role of Constitutional Processes and Elections**
 - Distribution of political power, provision of avenues for political representation; political mandate
 - Help to provide structure and foundation on how the country was run → basis of governance
 - c) Role of the Military**
 - Use of the military to create order and stability
 - d) Role of Traditional Institutions**
 - Tapping on traditional institutions like monarchy, religion, and patron-client relationships as sources of legitimacy
 - e) Government Performance**
 - Ability of governments in creating political order, social cohesion and economic growth

f) Role of Political Challenges and Opposition

- as litmus tests of whether governments were able to consolidate power and legitimacy
 - **Political challenges:** communist threats, minority uprisings, military coups
 - Served as a litmus test to the democratic govts in the early years of independence
 - **Popular opposition:** middle-class and student movements, pro-democracy movements
 - Served as a litmus test to the authoritarian govts from the late 1970s
- Political challenges and popular opposition were manifestations of incompetent government (evidence of inability of govts to consolidate power + catalyst for change)
- Govt response to these opposition would determine whether they would be able to remain in power (Strategies adopted by governments to manage political challenges and popular opposition)

g) Role of Cold War Developments

- Positive: provision of political support and aid by superpowers such as the USA, USSR and China
- Negative: external influence on domestic political developments

2. Case Study 1: Burma

*Burma, along with Indonesia and Philippines, are the **most relevant case studies** to answer the question type on the inability of democratic govts to consolidate power.*

This case study can be used for almost all the factors to explain on the inability of democratic govts to consolidate power.

You will find Burma useful as case studies for the following factors:

- *Role of government leaders*
- *Constitutional processes and elections*
- *The military*
- *Traditional institutions*
- *Government performance*
- *Political challenges (communist and minority uprisings)*

2.1 A chronological overview of the political transitions over time

- **1947:** Democratic constitution announced
- **January 1948:** Burma attained independence, with U Nu as Prime Minister
- **1951:** First elections held
- **1958:** AFPFL split occurred and military caretaker government invited by U Nu to re-establish order
- **1962-1988:** Ne Win's coup and the military took over; authoritarian government rule imposed
- **1988:** The '8888' Uprising
- **1988-1997:** State Law Order and Restoration Council (SLORC) / State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)

2.2 Role of Government Leaders and Constitutional Processes and Elections – Weak socio-political prerequisites aggravated by colonial legacies

- The leadership of independent Burma came from a somewhat limited elite, mostly English-educated, who preferred democratic forms of government and socialist socio-economic goals.
- The Constitution created a parliament modelled after the British parliament but providing for a federal “union” of the several ethnic groups. The two houses of legislature consisted of members irrespective of their ethnic composition.
- In April 1947, national elections were held in Burma to select the government that would take Burma to independence with the British.
 - Aung San’s party, the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL) won although no other political party joined the elections and only 49.8% of the expected voters turned up. Nevertheless, the election results meant that the AFPFL formed the government of Burma, headed by Aung San and U Nu, who was deputy chief of the AFPFL.
- Aung San’s concept of a free Burma was essentially democratic in nature, intending to set up socialist welfare state with a parliamentary system, rule of law and rights for the minorities. Hence, **under Aung San's intended vision for Burma, the country was to exist in a peaceful state of plural politics**. Aung San believed that absolute rule should never be revived in Burma since it would not gain the support of the diverse peoples of Burma. He also believed that religion and the state should be separated.
- One major challenge facing the Burmese government is the **divisive make-up of Burmese society**, where the dominant majority Burman¹

¹ In British usage, ‘Burmese’ is the collective term for anyone from Burma while ‘Burman’ refers to anyone from the dominant Bhamar ethnic group from which the name of the country is derived. Thus a Burmese may not be Burman and can be Mon, Karen or Kachin.

community living in the plains and cities live at odds with a host of minority groups largely living in the highlands and borders of Burma.

- Some of these minorities had been strong kingdoms in their own right before being conquered by the Burman empire, such as the Mons. Others were still living as primitive tribes. Such a diversity of ethnicities, languages, religions and cultures would have to be appeased or cajoled into maintaining the unitary nature of Burma after independence.
- To deal with the biggest threat to the unity of Burma, **Aung San was willing to grant the minorities considerable autonomy** through three arrangements concerning their territories, called Union State, Autonomous State and National Areas, that catered to the different extents of willingness these minorities were to living with the Burman-dominated mainstream. These arrangements were drawn up in the Panglong Agreement of 12 Feb 1947.
- However, **the political consensus garnered from amongst the Burmans and the minorities that led to independence dissolved** when Aung San was assassinated on 19 July 1947. None of the above goals were ever achieved in Burma.
- U Nu stepped up to head the AFPFL and so led Burma into independence on 4 Jan 1948 when the Britain officially granted it freedom from British rule.

2.3 Role of political challenges – Immediate challenges facing Burma after independence (communist and minority threats)

- U Nu's state got off to a precarious start as almost immediately after independence, he had to defeat rebellions by Communists, some minority groups and disgruntled Burmans. The more serious of the threats are described below:
 - 1) The **Communist Party of Burma (CPB)** were initially popular because they championed the rights of the farmers, pursuing such

policies as the cancellation of agricultural debts, returning land to the farmers who actually worked on the land, and reserving the use of resources to the Burmese.

- In March 1948, a **communist insurrection** took place, primarily in central Burma. The communists also tried unsuccessfully to organise a general strike in Rangoon and other urban centers.
- Overall weaknesses of the communists:
 - Although they had considerable support from peasant and workers, it was short of funding, organisationally weak and had no significant military support.
- U Nu's govt, with military aid from India and Britain, was able to suppress the 25,000 member communist force largely because of the general antipathy of the people for communism.
 - The AFPFL also purged the communist leadership of the All Burma Peasants Union and the Trade Union Congress of Burma, replacing them with AFPFL leaders.
 - In 1953, the govt officially banned the Burma Communist Party (BCP).
 - Thereafter, only a handful of communists continued to carry on the anti-govt struggle in the highlands.

2) The **ethnic minorities** were discontented as the promise for autonomous rule did not materialise.

- Colonial legacy: The non-Burman minorities of the Chins, Kachins, Shans and Karens, occupying the largely hilly and relatively infertile half of the country, had been administered separately as "excluded areas". With the advent of independence, minorities feared the traditional tendency of the Burman majority (75% of population) to dominate politics of the country.

- In 1948, the Karen National Defense Organisation, having in its ranks some of the best British-trained soldiers in Burma, rose up in rebellion, demanding an independent state that would include the Irrawaddy Delta.
- Early Karen military victories during 1948 and 1949 included seizure of important towns like Moulmein, Bassein and Prome; at one time the rebels threatened to take Burma's capital, Rangoon.
- The Karen movement was temporarily contained through military action.

2.4 Role of Government Leaders - U Nu's personal characteristics and leadership qualities

- A student of Rangoon University, he was part of the nationalist struggle against the British in pre-war period with Aung San. Western educated, he opted to set up a democratic-socialist state upon independence.
- A **reluctant PM**, unwilling to take over leadership of the country. He was catapulted to the position of Prime Minister after Aung San's assassination.
- While Burma remained pluralistic and representative in theory, this **democratic foundation was eventually destroyed by U Nu's inability** to manage the balance of power between the political factions.
- Limits to consolidating power and gaining legitimacy:
 - Although he was well-meaning and sought to promote democratic ideals, he was a generally poor leader, being slow to **act**. He was a self-confessed dreamer, which made him lose the trust of his followers and made rival Burmese leaders turn against him.

- **Weak leader** who could not inspire confidence and poor in reacting to the difficult circumstances in the immediate pre-war period.
- Early in U Nu's years as PM, "his reputation for personal honesty, integrity, devotion to Buddhism and determination to end corruption won him considerable support".
- BUT his govt was plagued by political factionalism he lacked the ability to be the unifying force for the AFPFL [as Aung San had been].
 - Given that the party was made up of an alliance of mass organisations, minority nationalist parties and individual players, the AFPFL needed a leader that could keep it united. U Nu proved to be too weak to hold the party together when each section of the alliance was determined to defend its own interests. As a result, the party was reduced to a coalition of rivals. Consequently when U Nu proclaimed that the party was to change to a unitary party, **the AFPFL became divided into two factions in 1958.**
- Armed conflict with the communists and ethnic minority groups. The later was unhappy with his policies on promoting Buddhism as a unifying force.
- By 1958, U Nu was losing total control; the country was in a state of civil disintegration and he controlled only the region around Rangoon. In the context of such instability, U Nu had to ask the military to form a caretaker government, under the "emergency" clauses of the constitution. This is testimony of U Nu's weak and inadequate leadership.

2.5 Government performance

- In August 1952, U Nu launched a four-year economic plan to convert Burma into a *pyidawtha* ("Land of Happiness").

- The plan included welfare measures for improvement in education, public health, subsidised housing, reclamation, irrigation, easy credit and elimination of old debt.
- The emphasis was on rural projects instead of industry, on private enterprise instead of nationalisation of farms and factories.
- Unfortunately, due to a combination of factors like global slump in demand for rice, military costs of suppressing internal dissent, exodus of skilled Indian administrative and technical personnel, led to the failure of implementation of *pyidawtha* by 1956.
- In keeping with his Buddhist faith, U Nu promoted simple, austere and humane policies of development, and abandoned his own initial enthusiasm for socialism.
- However, equally discernible is a **relative lack of pragmatic consideration and a little too much idealism.**

2.6 Role of constitutional processes and elections and the role of the military - Weaknesses of party-based politics

- By 1956, the AFPFL was seriously factionalised between the All Burma Peasants Organization (ABPO) under Thakin Tin and Trade Union Council (TUC) under U Ba Swe and Kyaw Nein. The rise of the National Union Front (NUF), led by Aung Than, posed a serious challenge to AFPFL for the first time.
- **By 1958, the split in the AFPFL was complete and the country effectively politically immobilised.** One of the factors causing the split was U Nu's rejection of Marxism as party ideology.
- The Communists, operating undercover within the NUF, took the opportunity to stage violent uprisings in many parts of Burma. They even helped the Kachins and Shans revive their demand for separate states.

- At this point, with domestic politics in such a state of volatility, U Nu asked the Burmese military, which had always been subordinate to the civilian government, to **assume temporary control for two years**, under the “emergency” clauses of the constitution.
- The military by now was enjoying a reputation for effectiveness, honesty and political neutrality, having basically held Burma together up to then, and was welcomed by the people for restoring of law and order so quickly at a national level.
- Ne Win’s caretaker government lasted 19 months and they managed to achieve the following:
 - Stabilised the cost of living and increased exports and foreign exchange reserves.
 - It also attempted to exert central control over various districts of Burma by centralising appointment of government officials.
- At the end of the stipulated period in 1960, the army did not immediately leave office, but when some of the senior soldiers wanted to stay in power permanently, General Ne Win, who led the military, prevailed upon the military to hand over power back to the civilian authorities.
 - The slowness of the resumption process was a sign of things to come, however, and was criticised.
- In 1960, Ne Win initiated the national elections to create a definitive government, which was meant to be a representative govt.
 - **Analysis:** At this point, the military did not have real intentions to take over power for itself, but **it was no longer apolitical**, having tasted power and authority during these two years. It had gained valuable administrative experience in government, and even after handing over power to civilian rule, the military continued to wield political influence.
- Even though U Nu’s Union Party won the 1960 elections, U Nu was still faced with political factionalism and made decisions (1961 – made

Buddhism the state religion and practically conceded to the Shan demand for quasi autonomous state, thereby spurring similar demands from other ethnic minorities) that led the military to takeover power again in 1962.

2.7 Role of the military as a source of power and legitimacy

- The military's dominant role in Burma had its roots in the colonial period and WWII.
 - During the colonial period, nationalist organisations formed armies to protect their followers. It was also during this period where a group of Burmese nationalists² - the Thirty Comrades – sought Japanese assistance and training against British colonial rule. The Thirty Comrades constituted the roots of the modern Burmese army called the Burma Independence Army (BIA) which was formed to fight for independence from Britain.
 - Beginning of two factions within the military as a result of WWII:
 - One faction was the pro-British battalions originally recruited from minority ethnic groups.
 - The other faction was the BIA made up from the Burman majority and had anti-British credentials.
- In 1945, the Kandy Conference convened by the British, Aung San, communist leaders, military leaders met to determine how to reorganise the Burmese army.
 - The consensus was on a two-winged army: one for the minorities and another for the former BIA.
- **Analysis:** This split reflected the realities of 'two Burmas' – one consisting of the ethnic majority and the other of the minorities, with

² They call themselves the Thakins, which means 'master'.

neither trusting the other. Yet, this split was vital to preserve the power base of the AFPFL as well as appeasing the demands of the minorities.

- In order to make this two-winged army work, Aung San's leadership was crucial; his assassination in 1947 contributed to fragmentation on both political and military fronts.
- Within a few months after independence, the two-winged army fell apart when minority-dominated battalions defected to join the minority uprisings. At the same time, the Rangoon government was also factionalised.
- The national army soon found themselves making independent decisions to contain both the communist and minority uprisings. The military leadership began to feel that only they could hold the country together and a weak civilian government was as much a liability as the communists and ethnic minorities.

2.8 Role of Traditional Institutions - Promotion of Buddhism as a source of power and legitimacy

- U Nu believed that Buddhism was the means of making socialism possible because the political and economic system could not be changed unless human hearts were first transformed.
- 1950: When the Buddha Sasana Council Act was enacted, U Nu created a state-financed agency for the promotion and propagation of Buddhism.
- 1954: In response to pressure from Buddhist abbots, Buddhism began to be taught in state schools.
- **Analysis:** U Nu's support for Buddhism was partly due to the need to provide an ideological challenge to the forces of communism at that time.

2.9 Ineffectiveness of U Nu's government - Failure of democracy, 1960 – 1962

- Somewhat uniquely, Burma was being given a second chance to make civilian democracy work. However, U Nu did not use the two years of military “caretaker” govt to close its ranks.
- Even though U Nu's Union Party won the Apr 1960 national elections, he was still faced with **political factionalism** in govt.
 - The Union Party did not live up to its name, soon succumbing to squabbles among the leaders representing different factions.
 - The internal divisions resulted in the party losing its credibility and this was in part responsible for the military takeover by Ne Win in 1962.
- In a bid to enlist support from various quarters, **U Nu made vital concessions** in 1961 by getting the legislature to amend the constitution in **making Buddhism the state religion**.
 - The army was alarmed as they believed that this move would be divisive for Burma. The non-Buddhist minorities also opposed this move.
- Even worse, **U Nu practically conceded the Shan demand for quasi-autonomous state**, thereby spurring similar demands from other ethnic minorities.
 - In early 1962, he started negotiations with the leadership of the various groups seeking ethnic autonomy, endangering, in the army's view, the integrity of the Union of Burma.
- Ne Win finally decisively seized power in a coup on March 2 1962. Military rule has brought an end to the 1947 constitution & democracy.
 - The political process halted, the legislature dissolved and large numbers of dissenting politicians, including U Nu, were interned.

- The freedoms of speech, assembly and press were allowed, provided they were not directed against the govt.
- U Nu's inability to consolidate power and legitimacy following Aung San's demise, reflected the complexity involved in uniting a country split up by three political structures - religion, ethnicity and politics.

3. Case Study 2: Indonesia

Indonesia is another important case study to account for the ineffectiveness of democratic govts in consolidating power.

This case study can also be used for almost all the factors to explain the ineffectiveness of democratic govts.

By now, I hope you will begin to appreciate how the same factors are fleshed out in different case studies. This is also when you will start to select your case studies to support each of the given factors.

You will find Indonesia useful as case studies for the following factors:

- *Role of government leaders*
- *Role of constitutional processes and elections - Weaknesses of party based politics*
- *Role of the military*
- *Government performance*
- *Political challenges and intervention by ambitious leaders*

3.1 A chronological overview of the political transitions over time

- **1949:** Withdrawal of the Dutch and Indonesian independence
- **1949-1959:** Democratic rule with elections
- **1955:** Fragmentation of Indonesian political scene seen in how no party won a clear majority in the elections
- **1958:** *Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia* (PRRI) Rebellion, led by a subversive government in Sumatra against the central government in Java
- **1959:** Transition to 'Guided Democracy' finalised; martial law implemented and democratic processes suspended³
- **1965:** The Gestapu and military coup
- **1966-1998⁴:** Suharto took over with the 'New Order government' which was possibly even more authoritarian than Sukarno's but perhaps legitimised its rule more deftly than Sukarno's regime had, through the use of democratic mechanisms⁵
- **1998-2001:** Post-authoritarian government rule under B.J. Habibie

3.2 Difficult transition to democracy due to colonial legacies and decolonisation (taken from Lecture 2)

- Unlike the US and to a lesser extent the British, the Dutch did not have a policy of developing a politically mature class of indigenous elites

³ This was the first transition to authoritarian government.

⁴ Suharto, by now army chief of staff, took effective control of the Indonesian government on March 12, 1966, though Sukarno remained nominal president for another year. Suharto banned the PKI and began formulating new policies to stabilize the country's economy and political life, which had approached the brink of chaos in the last years of Sukarno's rule. In March 1967 the People's Consultative Assembly (the national legislature) appointed Suharto acting president, and in March 1968 it elected him to a five-year term as president. Information taken from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Suharto#ref976039>.

⁵ This could be seen as the second transition, to an even more extreme form of authoritarian government.

that could administer a state themselves. The **Indonesians were hence less prepared for independence** than the Filipinos, the Burmese and the Malaysians, and so after independence in 1949, they experienced tremendous difficulties in creating and operating viable political systems.

- Dutchmen held the majority of the seats in the national legislative body during the colonial period, although they accounted for less than 1% of population.
- Political freedom was restricted under Dutch rule and nationalist figures such as Sukarno, Mohammad Hatta & Soetan Sjahrir were under detention during most of the 1930s.
- When independence was finally achieved in 1949, the western European model of rule was retained. In a republic, there was a President, a Vice-president, a Consultative Assembly and a Chamber of Representatives. However, like Burma, the delicate consensus that materialised because of the revolutionary endeavour soon broke down when the goal was achieved.
- Hence although Indonesia did not suffer from problems of ethnic insurgency like Burma, it had **its share of partisan politics, which brought about the failure of parliamentary democracy** in 1960.

3.3 Role of Constitutional processes and elections - Weaknesses of party-based politics

- Weaknesses of the 1945 Constitution
 - The definitive government of Indonesia was supposed to be based on the 1945 Constitution left for them by the Dutch. Unlike the Filipinos, who wrote a constitution more than a decade before independence, and the Burmese, who pasted together their basic law half a year before independence, **the**

Indonesians began their postcolonial national devt with only temporary political institutions.

- It was a unicameral⁶ parliamentary system: a House of Representatives with members elected directly by the people, **this body was not formed until 1955.**
 - This meant that proper representative government was absent in Indonesia during that time.
- **Elections were postponed for five years** after independence from the Dutch. They were postponed primarily because a substantial number of Dutch-appointed legislators from the Republic of the United States of Indonesia (RUSI) system⁷ remained in the House of Representatives, a compromise made with the Dutch-created federal states to induce them to join a unitary political system.
 - The legislators knew a general election would most likely turn them out of office and tried to postpone one for as long as possible.
- **Hence for the first 10 years of its proclaimed freedom (1945-55), Indonesia's national govt suffered from the fact that it had not been elected.**
 - The members of the House of Representatives had been appointed rather than filled by popular vote.
 - Sukarno was appointed President by the other revolutionary leaders in 1945.
 - During the 5 years that followed Dutch recognition of its independence, Indonesia had five PMs & cabinets. This

⁶ Parliaments can have one house (unicameral), or two houses (bicameral) usually with one upper house for elites and one lower house for the masses. Iceland and Singapore have a unicameral system. Unicameral parliaments are usually the result of no felt need to represent different sections of the population – a dire problem for Indonesia with over 300 ethnic groups, 737 spoken languages and sharp regional differences. Only after the collapse of Suharto's authoritarian regime did Indonesia create a bicameral parliament to address this old problem of regional representation.

⁷ This was the result of the great disparity between Indonesian territories. United States of Indonesia consisted of areas still held by the Dutch at Independence and areas held by the Indonesian territories. Obviously this situation was not ideal and was supposed to be replaced by a unitary Republic of Indonesia controlled by a strong capital (Jakarta).

indicated great instability and very little prospect for a smooth functioning of the party system.

- This **instability was exploited by Sukarno** to increase his own power. Initially a ceremonial head according to the constitution, Sukarno was not only extremely popular, but he also **used his popularity in collaboration with the army** to curb democracy.
- The **first such collaboration was displayed in 1952, when regional coups were engineered** in support of Sukarno's call to undermine the parliamentary system.
- Constitutional arrangements for Indonesia were in the **highest degree of flux of any of the SEA countries** as the attempt to introduce a parliamentary system had not proved very successful
 - President Sukarno, in seeking to experiment with various forms of "guided democracy" and authoritarian rule, further weakened Indonesian constitutional devt.
 - Decision-making powers were now wielded largely by the military commanders.
- Tensions within the leadership
 - There was rising tension within the inner circle of leadership, between Sukarno and Hatta, President and Vice-President respectively.
 - Basically, Hatta was an administrator who advocated a pragmatic approach so as to focus on the country's political and economic reconstruction.
 - On the other hand, Sukarno never lost his revolutionary attitudes, so he focused on being a 'solidarity maker' who viewed pragmatic politics as a secondary priority. Sukarno, an idealist, felt that inspiring the masses and maintaining their popular support was more vital than the country's economic reconstruction.

- Divisive Party Politics
 - On a broader level, there was a sharp divide between their respective supporters. Many of the Hatta faction were members of the Masjumi party, representing the reform wing of Indonesian Islam.
 - Sukarno faced an even more complex situation: his major supporters were the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) and the Nahdatul Ulama (NU), the latter representing the more traditional Muslims. As a result, **not only were supporters of Sukarno and Hatta representing competing interests, but Sukarno's were further competing between themselves.**
 - Thus **the practice of party politics, democratic as it was intended to be, took its toll on Indonesia's unity.** The ideological conflicts that were waged between the parties were brought into the parliamentary realm. As a result, cabinet ministers came to represent only their own interests, placing the necessity for national unity as a lesser priority. The lack of education worsened the divides between the party, reducing the likelihood of reaching compromise.
 - During the 1955 national elections, the conflict between the parties spread from the urban areas to the countryside, as they struggled against one another to gain mass support from the villages. **The results of the 1955 elections can be said to be the immediate factor that brought an end to parliamentary politics in Indonesia.**

3.4 Role of government leaders - Sukarno's personal characteristics and leadership qualities

- A skilled orator, charismatic and a consummate politician.
 - Could profoundly move crowds with his excellent oratorical skills.
 - During the nationalist struggle for independence, he used these skills to good effect:
 - Mobilised the people against the Dutch colonial power.
 - Crafted the Pancasila as a unifying ideology for Indonesia.
 - But in the post-independence period, he used it more to gain absolute power for himself and get rid of opponents.
 - Attempts were made to mobilise the population for campaigns like recovery of West Irian, confrontation against Malaysia (due to his desire to be the undisputed leader of the Malay world).
 - Such mobilisation was not for longer term goals BUT more to meet his short term goals.
- A strong desire for power and an opportunist
 - Allied with the Japanese during 1942-45 to further the goal of independence. Built up his own support and power position and developed reputation of "Father of the Revolution."
 - His opportunism is also seen in devising "Guided Democracy". Based on the weaknesses of party politics, he justified the dismantling of the democratic model in favour of "Guided Democracy": one in which he amassed power.
 - While Sukarno tried to balance the different forces in Guided Democracy between the PKI and military but he ultimately failed to consolidate power due to the unhappiness of the military and militant Muslims as he increasingly supported the PKI and showed a leftist sway.

3.5 Role of the Indonesian military

- Throughout the 1950s the military grew increasingly coherent ideologically.
 - Its Islamist wing defected or was purged as a consequence of the Darul Islam Rebellion⁸ during the 1950s.
 - The military's leftist officers were also purged after the Madiun Coup in 1948.
- The military became a body characterised by two ineradicable convictions: that it alone was the saviour of the Republic and the expression of the people's will, and that civilian politicians in general – in particular Communists and Islamists because of the two rebellions – were not to be trusted.

3.6 Constitutional processes and elections: The 1955 National Elections brought about greater political fragmentation

- By 1955, the way was finally open to hold the elections. Four parties competed – Sukarno's own anti-West PNI, the moderate, pro-West, Islamic party *Masjumi*, the traditionalist Islamic party NU, and the Communist *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI).
 - PNI obtained 22% of the vote and the NU 18%: both derived their votes from Java. The *Masjumi* obtained 21%, most of its votes coming from the outer islands.
 - PKI staged an effective comeback⁹ with 16%. The strong showing of the PKI and the concentration of its votes in Java showed that it was a strong contender for the same religious

⁸ The Darul Islam Rebellion was a separatist insurgency that took place in Indonesia in the 1950s. The rebellion was led by a militant Islamic organization called Darul Islam, which aimed to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia.

⁹ This unfortunate party survived several defeats and massacres in its history, from a failed anti-Dutch revolt in 1926 that essentially eliminated the PKI as a political factor before WW2, and another failed revolt on the island of Madiun against Sukarno's leadership in 1948 which saw its leaders executed for their mutiny. However, they were finally wiped out in the anti-Communist massacres of 1965-66 led by Suharto.

community as the PNI and the NU, contrary to expectation that Muslim communities tended to reject Communism.

- In an attempt to break the deadlock in the results, Sukarno advocated Guided Democracy, but this was strongly opposed by Masjumi and the inhabitants of the outer islands who did not like domination from Java. They led revolts in Sumatra and south Sulawesi, which were then crushed by the military.
- Hatta resigned in December 1956 in protest against Sukarno's new-found heavy-handedness.
- **Analysis:** No party won a clear majority in the elections, leading to **fragmentation of the Indonesian political structure**. Ultimately, constitutional processes failed to enable Sukarno's government to consolidate political power due to the fundamental cleavages existing in the political system represented by the variety of political parties.

3.7 Government performance

- Accompanying the political disarray that Indonesia's political scene found itself in after the 1955 election was the **economic difficulties** that were prevalent during Sukarno's rule. These economic challenges compounded the difficulty of consolidating power for Sukarno's government.
- Although Sukarno was adept at rhetoric and language, he was a failure at economic policy.
 - Anti-west xenophobia and poor economic policies resulted in economic disaster for Indonesia.
 - This inability to promote socio-economic development was also a source of unhappiness among the masses.
- The country's new leadership also faced formidable difficulties in producing the prosperity that Indonesians expected of independence.
 - Plantations, transport infrastructure and factories had all been badly damaged.

- Foreign enterprises were still strong in the economy – which stimulated much political animosity – but the indigenous middle class was economically and politically weak.
 - The ethnic Chinese were often better placed to develop business enterprises, but faced unpopularity and could count on little or no government support.
 - Hence, it was hard to find adequate investment sources for national recovery.
- Population growth exacerbated the dire economic situation, where it grew from **77.5 million to 97 million from 1950 to 1961**.
 - This generated domestic demand, especially for oil, thus undermining efforts to restore oil exports.
 - By 1957, oil output had returned to 1940s levels but during that same time, domestic demand for gasoline rose by two-thirds and for kerosene by 200%.
- External conditions were also not favorable.
 - The Korean War created an initial boom in commodity prices which led to increased export earnings and government export duties only until mid-1951.
 - For e.g., rubber was Indonesia's leading export but its price fell over 70% by September 1952.
 - Thereafter, in the absence of any other commodity boom, Indonesian economy became increasingly characterised by weak export revenues or growth, accompanied by increasing political interference in the economy, corruption and smuggling.

3.8 Political challenge: The PRRI Rebellion (1958)

- The inherently unstable and increasingly dire economic conditions provided **prevailing conditions that made it conducive for discontent** to breed against Sukarno's government.

- It was within this context of discontent and instability that the **PRRI Rebellion** broke out in **1958**.
 - Bloodless coups were carried out in Sumatran provinces by indigenous army officers who rejected the central government's over-centralisation and tolerance of the PKI.
 - These coups established army-led councils in the outer islands and directly undermined the authority of the state.
 - Eventually, these coups culminated in the major **PRRI Rebellion** by **non-communist, anti-Sukarnoist and factional military groups in Sumatra**.
- After being crushed by the army, it was further declared that Masjumi and Socialist Party of Indonesia (PSI) were now illegal parties in Indonesia due to the prominence of their leaders in the rebellion.
 - The suppression of these regional rebellions **resulted in key figures of the Revolution such as Sjahrir and Natsir being imprisoned** and this **fuelled greater discontentment towards Sukarno's government** and its heavy-handed measures.
- While Eisenhower's administration had supported some of these regional coups and rebellions to counter Sukarno's shift towards the PKI, **the Indonesian Army's swift suppression of the PRRI coup persuaded them that it was better to work with Sukarno** for the sake of Indonesia's political order.
- Within the context of widespread dissent, the impending collapse of central authority and to forestall a possible military coup by General Nasution, the **1957-1958 rebellions provided an opportunity for Sukarno to justifiably move towards 'strong government'**, where he subsequently adopted a presidential-style constitution under the name 'Guided Democracy'.

3.9 The start of Authoritarian Government: Sukarno's Guided Democracy (1957)

- Sukarno realised that hoped-for consensus of diverse political structures contending with each other civilly in an overarching liberal system had been too idealistic for Indonesia.
- By this time, democracy came under increasing criticism:
 - Corruption was widespread.
 - The army was appalled at the doings of the civilian politicians and alarmed at PKI's growth.
 - Sukarno was critical of the self-interested politicking of the parties and sympathetic to the general disillusionment with the democratic system.
 - Outer islands were dissatisfied with apparent trends of this Indonesian Republic: centralising, increasingly leftist in rhetoric and Java-dominated.
- Hence, Sukarno made his first move at establishing authoritarian government in 1957, when he proposed a new form of 'democracy', which he called Guided Democracy.
 - Sukarno believed that Western-style democracy was inappropriate for Indonesia's situation.
 - Instead, he called for the diminution (not abolition) of political parties and Guided Democracy was then officially proclaimed in 1959.
 - It was seen by Sukarno as a political structure which would save the nation from the purposelessness that had characterised Indonesia from 1949 to 1959. As president, he would 'guide' the nation to its proper path.
- **This marked the end of the democratic phase for Indonesia. Subsequently, Indonesia would experience two types of authoritarian government – Sukarno's civilian dictatorship (1959 – 1965) and Suharto's military dictatorship (1965 – 1997)**

4. Case Study 3: The Philippines

Philippines is an interesting case study that you can use for two purposes:

- *How Philippines established foundations of democracy due to colonial legacies*
- *Yet, Philippines went through a period of Authoritarian Govt from 1971 – 1986 under Ferdinand Marcos.*

Hence you need to understand how and why Philippines experienced a period of Authoritarian Govt, in spite of the stable democratic structure put in place.

*Overall, Philippines will be used as a case study for the **effectiveness of democratic governments in consolidating power** because it went back to democratic govt after Ferdinand Marcos was overthrown in 1986. So this shows the resilience of democracy in Philippines.*

You will find Philippines useful as case studies for the following factors:

- *Role of constitutional processes due to positive colonial legacies albeit elitist nature*
- *Role of strong and experienced local elites*
- *Government performance*
- *Political challenges- Minority uprisings and communist uprisings*
- *Trigger factor to mark end of democratic govts: Intervention by ambitious leaders*

4.1 A chronological overview of the political transitions over time:

- **1946:** Democratic constitution announced and democracy was adopted.
- **1946-1972:** Multiple transitions of power occurred during the Philippines' phase of democratic governance.
 - **1946-1948:** Manuel Roxas
 - **1949-1950:** Elpidio Quirino
 - **1951-1957:** Ramon Magsaysay
 - **1957-1961:** Carlos Garcia
 - **1961-1965:** Diosdado Macapagal
 - **1965-1972:** Ferdinand Marcos
- **1972-1986:** Authoritarian government
 - **1972-1981:** martial law under Ferdinand Marcos
 - **1981-1986:** martial law lifted, in name, under Marcos as authoritarian rule continued
- **1986-2000:** Democratic government
 - **1986-1992:** Corazon Aquino
 - **1992-1998:** Fidel Ramos
 - **1998-2001:** Joseph Estrada

4.2 Role of constitutional processes and elections – due to positive colonial legacies

- No colony in the world was more vigorously tutored to be a democracy or responded more enthusiastically to the treatment than the formerly American-ruled Philippines. Its political tutelage under the US in colonial Philippines during the 20thC include the introduction of suffrage, universal primary education and infrastructure building.

- However, the most important US contribution to state formation was the **consolidation, legitimation and expansion of elite power well into the post-colonial period.**
- The constitution, drawn up by the Filipinos was democratic and its institutions strongly resembled those of the US.
- The President:
 - Executive power resides in the president, who is elected for a 4-year term & may not serve more than 8 consecutive years.
 - Chosen by direct popular vote, the Philippine president has powers that are somewhat wider than those of the American president, for he not only has direct control over all executive depts, but also supervises local govts. Thus the President is the center from which all political power emanates.
- Fairly successful in function
 - **The national govt institutions of the Philippines functioned fairly successfully in the formative period (1946-60).** Presidents from Roxas to Marcos had been able to direct the executive organs of the state in a constitutional manner and to hold the country together. In nearly a quarter-century, the independent republic has achieved a remarkable record of continuity in its govt institutions.
 - Eg 1: Through the years, **Congress had been an impt part of the total decision-making machinery, not a rubber stamp.** The President and Congress had not always agreed but they had been partners in the process of policy determination.
 - Eg 2: The country had become increasingly democratic in several respects, most importantly in terms of the **growth in popular participation in elections.**

- Philippine govt was highly centralised vis-à-vis local govts.
 - The governors of the 53 provinces often had significant individual influence in decisions affecting their territory, but most of the local govt depts were responsible to the national authority in Manila and not to their governors.
- **Analysis:** From 1946-1971, the **Philippines functioned as a working democracy, with elections held on a regular basis.** The major parties – the Liberals and Nationalists – dominated the political scene. The fact that there were 6 presidents drawn from the 2 rival parties and that none of them were re-elected showed that the electoral processes had been given a reasonably fair trial.

4.3 Role of Constitutional processes and elections: Nature of elitist party politics from 1946 to 1971

- Initial successes
 - The Philippines is often touted as the showpiece of democracy due to its political tutelage by their colonial power, the Americans.
 - Based on the 1935 constitution, constitutional processes were functioning and electoral politics was evident.
- Limitations
 - However, what resulted in Philippines was more an oligarchic form of government.
 - Politics was dominated by the rich landed families (*Ilustrados*), whom the Americans had helped to entrench.
 - Political parties lacked any distinctive ideologies and party membership was largely recruited from the *ilustrado* parties who used these parties for fulfilment of their political interests through the forging of patron-client relationships.
 - Political scene was dominated by two main political parties (Liberal Party and Nationalist Party).

- However, representative government in Filipino terms was in reality characterised by power held by only the few elite families.
- Filipino elite have always monopolised political institutions and processes and excluded masses from them.
- The electoral system, though present, was often marred by voter intimidation, vote rigging and pork barrel expenditure.
- When the grassroots was mobilised during the Presidencies of Magsaysay and Macapagal, they met with strong elite resistance.
- **Analysis:** The prevalence of traditional political structure that was antithetical to constitutional processes meant that the holding of regular elections did not necessarily reflect a stable political scene as it was characterised by **clear manipulation of electoral processes by vested interests and lacked legitimacy.**

4.4 Political challenges- The communists: The Hukbhalahap Rebellion (1946-53)

- The Huk movement was the best illustration of the widespread rural discontent in independent Philippines.
- From 1946-53, the Huks were able to launch a full-scale rebellion in central Luzon, in part because the movement received considerable support from the peasants who had been severely disadvantaged by the breakdown of the patron-client relations.
 - According to traditional practice, the landowners were expected to act as patrons by contributing to community activities and providing help to their peasant-tenants in times of crisis. In return, the peasant-tenants were expected to show deference.

- In central Luzon, this system was breaking down because of the increase in absentee landlords. The peasants were soon exposed to a less protected life, adding on to their hardships.
- In this light, Magsaysay was then able to contain this rebellion because he offered land in the south to the Huks who surrendered. He also legislated agrarian reforms in 1954 and 1955.

4.5 Role of the Cold War - minimal direct impact on the political order in the Philippines

- The early Presidents recognised the importance of the USA as a guarantor of their independence, and desperately sought ways to commit the USA to the defence of the Philippines.
 - The Military Bases Agreement (1947) only allowed for the presence of U.S. bases in the Philippines, but with no explicit provision for defence.
- After the 'loss' of China in 1949 and the onset of the Korean War in 1950, the **Mutual Defence Treaty** signed in **1951** that committed the USA to defend the Philippines in the event of an attack had the **unexpected effect of turning the military of the Philippines into one which was increasingly focused on internal security.**

4.6 Role of strong and experienced local elites: Ramon Magsaysay (1953-1957) & Diosdado Macapagal (1961-1965)

- Popularly known as the man of the masses, **Ramon Magsaysay** was the son of a blacksmith and a teacher - a background that contrasted with the famous families of the political elite at that time.
- He was the first politician to **capture the presidency with a populist approach that appealed to the electorate directly**, without support from the old elite.
 - During the 1950s, an **emergent urban middle and professional class** has started to challenge the political

monopoly of the landed ruling class. The influence of this new class was largely responsible for the election of Magsaysay to the presidency in 1953, the closest to being a populist leader in Philippines.

- He also had support from the USA who was impressed with his ability to organise an effective counter insurgency against the Huks.
- Because of Magsaysay's background, he brought politics closer to the people.
 - He introduced the concept of touring the electorate and interacting with the citizens, and opened up the grounds of the Presidential Palace to the public.
- Only under Ramon Magsaysay's leadership (1953-7) were there reforms that improved living conditions in the countryside.
 - Even before he became president, Magsaysay (pronounce his name "mug-sigh-sigh") had broken the back of the Huk rebellion. He was appointed Secretary of National Defense in 1950 and had successfully suppressed the Huk Rebellion by 1953.
 - Riding upon this victory and his immense popularity amongst the rural population, he resigned from his military post, stood for the 1953 elections and defeated Quirino.
 - His great domestic popularity was largely due to his efforts at land reform, giving land to landless families, establishing clear legal procedures for farm ownership, share-holding and tenancy, and providing the proper infrastructural support such as irrigation works. He continued to support anti-Communist efforts overseas.
- He was a firm supporter of the USA and a vocal spokesman against communism during the Cold War. He also laid the foundation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), also known as the Manila

Pact of 1954, that aimed to defend Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Southwest Pacific from communism.

- Magsaysay was killed in an airplane crash on 17 March 1957 and Vice-President Carlos Garcia assumed the presidency to serve out the last eight months of Magsaysay's term.
- **Diosdado Macapagal (1961-5)**, dubbed 'The Incorruptible', focused on fighting graft and corruption and economic policy change.
 - A populist leader, Macapagal changed the official celebration of Independence Day from July 4 (the date in 1946 that United States granted independence) to June 12 (the date in 1898 that Emilio Aguinaldo declared independence from Spain) in 1962.
 - His two most important reforms were a socio-economic program that liberalised the economy and encouraged free enterprise, and the Land Reform Program, which was an extension of Magsaysay's reforms which had been neglected during the Garcia administration.
 - More controversially, he also claimed Sabah as part of Philippines. However, he met constant opposition from the conservative elite of the Nacionalista Party who controlled both Houses of Congress, and they ultimately managed to undermine the effectiveness of his reforms.
- **Despite Magsaysay's and Macapagal's efforts, Philippine politics remained elitist.** The central Philippine government faced competition from a diverse range of rivals at all levels of society, including intense competition among politicians, landowners and dynastic heads, Communist rebellions and rural unrests.
 - However, unlike Burma and Indonesia it did not have a politicised military that could compete with the central

government, and the allure of liberal democracy remained strong in the Philippines.

- Nevertheless, Ferdinand Marcos (1965-86) later increased authoritarianism, and began to see the use of brute force as the solution for the problems of the Philippines.
- Analysis: It is thus clear that for Philippines, **the greatest limitation to its democratic govt was its elitist nature**, where there was an unequal balance of power amongst the elite and the masses. This explains why the political challenges during the 1950s stemmed from this inequality and were led by the interest groups representing the masses (communists, urban middle class).

4.7 Government performance and the Cold War

- The pursuit of economic development has been consistently elitist in nature, controlled by the rich landed families (Ilustrados) who had close ties with the US.
- Some Presidents such as Magsaysay and Macapagal attempted to help the peasants through social welfare plans but stopped short of displacing landlord power through a land redistribution program.
- The wealthy elite benefited greatly from their 'special' relationship with the US.
 - The US had provided war rehabilitation funds in return for the passing of the Bell Trade Act and the Military Bases Agreement¹⁰.
 - These funds were only made available to the political elite, who invested in more land and commerce.

¹⁰ These two agreements revealed that US continued to have economic and military interests in independent Philippines. The Bell Trade Act gave Americans the same rights in land ownership, natural resources and other fields of economic activity as the Filipinos. The Military Bases Agreement allowed long-term American military facilities in the country. If you are suitably outraged and are interested to find out more about why the Philippine government allowed this to happen in the first place, please go find out more.

- Free trade proved to benefit the landed elite who met American demand for products like sugar and coconut oil. It facilitated the continued dominance of the landlords, even though newly independent Philippines in principle stood for democratisation and modernisation.
- The flood of American goods into the domestic market also hampered local small-scale industries, fuelled pervasive corruption and overpricing and precipitated a balance-of-payments crisis that led to capital flight, inflation and massive unemployment.
- By the time of Marcos' election as President in 1965, Philippines was saddled with 400 million pesos of domestic debt, was nearly bankrupt and could hardly afford essential services.

4.8 The beginnings of Authoritarian Government (“New Society”) in response to political challenges

- Ferdinand E Marcos, (elected in 1965) became the 1st Filipino president to be elected to a second 4-year term in office.
 - In his first term (1965-69), he ruled as a 'conventional', liberal democratic, Philippine President, and he focused on economic development, good governance, anti-graft reforms and international diplomacy.
 - For example, Marcos embarked on an ambitious rural development program. Using funds from domestic and external loans and developmental aid, he pumped millions into new irrigation systems, road systems and social development.
 - In 1967, Marcos pushed Congress to pass the Investment Incentives Act which encouraged foreign investors to

contribute to the country's industrial development through export production.

- However, in 1972, Marcos began to feel threatened by the rise of a popular, dynamic and brilliant Senator Benigno Aquino who would most likely to succeed Marcos as president, who would be disqualified from running for office after his 2 terms.
- Rise of **political challenges**:
 - In the 1960s, there had been increased insurgency in the central plains of the northern main island of Luzon under the leadership of the **Marxist New People's Army (NPA)**, which trained urban recruits for armed combat. Drawing on the same roots of agrarian discontent as the Huks, the NPA provided an alternative political structure that had grave implications for the future of the Philippines.
 - The NPA spread its influence across the country, mobilising peasants and workers and built up armed units.
 - In Northern Luzon, the traditional stronghold of the landed elite, the NPA established base areas for encircling the cities. In these bases, rebels kept peace and order and earned the reputation of being polite, patient and helpful in agricultural production.
 - The **economy took a dive**, made worse by the unfortunate coincidence of natural disasters and the lavish use of funds in the election year of 1969.
 - There was increased **Islamic insurgency** in the southern Philippines from 1969.
 - The Muslim grievances were an expression of opposition to the numbers of Christians migration from the north to their lands. This migration threatened to Christianise the south as well as posing a danger to the Muslim control of land. The local economic infrastructure also came to be heavily

dominated by the local Christian sector. Thus the Muslims formed the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) with its goal of separation from the Philippines. The MNLF was to go to war against the Marcos martial-law government in late 1972 with the support of Libya, members of the Islamic Conference and the Malaysian state of Sabah.

- **Trigger event:** The fear of a general insurrection in Luzon was also fuelled by two huge explosions on 21 August 1971 at the Plaza Miranda (Manila), killing and injuring many at a political rally. This incident, coupled with the backdrop of increasing communist activity in the Philippines, provided the occasion for Marcos to proclaim martial law.
- To deal with the problems, **Marcos imposed martial law** and restructured the Philippines in his second term of presidency (1969-72, then extended to 1981), and named his programme "New Society". This move allowed him to serve as President beyond the two-term limit, which would have ended in 1972. Thus, the democratic processes in force since 1935 came to an abrupt end.
- Under martial law, Marcos wanted to create the 'New Society', as 'old society' broke down due to the fact that it was too individualistic and self-centered. Thus in 'New Society', people were expected to think 'more and more of the community' and less of 'individualist, the selfish and even class interest' (Marcos).

- **This marked the end of democracy for Philippines till 1986, when Marcos was overthrown via people's power. However, there are some significant differences between Philippines on one hand and Indonesia and Burma on the other with regards to WHAT ultimately caused this failure of democracy. Philippines did not experience a difficult transition to democracy due to positive colonial tutelage, unlike Burma and Indonesia. The Philippines govt was also fairly unified and functional, albeit elitist. Hence the most important reason to explain why democracy failed in Philippines might differ from that of Indonesia and Burma.**
- **Guiding questions:**
 - What are the factors for failure of democracy in Indonesia and Burma? List all of them.
 - Do all these factors have equal weightage in terms of significance? Do all these factors contribute to the failure of democracy in the same way? If not, how does each factor contribute to the failure of democracy?
 - What are the factors for failure of democracy in Philippines? In contrast to Burma and Indonesia, what then is the most important factor to explain the failure of democracy in Philippines?

5. Case Study 4: The Federation of Malaya / Malaysia

Malaysia will be used as a positive case study for the effectiveness of the democratic government in consolidating power, albeit modified.

Yet, it is important to note that even Malaysia experienced a two-year period where democracy was suspended in the aftermath of the 1969 KL Riots.

Hence you need to understand how and why Malaysia experienced this brief episode of authoritarianism, in spite of the stable democratic structure put in place.

*Overall, Malaysia will be used as a case study for the **effectiveness of democracy in consolidating power** because in 1971, parliament was reconvened, albeit with many provisions that served to uphold the political dominance of the bumiputras.*

You will find Malaysia useful as case studies for the following factors:

- *Role of constitutional processes due to positive colonial legacies*
- *Role of government leaders*
- *Trigger factor to mark end of democratic govts: Role of communal politics*

5.1 A chronological overview of the political transitions over time

- **1957:** Malaya gains independence from the British
- **1957-1970:** Tunku Abdul Rahman
- **1963:** Singapore merges with the Federation of Malaya, Sarawak, North Borneo (Sabah) to form Malaysia on 16 September.
- **1964:** Racial riots occurred in Singapore, a contributing factor to Singapore's eventual expulsion from Malaysia.
- **1965:** Singapore is officially separated from Malaysia.
- **1969:** Communal politics contributes to the 13 May racial riots.
- **1969-1971:** The National Operations Council (NOC) rules Malaysia and parliamentary elections are suspended during this period.
- **1970-1976:** Tun Abdul Razak Hussein
- **1976-1981:** Hussein Onn
- **1981-2000:** Mahathir Mohammad

5.2 Role of constitutional processes – due to positive colonial legacies

- The British granted independence to Malaya on the condition that the **local government was able to unite the ethnic divisions** in the country through peaceful and democratic procedures. The **Alliance Party** – the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) – fulfilled these conditions for the sake of independence. Thus, the independent Federation of Malaya was established in 1957.
- In 1963, the name of the country was changed to Federation of Malaysia because Singapore and northern Borneo (Sarawak & Sabah of Kalimantan), previously British colonies, joined the new Federation.
- The government was formed along the lines of the British parliament.

- The constitution allows for an elected Sultan, the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, to be selected by a conference of Malay rulers of the original nine Malay states.
- The king only has limited constitutional powers, but one of the duties he is charged with is to guarantee and protect Islam religion within the country.
- Political power resides in the prime minister, who is selected from the lower house of the parliament whose maximum is 5 years, subject to dissolution by the Sultan.
- In all its essential aspect, the Malaysian system operates along the lines of the British parliamentary or cabinet system.
- Uniquely Malayan was the underlying principle that **though Malay interests were to remain constitutionally guaranteed, large segments of the Chinese and Indian populations were actively drawn into the political process**. This was what made for the successful operation of constitutional democracy in a multi-racial state.
 - The leaders of the two major communities – Tunku Abdul Rahman (PM of Malaya) and Tan Cheng Lock (founder of MCA in 1949) laid the groundwork for the Alliance Party, or Barisan Nasional, a tripartite coalition joined by the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC); it has been the governing majority party since the early 1950s.
 - The Alliance Party was formed through the '**Racial Bargain**' or '**Social Contract**' of 1957 that marked the foundation of independent multi-racial Malaysia. Under the tacit agreement by the Alliance leaders, it was agreed that the Chinese would continue their dominance of the Malayan economy as long as they do not question or challenge the political dominance of Malays, the *bumiputra* (or 'sons of the soil').
- However, when the idea for a Federation of Malaysia, which included the sultanate of Brunei and the British colonies of Sarawak, Sabah and

Singapore was first proposed in 1961, these old political and cultural concerns of colonial times over citizenship and special privileges were revived.

5.3 Role of Constitutional processes and elections: Nature of communal politics from 1957 to 1971

- **Communal** politics (politics based on religious-ethnic grounds)
 - Although the constitution established in 1957 had reserved a special position for the Malays in the country, the Chinese were indifferent, as their economic rights were undisturbed. However, **circumstances changed** when Malaysia was created since the entrance of Sarawak, Sabah and especially Singapore altered the communal composition of the state. Most critically, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore had Chinese majorities.
 - At the same time, there was lingering resentment of the Malays of Chinese economic dominance and growing suspicions that the newly independent govt was willing to placate the Chinese at their expense.
 - This led to the **rise to power of Malay "ultras"** (right-wingers) who had long preached doctrine of 'Malaysia for Malays'. They were highly involved in the 1964 Racial Riots in Singapore that eventually led to Singapore's expulsion and in 1967, another outburst of Malay passion for *ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy) after the National Language Act of 1967, which in the opinion of some Malays, had not gone far enough in the act of **enshrining** Malay as the national language.
 - On the other hand, **opposition groups made up primarily of Chinese began the campaign for 'Malaysian Malaysia'**, questioning the nature and right of Malay privileges and this contributed to inflamed passions on both

sides. This included the non-communal Democratic Action Party (DAP), which was formed out of the Malaysian branch of the Singapore-based People's Action Party when Singapore left Malaysia in 1965.

- Western observers such as Time Magazine attributed the racial enmities to a political and economic system which primarily benefited the upper classes: *The Chinese and Indians resented Malay-backed plans favoring the majority, including one to make Malay the official school and government language. The poorer, more rural Malays became jealous of Chinese and Indian prosperity. Perhaps the Alliance's greatest failing was that it served to benefit primarily those at the top. ... For a Chinese or Indian who was not well-off, or for a Malay who was not well-connected, there was little largesse¹¹ in the system. Even for those who were favored, hard feelings persisted. (published 1969).*
- Although the Alliance remained successful in the general elections of 1959, 1964 and even of 1969, the rise of these other political parties mostly defined by strong communal character (except for the DAP), had a rippling effect on Malaysia's political landscape. In trying to work out the complexities of merger politics after 1963, the Malaysian government failed to curb the brewing discontent amongst the various racial groups. Dissatisfaction with the coalition was an all-time high by 1967. Both the Malays and the Chinese felt that the Tengku and the MCA poorly represented their interests. At this point, alternative political structures like the PAS and the DAP emerged to win the support of the Malays and the Chinese respectively.
- The 1969 National Elections and the May 13 Racial Riots

¹¹ Benefits.

- General Elections were held on 10 May 1969, and during the run-up to the elections the competing parties had played on ethnic fears. These are just some of the major ones:
 - PAS accused UMNO of betraying Malay interests to the Chinese.
 - DAP accused MCA of betraying Chinese interests to the Malays.
 - Both DAP and PAP (in Singapore) advocated ending Malay primacy.
 - Alliance accused PAP of meddling in Malaysian affairs, which annoyed the PAP since it showed that Alliance perceived the PAP as a junior political party that had no right to be involved in matters outside Singapore.
- Alliance won the elections, but with significant setbacks in a few key places like Selangor. The largely Chinese opposition Democratic Action Party and Gerakan gained in the elections. The general mood was one of disappointment: the Malays felt that the Chinese and Indians appeared to be moving away from Alliance, and the Chinese and Indians felt that the Malays had won.
- On 12 May, a Chinese group in KL celebrating DAP's success in the elections, detoured through a Malay neighbourhood to taunt the residents. In retaliation, a furious UMNO Youth organised its own victory parade the next day, and a rumour spread that Malays proceeding to the parade had been attacked by Chinese. As Malay anger grew, two passing Chinese motorcyclists were set upon and killed.
- At least eight Chinese were killed and within 45 minutes fast-spreading riots forced the Tunku to clamp a 24-hour curfew on the capital. The riots continued for weeks and claimed 196 lives according to official figures although Western diplomatic

sources at the time suggested a toll of close to 600, with most of the victims Chinese.

- The government immediately declared a state of emergency under a committee composed of military and civilian leaders called the National Operations Council (NOC) and took firm action to end the violence, which it did by July.
- Parliament was suspended in the interim, not to be reopened until 1971, and when it did, Malaysia became a subtly but profoundly different state under the “New Economic Policy” (NEP).
- **Successful representative politics also escaped the hands of the Malaysian government. Although her political framework remained democratic in nature after 1969, it had become a far more authoritarian state.**

6. Case Study 5: Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)

S Vietnam serves as an exceptional case study due to the following reasons:

- *Only artificial state that was created as a result of the decolonisation process (i.e. First Vietnam War) and US involvement, rather than the local nationalists. Hence its creation was more attributed to external developments rather than internal conditions.*
- *As a result of the above, its constitutional development from the start was unstable and ineffective. Democracy never had a chance to be established in the country due to the role of an ambitious leader, Ngo Dinh Diem.*
- *It was also embroiled in a civil war with N Vietnam (i.e. Second Vietnam War).*
- *Eventually, only state to cease to exist after they have lost to N Vietnam after US withdrawal from the region.*

Therefore, S Vietnamese government can be said to have failed at the consolidation of power, starting from its very inception to its demise

6.1 Impact of decolonisation on the establishment of S Vietnam

- The State of Vietnam was created through **co-operation between anti-communist Vietnamese and the French government** on June 14 1949 during the First Vietnam War, and Bao Dai took up the position of Chief of State, with **Ngo Dinh Diem** as the Prime Minister.
 - This was known as the 'Bao Dai Solution', and was an attempt by the French to grant partial independence to Vietnam, while still retaining substantial control over the country, and keeping it from communist rule. Such a formulation was rejected by Ho Chi Minh.
 - In 1954 it was determined by the Geneva Conference that the State of Vietnam would rule the territory of Vietnam south of the 17th parallel, pending unification on the basis of supervised elections

- Known as Republic of Vietnam from 1955 – 75 and Republic of South Vietnam from 1975 – 76.

6.2 Role of government leaders and uncertain constitutional devt of S Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem regime, 1955 – 1963

- Diem very quickly seized power for himself. In **1955**, Diem fraudulently got Bao Dai voted from power, and made South Vietnam a republic with him as President.
 - The USA readily supported him as he was known to be fervently anti-Communist.
- Diem ruled South Vietnam as a despot, and before long, confidence in his leadership started to plummet.
 - He unleashed a 'mopping up campaign', using emergency powers and vague definitions of espionage and treason to carry out arbitrary arrests of his political rivals, even non-Communist ones.
 - Censorship was imposed on the press, more severe than during French colonial rule. **By 1957, Diem's state had become a "quasi-police state".**
- Diem was also nepotistic and bigoted. His family was Roman-Catholic, and he promoted Roman Catholic interests while adopting anti-Buddhist policies. He appointed members of his own family and Roman Catholics to high positions, and ignored Buddhist sensitivities.
 - As Buddhist monks led protests against Diem, he responded with overwhelming violence against the largely unarmed protesters. When he sent elite forces to raid Buddhist temples, hundreds of people were killed in the process.
- Diem also misused the military.
 - They were not being deployed against the worsening attacks of the South Vietnamese Communists.

- Instead, military commanders, including Diem's own brother, were using their soldiers as their own private armies to eliminate their rivals and carve up territories or their own to enrich themselves.
 - Up to the end of the South Vietnam state in 1975, this remained a fact of life for any South Vietnam leader trying to repel North Vietnam's invasion: the South Vietnamese military was less a professional force and more the 'muscle' for what were really local gang leaders.
- In such an environment, it was not surprising that the Communist guerrillas, called the 'Viet Cong' by the South Vietnamese newspapers, not only survived but enjoyed a ready supply of recruits who were always given a reason to resent their own government.
 - It also gave the North Vietnam government a reason to send their military into the south to help their southern comrades.
 - **Analysis:** This is hence the only case study where the state was not able to suppress centrifugal threats even after transitioning to an authoritarian government.
- The military started to plot against Diem, largely because of his nepotism and their lack of career prospects if they were Buddhist.
 - On **1 Nov 1963**, Diem and his brother were arrested and then assassinated by the military.
- Subsequently, South Vietnamese governments, mostly led by the military, came and went frequently.
 - **Nguyen Ngoc Tho** government: civilian figureheads directed by military generals who deposed Diem. Lasted **86 days**.
 - **General Nguyen Khanh** government: military with some Buddhist leaders. Lasted **260 days**.
 - **Tran Van Huong** government: civilian figurehead directed by military junta. Lasted **84 days**.

- **Nguyen Xuan Oanh** government: civilian with very heavy military participation. Lasted **19 days**.
- **Phan Huy Quat** government: transitional government. Lasted **112 days**.
- **Nguyen Cao Ky – Nguyen Van Thieu** government: military rule. Lasted till the fall of Saigon in **1975**, but had to reshuffle its government several times.
- There were several **reasons for the instability of South Vietnamese governments**. These included:
 - The elite class tended to be sharply divided in terms of their beliefs: e.g., capitalist, pro-French, pro-US, pro-Communist, Confucianist, Buddhist, Christian.
 - As a result, the military dominated South Vietnam's political system.
 - This weakened the ruling government's popularity because the population was Confucianist and distrusted the military.
 - During the French period, members of the military had fought with the French against the Vietnamese people: e.g., all the military leaders after Diem.
 - In contrast, nationalist leaders in the North were widely respected for fighting for the people against the French.
 - Due to their unpopularity, South Vietnam's leaders were heavily dependent on U.S. support and sponsorship to obtain power and to stay in power, weakening their prestige in the eyes of the people.
- **Hence democracy never had a chance to take off in S Vietnam, due to the circumstances leading to its formation as well as the role of Ngo Dinh Diem.**