

Political Reform in Thailand: Part I

From King Chulalongkorn's Transformation to September 2006 Coup d'état

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Abstract

This article surveys key political reform in Thailand. It began with the discussion of political reform during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, followed by the revolution in June 1932. Various political reforms supported by educational reform brought Thailand into a participatory democracy that is still seeking for a more transparent, effective and efficient government as well as a new system of check and balance of power for a new political order.

Keywords : coup d'état, democracy, constitution, military rule, parliament, political consolidation

A discussion of context is necessary to understand political reform in Thailand. The first Kingdom of this country was the Kingdom of Sukhothai (1238-1438). According to Rong Syamananda (1986) in the late fourteenth century, the Kingdom of Sukhothai began to decline while the Kingdom of Ayutthaya (1350-1767) was rising. The first political reform in this Kingdom was known as the reform of King Baromtraiokanart (1448-1485). After the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, the Kingdom of Thonburi existed for only fifteen years from 1767-1782. The capital was moved from Ayutthaya to Thon Buri, and then to Bangkok in 1782, and the new era of Rattanakosin began. The Bowring Treaty of 1855 was a treaty

of friendship and commerce between Siam and Great Britain and contributed to the transformation of Siam into a modern, nation state and led to another political reform of King Chulalongkorn in 1892 with a reorganization of bureaucratic structure (Riggs, 1966 : 117). The June 1932 revolution marked the transition of Thai politics from absolute monarchy to a modern era of democratic rule with the King as Head of State which would, through the consecutive stages of semi-democracy and representative democracy, lead to the model of participatory democracy.

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THAI POLITICS

According to Scruton (1982), political reform is “a process of political change within the framework of a constitution. The net result of continuous reform may be a change of constitution, but the essential feature is the absence of challenge to the received political process” (Scruton, 1982, p. 397).

Recent political reform in Thailand under the framework of the new constitution had three goals, namely: to support and protect the rights of the Thai people, to introduce transparency and responsibility to government, and to hold politicians accountable for their action.

has had a new official name “Thailand” since May 11, 1949. The Kingdom of Sukhothai, ruled by Phra Ruang Dynasty, comprised of eight kings. The most famous king was King Ramkhamhaeng the Great who ruled from 1279-1298 (Rong Syamananda 1986, p.29). During the reign of King Ramkhamhaeng, the Thai alphabet was invented as appeared in the Stone Inscription, and the administrative structure was that of the father and child relationship. After the reign of King Ramkhamhaeng, the power of the Sukhothai Kingdom began to decline. In the middle of the fourteenth century, the Kingdom of Ayutthaya was rising. After his accession to the throne, King Ramatibodi I (1350-1369) created the departments of metropolitan affairs, palace affairs, treasury, and cultural affairs to administer the affairs of the Kingdom (Rong Syamananda, 1986, p.33).

The first political reform was known as the Political Reform of King Baromtrailokanart or King Trilok (1448-1488). The reform took place on two levels,

namely the national level and the provincial levels (Siffin, 1966, p.22). Within the national level administrative distinction was made between the military affairs and the civil affairs. Under the Great Minister of Defense were the four military divisions of elephant, horse, land and engineer soldier. While under the Great Minister of the Civilian Affairs were Four Ministers of Metropolitan Affairs, Palace Affairs, Treasury and Agricultural Affairs. The King was the sovereign of the Kingdom and was assisted by these two great ministers (Likhit Dhiravegin, 1992, pp.22-24). In terms of provincial administrative reform, the Kingdom was reorganized into the capital, the cities, and the vassal states. The capital was the center, the cities were classified into inner cities and outer cities, and the vassal states were states situated most far away from the capital (Riggs, 1966, p.83). King Baromtrailokanart also reorganized the social system. To establish unity and stability he outlined the rank, duties, and privileges of every official and common man. The political reform of King Baromtrailokanart served as the basic polity for Siam for over four centuries. Though slight changes were made from time to time, this structure held true until early Rattanakosin period (Siffin, 1966, p.20).

During the reign of King Ramathibodi II (1491-1529), Westerners began to come to Ayutthaya (Rong Syamananda, 1986, p.41). They came for trade, political, and missionary purposes. Ayutthaya learned about the western world, thus it was the beginning of the process of globalization in Siam. During the Reign of King Mahin (1569), the Burmese attacked Ayutthaya and the Kingdom fell for the first time in 1569. Prince Naresuan proclaimed the independence in 1584, ascended to the throne in 1590 and became King Naresuan the Great.

Another famous King of Ayutthaya was King Narai the Great (1656-1688) who granted permission for missionaries to preach their religion, and sent four missions to France. Only the second and the third mission achieved some results. After the reign of King Narai the Great, Ayutthaya was ruled by another six kings. In 1767, Ayutthaya was attacked by the Burmese leading to the collapse of the Ayutthaya Kingdom. (Terwiel, 2011, pp. 57-58).

During the reign at King Taksin (1767-1782) independence was declared and the capital was moved from Ayutthaya to Thonburi. King Rama I (1782-1809)

established the Chakri Dynasty and the capital was moved from Thonburi to Bangkok (Riggs, 1996, p. 49). During the reigns of the first four kings of the Chakri Dynasty, the political system was similar to that of Ayutthaya. During the reign of King Mongkut (1851-1868) the Bowring Treaty was signed with Great Britain in 1855. This treaty transformed Siam into a modern nation-state with political reform on the horizon (Siffin, 1966, p. 48).

2. POLITICAL REFORM OF KING CHULALONGKORN AND THE AFTERMATH (1892-1932)

During the reign of King Chulalongkorn or King Rama V (1868-1910) political reform continued on from what had been started in the reign of King Mongkut (Terwiel, 2011, pp. 206-207). Various programs in political reform included the abolition of outdated political culture, the creation of modern bureaucracy and military organization, the centralization of administrative power, financial reform, judicial reform and educational reform. The political reform resulted in the creation of a modern nation-state, centralization of power, the emergence of a national bureaucracy, and a new system of education (Rong Syamananda, 1986, p. 145).

One of the most important reforms in the reign of King Chulalongkorn was educational reform. The Department of Education was established in 1888 and this was upgraded to the status of the Ministry of Education in 1892. Modern schools were built for students so that they would not have to study in temples or their houses any longer. Phranakhon Teacher Training School was established in 1892, and Ban Somdejchaopraya Training School in 1896 for training teachers in Bangkok and its surrounding provinces.

During the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the first three National Education Schemes were promulgated. The First National Education Scheme of 1898 provided education for students in the capital and in the provinces. The Second National Education Scheme reshaped education into general education and technical education and the Third National Education Scheme stipulated the school age for students. After the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the foundation of modern education system in Siam had been firmly established.

King Vajiravudh or King Rama VI (1920-1925) was the first King of Siam to be educated in England. The new king had accomplished many works that contributed to the development of Thai Education. Chulalongkorn University was established in 1917, and the Primary Education Act was promulgated in 1921. During the reign of King Vajiravudh, six more teacher training schools emerged. Thepsatri Teacher Training School was established in 1920, Nakhon Sawan in 1922, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Udon Thani concurrently in 1923, Chiang Mai in 1924, and Maha Sarakham in 1925 (Department of Teacher Education, 1992: 97). Three more National Education Schemes were proclaimed. The National Education Scheme of 1913 extended primary education from 3 years to 5 years. The National Education Scheme of 1915 provided equal opportunities in education for male and female students. The National Education Scheme of 1921 classified schools into government and private schools. After the reign of King Vajiravudh, all levels of education from primary, secondary to tertiary education were well organized in the Kingdom of Siam.

King Prajadhipok or King Rama VII (1925-1935) was the younger brother of King Vajiravudh. Political reform in Siam began to plan for constitutional monarch government. Prior to the June 1932 revolution, two more teacher training schools were established. Phetchaburi Teacher Training School was built in 1927, and Phetchaburi Wittayalalongkorn Teacher Training School in 1932 (now become Valaya Alongkorn Rajabhat University) respectively.

Summary

The consequence of the Bowring Treaty of 1855 was that it brought about the transformation of Siam into a modern nation-state as well as preparing the social context for political and educational reform in the kingdom. The political reform during this era resulted in the creation of the national bureaucracy, the centralization of administrative power, and the establishment of the modern educational system. The new Ministry of Education was established in 1892 and compulsory education was introduced. New schools were built for students both in the capital and in the provinces, so that students did not have to study in temples or their houses any longer. During this era, beside the creation of the first university

in Thailand, a total of ten teacher training schools were established throughout the kingdom. The first three national education schemes proclaimed during the reign of King Chulalongkorn resulted in providing education for people both in the capital and in the provinces, and in setting school age for children. Another three national education schemes announced in the reign of King Vajiravudh resulted in providing equal opportunities in education for boys and girls, and giving students the choice to attend either government or private schools. National education schemes were necessary at that time because each scheme was compulsory, being of royal command. The achievement of the reforms made during this era were a consequence of great leadership skills from all three kings who were highly devoted, dedicated and sincere in their efforts to push educational reform which would, in turn affect political reform.

3. POLITICAL REFORM AFTER JUNE 1932 REVOLUTION (1932-1957)

3.1 *The June 1932 Revolution*

In the reign of King Rama VII (1925-1935), a group of military personnel led by Major Pibulsongkram (who was promoted to the rank of Filed Marshal in July 1941) and civil government officials led by Dr. Pridi Banomyong staged a revolution to replace absolute monarchy with a constitutional monarch on June 24, 1932 (Wyatt, 1984, p. 241). The revolutionary group called themselves the People's Party and proclaimed their intention to promote freedom, liberty and equality for all, to maintain national peace and order, to introduce an economic plan and provide jobs for all citizens, and to provide education for all (Thak Chaloemtiarana, 1979, p. 2).

The provisional constitution was hastily drafted and it was promulgated on June 27, 1932. This provisional constitution was the first constitution of Siam. It declared that the political sovereignty was to rest within all people. The People's Assembly was to have political authority and was to be composed of 70 persons who were initially appointed. After 10 years it would be elected. The People's Committee was the executive body and were to be elected by the People's

Assembly. The Court system was an independent judicial institution, making decisions based on Thai laws (Riggs, 1966, pp. 153-159).

3.2 The Political Reform of the First Ruling Circle (1932-1944)

The prominent figures of the first ruling class consisted of Phraya Manopakorn Nititada, the first Prime Minister (June 28, 1932-June 20, 1933), Phraya Phahon Phonphayuhasena, Prime Minister (June 21, 1933-December 16, 1938), and Field Marshal Pibulsongkram, Prime Minister (December 16, 1938-August 1, 1944) (Chaowana Trimas, 1998, p. 19).

the June 1932 Revolution, the People's Party through the Military Controllers set up the National Assembly as the legislative body. The National Assembly elected the People's Committee as the executive body. They allowed the Court of Justice to make judicial decisions in accordance with the law (Riggs, 1966, pp.153-159). The Provisional National Assembly also set up a committee to draft a permanent constitution which was proclaimed on December 10, 1932. The permanent constitution which was the second constitution of Siam declared the following : that the king was a constitutional monarch. Equality of all people before the law. A single legislative body known as the People's Assembly to be elected by the people. A Prime Minister and his cabinet were appointed by the king. The Council of Ministers must gain the confidence from the People's Assembly while administering state affairs and the court would serve as the judicial body (Riggs, 1966, pp.159-162). The second constitution of December 1932 indicated that the Prime Minister was appointed by the king. The first Prime Minister, Phraya Manopakorn Nitithada, was ousted by another coup on June 20, 1933, several political conflict occurred on numerous occasions (Wyatt, 1984, pp. 246-248). Eventually, King Prajadhipok went abroad and decided to abdicate on May 2, 1935 (Rong Syamananda, 1986, p. 166).

The June 1932 revolution brought about the military domination in politics which would last for the next forty years. This began with Phraya Phahon who took office in June 1933 and ended with the fall of Field Marshall Thanom Kittikachorn in October of 1973. Field Marshal Pibulsongkram came into power in 1938, following the resignation of Phraya Phahon in December of that year. The

struggle for power existed between military leadership under Field Marshal Pibulsongkram, and civilian leadership under Dr. Pridi Banomyong. This power struggle came to the most exciting moment when parliament refused to pass a bill which would move the capital from Bangkok to Phetchabun in June 1944. Field Marshal Pibulsongkram resigned and thus the first ruling circle which consisted of Phraya Mano, Phraya Phahon, and Field Marshal Pibulsongkram came to an end after being in power from 1932-1944 (Riggs, 1966, p. 232).

The first ruling circle proclaimed two national education schemes in 1933 and 1936. Phraya Manopakorn's government announced the 1933 National Education Scheme in March 1933. This scheme reduced primary education from 5 years to 4 years. The People's Party expected that education would contribute to the progress of a constitutional regime. Three years after, Phraya Phahon's government announced the 1936 National Education Scheme near the end of 1936. This scheme intended to improve educational planning by dividing education into general education and vocational education.

3.3 Political Reform of the Second Ruling Circle (1944-1947)

The second ruling circle consisted of Khuang Abhaiwongse, Prime Minister (August 1, 1944-August 31, 1945 and January 31, 1946-March 24, 1946), Tawee Bunyaket, Prime Minister (August 31, 1945-September 17, 1945), M.R.Seni Pramoj, Prime Minister (September 17, 1945-January 31, 1946), Dr. Pridi Banomyong, Prime Minister (March 24, 1946 – August 23, 1946) and Rear Admiral Thawal Thamrong-natasawat, Prime Minister (August 23, 1946-November 8, 1947) (Chaowana Traimas, 1998, p. 20).

Most of them were Seri Thai Movement members during the Second World War. Khuang Abhaiwongse became Prime Minister on August 1, 1944 and resigned after the defeat of Japan on August 16, 1945. Dr. Pridi, as the Regent invited M.R. Seni Pramoj to take place as Prime Minister. As M.R. Seni was Thai Ambassador to the United States in Washington, D.C. at the time of this invitation, Tawee Boonyaket served as Prime Minister for seventeen days until M.R. Seni returned to Thailand. In December of that year King Ananda Mahidol reached the age of 21

and returned to Thailand from his studies abroad. The regency was dissolved and Dr. Pridi became the Elder Statesman (Thak Chaloemtiarana, 1979, p. 10). M.R. Seni Pramoj who became Prime Minister since September 19, 1945, was instrumental in negotiating and signing an agreement with the Allied Powers following the Second World War. However, after the general election held on January 6, 1946, he resigned as Prime Minister.

Khuang was able to get enough support from the People's Assembly henceforth became Prime Minister on January 31, 1946. His government lasted for only a few months. There was a struggle for power between himself and Dr. Pridi. In the end Dr. Pridi controlled more seats in the People's Assembly. Khuang eventually resigned as Prime Minister in March 1946 (Riggs, 1966, p. 235). Following his resignation, Khuang formed the Democrat Party which would play an important role in Thai politics over the next several decades. On March 24, 1946 Dr. Pridi became Prime Minister of Siam. This was achieved through the support of the Constitution Front and the Co-operation Party. During his time in office the third constitution was promulgated on May 10, 1946. This third constitution provided a bicameral parliament made of an elected House of Representatives and an indirectly elected Senate. This new senate was made up of 80 members named by the House of Representatives (Riggs, 1966, p. 164). Membership into the Senate was restricted to those persons with special qualifications based on both age and education. The Senate has the duty to provide consideration on legislation and give advice pertaining to the conduct of the government. The cabinet was created to hold anywhere from ten to eighteen members (Wilson 1962, p. 207).

Dr. Pridi dominated both in the House and in the Senate, however his popularity began to decline after the incident of alleged assassination of King Ananda on June 9, 1946 (Terwiel, 2011, p. 276). Discussion in the House and Senate concerning the confidence in the government became quite heated. It was too much for Dr. Pridi who decided to retire from office on August 23, 1946 for medical reasons. Rear Admiral Thawal Thamrong-navasawat took over as Prime Minister. His cabinet was ousted by an army coup on November 8, 1947. This ended the second ruling circle and resulted in Dr. Pridi going into exile in Singapore (Riggs, 1966, p. 236). The major political reform of the second ruling circle included the

third constitution with a bicameral parliament, senators that were elected by the members of the House of Representatives, democracy was normalized, and international respectability came to being.

3.4 Political Reform of the Third Ruling Circle (1947-1957)

The prominent players in the third ruling circle of Thai politicians were Khuang Abhaiwongse, Prime Minister (November 10, 1947-April 8, 1948), Field Marshal Pibulsongkram, Prime Minister (April 8, 1948-September 16, 1957) (Chaowana Traimas, 1998, p. 20). They started the political forum by coup d'etat on November 8, 1947, claiming that Rear Admiral Thawal and his government were corrupted and also inefficient.

The fourth provisional constitution was promulgated on November 9, 1947. With this fourth constitution, the Supreme State Council to advise the King on state affairs was established. A new upper house was created, its members had to be appointed by the King. Members of the House of Representatives were to be re-elected based on a multi – member constituency. A new general election was set on January 29, 1948 (Riggs, 1966, p. 165).

The feeling in Thai society was that it was much too soon to have an army leader as Prime Minister. Therefore, Khuang was invited to form a provisional government. A cabinet was formed on November 10, 1947 and general election took place on January 29, 1948. The new parliament met on February 19, 1948 and Khuang's new civilian government came into being on February 21, 1948. It was apparent to the military that they could not control Khuang's government as they wanted. Feeling threatened by this, they forced Khuang to leave office on April 6, 1948 (Riggs, 1966, p. 165). After Khuang's resignation, Field Marshal Pibulsongkram once again returned to political leadership. He became Prime Minister and formed his cabinet within two days of Khuang's resignation. The parliament which was created during Khuang's term challenged Field Marshal Pibulsongkram's government with much hostility. Besides from 1948-1951, Field Marshal Pibulsongkram was challenged by three separate rebellions namely the General Staff Rebellion on October 1, 1948, followed by the Palace rebellion on February 3, 1949, and the Manhattan Rebellion on June 29, 1951 (Riggs, 1966, p. 238). These

rebellions resulted in eliminating several military officers and the murder of four former ministers who supported Dr. Pridi (Thak Chaloemtiarana, 1979, p. 49).

Despite the violence of the political situation, the fifth constitution was promulgated on March 23, 1949. This constitution reverted to the basic framework of the 1946 constitution. It provided the retainment of a bicameral legislature and the continuation of office for members of both the House and the Senate. However the constituency size for elections was reduced from 200,000 to 150,000. Another election was to be held on June 15, 1949 (Riggs, 1966, pp. 165-166). A new cabinet was formed after the general election in an effort to give legitimacy to Field Marshal Pibulsongkram's government. Two years after the promulgation of the fifth constitution, the third ruling circle under the government of Field Marshal Pibulsongkram proclaimed the 1951 National Education Scheme in 1951. This scheme intended to provide education for every child as much as possible so that they could earn a living, become good member and render service in a democratic community.

The Radio or Silent Coup on November 29, 1951 marked the end of the fifth constitution of 1949 and the reinstatement of the 1932 permanent constitution from December 6, 1951 to March 8, 1952. The bicameral legislature was wiped away thus restoring the unicameral legislature. The appointive members were appointed promptly, while the elective members were to be elected on February 26, 1952. Field Marshal Pibulsongkram formed his fifth cabinet (November 29, 1951 – December 6, 1951) to mark this political transition. A significant change took place on December 6, 1951, when Field Marshal Pibulsongkram announced his sixth cabinet (December 6, 1951 – March 23, 1952) which included Field Marshal Phin Choonhavan, Police General Phao Sriyanonda and General Sarit Dhanarajata in the cabinet. At a later time, General Sarit Dhanarajata was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal in January 1956.

The appointive and elective members of the unicameral passed the sixth constitution on March 8, 1952. which was a revision of the 1932 permanent constitution. This constitution provided that the unicameral legislature was restored. The Council of Ministers had the power to dissolve the National Assembly. To carry

out the administration of state affairs, the Council of Ministers had to retain confidence from the National Assembly. On March 24, 1952, Field Marshal Pibulsongkram formed his seventh cabinet according to the provision of the sixth constitution (Riggs, 1966, p. 239), and the authoritarian triumvirate consisting of Field Marshal Pibulsongkram, Field Marshal Sarit Dhanarajata and Police General Phao Sriyanonda controlled the cabinet and the National Assembly until the general election on February 26, 1957.

The general election of February 1957 was plagued with scandal and tales of corruption. The tactics and intimidation used in this election caused public discontent. Nevertheless, Field Marshal Pibulsongkram won the election and formed a new government. His legitimacy caused a series of demonstrations and protests by students and intellectuals. His popularity dropped while Field Marshal Sarit won more support from the military and the people. Field Marshal Sarit eventually staged a coup on September 17, 1957 which resulted in Field Marshal Pibulsongkram fleeing into exile in Japan. Police General Phao Sriyamon fled to Switzerland (Thak Chaloemtiarana, 1979, pp.153-154). The triumvirate and the third ruling circle ceased to exist.

From June 1932 revolution to 1957 coup d'état, 14 more teacher training schools were created throughout the kingdom. Songkhla Teacher Training Schools were established in 1934, Suan Dusit (1934), Yala (1934), Nakhon Pathom (1936), Phranakhon Si Ayutthaya (1936), Uttaradit (1936), Suan Sunandha (1937), Chandrakasem (1940), Chachoeng Sao (1940), Pibulsongkram (1943), Ubon Ratchathani (1947), Dhonburi (1948), Muban Chom Bueng (1954), and Nahhon Si Thammarat (1957) respectively. These teacher training schools could supply more teachers for the rural areas.

Thammasat University was established in 1934, while Kasetsart University, University of Medical Science, and Silapakorn University were established in 1943 concurrently. The National Education Scheme of 1951 encouraged students to study as much as possible up until tertiary education level. However, all universities still had the emphasis on creating new civil service officials for the expanding bureaucracy.

3.5 Summary

The revolutionary government in 1932 believed that education would contribute to the progress of the constitutional regime. Education programs had been developed at all levels. The 1933 National Education Scheme resulted in the expansion of primary and secondary schools into the provinces. The 1936 National Education Scheme improved the educational planning through the division of education into general education and vocational education. After the June 1932 revolution, the military dominated over politics from the first ruling circle to the third ruling circle. The end of the third ruling circle would lead to the centralization of administrative power and dictatorship in Thai politics.

4. POLITICAL REFORM AFTER SEPTEMBER 1957 COUP D'ÉTAT (1957-1973)

4.1 *Despotic Paternalism of Field Marshal Sarit Dhanarajata (1958-1963)*

Following the 1957 coup, Field Marshal Sarit Dhanarajata reinstated the permanent constitution of 1932. He did away with the legislature and set the general election on December 15, 1957. Meanwhile, Pote Sarasin was appointed provisional Prime Minister from September 20, 1957 to December 26, 1957 (Riggs, 1966, pp. 166-167). The outcome of the general election indicated that the Independents gained 69 seats, Unionists gained 40 seats, 39 seats went to the Democrats, followed by 12 seats for Social Front (Riggs, 1966, p. 171). General Thanom Kittikachorn formed his cabinet from the Independents and Unionists and became Prime Minister from January 1, 1958 to October 20, 1958. His government faced the problems of factions within the government and the legislature coupled with the attack concerning the budget for the upcoming fiscal year. On his return from abroad, Field Marshal Sarit was so outraged about the political situation that he staged another coup on October 19, 1958, which was the beginning of despotic paternalism.

According to Thak Chaloemtiarana (1979) “despotic” means ‘repressive and inflexible actions which are made purely to perpetuate one’s own political legitimacy.’ While “paternalism” is the idea of the relationship of a father knowing best for his children (Thak Chaloemtiarana, 1979, pp.160-161). Following the 1958 coup, Field Marshal Sarit abolished the constitution, dissolved the National Assembly, banned political parties, closed down newspapers, arrested communist sympathizers and hooligans, cracked down on labor unions, and prohibited political gatherings to no more than five people. He ruled as leader of the Revolutionary Party until he presented the seventh constitution on January 28, 1959 and took office as Prime Minister on February 9, 1959 (Wyatt, 1984, pp. 280-281).

The seventh constitution of 1959 had 20 sections. Some important sections indicated that the Constitutional Assembly would consist of 240 members appointed by the King. It would be their function to draft a constitution and to act as the National Assembly. Before the cabinet was formed, the leader of the Revolutionary Party would discharge duties of the Prime Minister and the cabinet. Section 17 indicated that the Prime Minister with the resolution of the cabinet, had the authority to repress or suppress any actions that endangered the national security. The order or step to uphold national security would be deemed legal (Wilson, 1962, p. 288). This section was the backbone of despotic paternalism during his time in office.

Field Marshal Sarit political principles centered around stability, order, strong executive leadership, popular will, and national development (Thak Chaloemtiarana, 1979, pp. 160-161). In 1959, he established the Budget Bureau, National Education Council, National Economic Development Board, National Research Council, National Security Council, Office of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and Department of Community Development.

In 1960, the 1960 National Education Scheme was launched. It aimed at increasing compulsory education from 4 years to 7 years and the expansion of secondary education. This was followed by the proclamation of the First National Education Development Plan (1961-1966) which focused on the establishment of universities in the provinces and acceleration of educational development. During

this period, there was a resolution of the cabinet to establish a new teacher's college in Sakon Nakhon and three regional universities in Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, and Songkhla respectively. Unfortunately, he did not live long enough to see the full implementation of the Education Development Plan. He died on December 8, 1963, at the age of 55 (Rong Syamananda 1986, p.182). Upon his death, there were rumors of his insatiable sex drive and corruption. These rumors were heightened when it came to light that state funds of \$US29,000,000 had become entangled within funds of his private estate (Wilson, 1965, p.109).

4.2 Political Reform of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn (1963-1973)

After the death of Field Marshal Sarit, General Thanom Kittikachorn became the new prime Minister. He insisted on continuing the system of government by maintaining a strong executive supremacy over the legislature, commitment to economic and social development, and pursuing close relationship with the United States of America and SEATO for security reasons. In January 1964, General Thanom was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal. He was able to control the government and dominate the political structure comfortably (Neuchterlein, 1966, p.119).

The Second National Education Development Plan (1967-1971) was launched in 1967. this plan concentrated on the development of manpower and widening the scope of teacher education. Toward the end of this plan, three teacher colleges were established in Phuket, Lampang, and Buriram. Field Marshal Thanom contributed to the advocation of political reform by promulgating a new constitution on June 20, 1968. This Constitution, which was the eighth constitution of Thailand, provided a bicameral parliament with an elected House of Representatives and appointed Senate, strong power to the executive branch, protecting civil liberties, neither the Prime Minister nor the ministers were required to come from the elected members of the House, and the cabinet could be removed by the vote of no confidence passed at a joint sitting of both the House and the Senate (Darling, 1969, p. 118).

A general election was held on February 10, 1969. The United Thai People's Party won 75 seats, the Democrats gained 56 seats and the Independents

gained 72 seats. Field Marshal Thanom became the Prime Minister for the third time from March 7, 1969 to November 17, 1971. The new legislature attempted to block the budget bills, while terrorism and the war in Indochina became a critical concern for the government. Thus on November 17, 1971, Field Marshal Thanom staged another coup d'état (Rong Syamananda, 1986, p. 183). The November 1971 coup once again hindering political reform in Thailand.

Following the 1971 coup, Field Marshal Thanom ruled Thailand without a constitution. He ruled for over one year as the Chairman of the National Executive Council. Finally, on December 15, 1972, the ninth constitution which was the interim constitution was promulgated. It contains only 23 sections. This constitution provided that the unicameral legislature consisted of 299 appointed members who had the legislative power and the duty to draft a new constitution. The Prime Minister, with the resolution of the cabinet, was empowered to issue orders or take steps to prevent or suppress actions which jeopardized the national security, or threatened public peace and order (Morell, 1973, p. 176).

In the following year, the Third National Education Development Plan (1972-1976) was launched. This plan concentrated on raising the quality of tertiary education and the production of teachers to meet the demand in rural schools. During his fourth term as Prime Minister, Field Marshal Thanom was unable to solve the economic and social problems, as well as not able to handle the political change within the country. The middle class felt depressed and were thirsty for a new liberal and constitutional government. By October 1973, the middle class, especially intellectuals and students, were ready to take risk by demanding new constitution from the regime. This event led to an uprising that brought down Field Marshal Thanom and his regime.

It should be noted that the National Education Schemes of 1960 and the First National Education Development Plan (1961-1966) resulted in the expansion of primary and secondary education, as well as the establishment of three regional universities in the provinces. The Second and Third National Education Development Plans resulted in accelerating development of human resources, raising the quality of tertiary education and widening the scope of teacher education. During this

period, 12 new teacher colleges namely Sakon Nakhon Teacher College (1964), Phuket (1971), Lampang (1971), Buriram (1971), Rambhaibarni (1972), Surin (1973), Surat Thani (1973), Loei (1973), Kamphaeng Phet (1973), Chiang Rai (1973), Kanchanaburi (1973), and Phetchabun (1973) were established in the provinces to meet the demand of teachers in rural schools, marking a total of 36 teacher colleges operating all over the kingdom in the northern region (8), the north-east (8), central (5), Bangkok (6), the west (4), and the south (5) effectively.

4.3 Summary

Prime Ministers during this period included Pote Sarasin, Prime Minister (September 21, 1957-December 26, 1957), Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn Prime Minister (January 1, 1958-October 20, 1958 and December 9, 1963-October 14, 1973) and Field Marshal Sarit Dhanarajata, Prime Minister (February 9, 1959-December 8, 1963). After the September 1957 coup d'etat, Field Marshal Sarit Dhanarajata brought about the new system in education administration and management. In 1959, he established the National Education Council to serve as an advisory and coordinating agency for education development, as well as proposing education policy and plans to the cabinet for decision making. Pote Sarasin was a provisional Prime Minister. Field Marshal Sarit insisted on stability, order, economic development and despotic paternalism. While Field Marshal Thanom maintained a constitutional government with a strong executive supremacy over the legislature. After the 1971 coup d'état, Field Marshal Thanom remained in power until the student uprising in October 1973.

5. POLITICAL REFORM AFTER THE OCTOBER 1973 STUDENT UPRISING (1973-1992)

5.1 *The October 1973 Student Uprising*

Demand to participate in politics to get a new constitutional government was increasing among the Thai people after the coup d'état in November 1971. Among them were a group of university students who were unwilling to be passive in gaining political voice in their country. They had liberal ideas and wanted

a democratic political system. They organized themselves and became the National Student Center of Thailand. With the support of lawyers, politicians, intellectuals, etc., they played important roles in reforming political system in Thailand (Race, 1974, pp.195-197). One of the first actions that the group participated in was a demonstration at Ramkhamhaeng University demanding the university reinstate students who were expelled for writing articles that criticized the government. Finally, Field Marshal Thanom's government complied. In October 1973, twenty members of the Constitution Group passed out leaflets in front of Thammasat University demanding a new constitution, and thirteen of them were arrested. The National Student Center of Thailand organized demonstrations calling for the release of the thirteen and the promulgation of a new constitution. Field Marshal Thanom's government also complied. However, there were student demonstrations until the morning of October 14, 1973. While students were dispersing, clashes with the police occurred, the violence expanded rapidly and the government called in troops to suppress the rioting which resulted in a large number of deaths and casualties. Field Marshal Thanom resigned and went into exile in the United States. Professor Sanya Dharmasakti was appointed as the new Prime Minister (Morell & Samudavanija, 1981, p. 69).

5.2 The Political Reform under the Civilian Leadership (1973-1976)

A number of political reforms were carried out under Prime Minister Sanya Dharmasakti such as creating the National Assembly, drafting a new constitution, holding a general election, conducting the Democracy Propagation Program, as well as initiating anti-corruption measures within the government. His political reform was another stepping stone for political development toward democracy in Thailand.

The Constitution of 1974, which was the tenth constitution of Thailand, was promulgated on October 7, 1974. This constitution provided for a bicameral parliament consisting of 240-300 members elected in the House of Representatives, and 100 members appointed in the Senate. The members of the House of Representatives, Senators, as well as the cabinet might not be military or civilian

bureaucrats and were required to declare their assets and liabilities to the President of the National Assembly. The cabinet had to resign if it did not pass the vote of confidence in the House of Representative. The constitution included other requirements which were of a more democratic perspective than previous ones.

A general election took place on January 26, 1975. The Democrat Party had the most seats in the House, thus M.R. Seni Pramoj was selected as Prime Minister, but his coalition government failed to gain the confidence of the House, thus M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, his younger brother, formed another coalition government and became the new Prime Minister in March 1975 (Zimmerman, 1976, pp.163-164). The Government of M.R. Kukrit carried out several measures in political reform such as decentralization in government and administration, passed land reform law, and adopted liberal foreign policy. The armed forces compelled M.R. Kukrit to resign, thus, he determined to dissolve the House and set the general election on April 14, 1976. The general election in April 1976 resulted in victory for the Democrat Party and the defeat of the Leftist and Socialist parties. M.R. Seni once again formed another coalition government and became the Prime Minister on April 20, 1976 (Darling, 1977, pp.121-122).

5.3 The October 1976 Coup d'état

M.R. Seni's government came to power facing many problems beyond mere political and economic hardships. There was a continuation of student violence and demonstrations along with labor strikes and demands made by the peasant population. Furthermore, Field Marshal Prapass Charusathiara and Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn returned to Thailand from exile in August and September of 1976 respectively. News of Field Marshal Thanom's return led to demonstrations and clashes erupted between leftist and rightist factions. The tension came when students at Thammasat University held a mock hanging in protest to the death of two workers in the province of Nakhon Pathom, as well as in denouncing lawlessness and cruelty in the society. The rightist organization called for the militants to crush the student demonstrators. Thus, thousands of militants plus Border Patrol Police stormed the campus on October 6, 1976. It was

a virtual slaughter by the end with 42 dead, 200 wounded, and over 1,300 students arrested (Darling, 1977, p. 127). That night Admiral Sangad Chaloryu staged a coup and M.R. Seni's government came to an end for another time.

The Seni government implemented some educational and economic reforms in an effort to equalize society. However, due to the coup on October 6, 1976, these were hardly implemented and many reforms were never carried out (Darling, 1977, pp. 122-127). Political and social reforms were carried out by bureaucrats and were therefore at best slow and far below expectations. This resulted in demonstrations from leftist organizations and endangered reactions from the right. In this midst, emerged a group of young army officers known as "Young Turks". This group would play an important role in the upcoming governments.

5.4 Civilian and Military Dictatorship after the October 1976 Coup d'état (1976-1979)

Three days after the coup, the National Administrative Reform Council (NARC) appointed Thanin Kraivichien as the new Prime Minister, and on October 22, 1976, the eleventh constitution of Thailand came into place. The eleventh Constitution of 1976 called for gradual political reform in 3 stages, with each stage taking 4 years depending on the political climate during each period. The constitution consisted of 29 sections. Some key components included the establishment of Prime Minister's Advisory Council to advise the cabinet, the establishment of National Administrative Reform Assembly to act as legislative body and the emergency power for the Prime Minister, with the resolution of the cabinet and Prime Minister's Advisory Council, in providing stability of the kingdom, throne, and economy (Darling, 1977, pp.129-130).

In March 1977, the 1977 National Education Scheme was proclaimed. It resulted in reducing compulsory education from seven years to six years, calling for teacher training institutions to be organized at the tertiary level and providing more freedom and autonomy to universities. In the same year, the Fourth National Education Development Plan (1977-1981) was launched. This plan concentrated on the promotion of institutional autonomy and quality of tertiary education, as

well as modification of tertiary education systems so that it would become more closely related to economic development.

Prime Minister Thanin assumed an anti-communist policy. He imposed censorship of the press, and arrested several hundred suspected subversives. He placed great value on economic development, and waged war on corruption, crime and narcotics. Though he was honest in his convictions, the military felt he was excessively conservative, dogmatic in pursuing his policies and too independent (Darling, 1978, p. 157). On October 20, 1977, Admiral Sangad Chaloyu staged another coup and Thanin was removed. General Kriangsak Chamanand was appointed as new Prime Minister. The October 1977 Revolutionary Party promulgated the twelfth constitution on November 9, 1977 which declared that the National Legislature would have the duty to draft a permanent constitution. The National Policy Council would give advice to the Council of Ministers in carrying out the affairs of State. Emergency power to the Prime Minister, with the resolution of the cabinet and the National Policy Council, for security reasons remained in place. The Constitution also called for a general election in April 1979.

As the Thai people were not accustomed to Thanin's civilian dictatorship, it was the military, in their opinion and past experience, who could bring about peace and order. Thus, the majority of them did not oppose the 1977 coup. Prime Minister Kriangsak's administration was one of moderation and reconciliation. Curfew was ended and communication was opened with the leftists. He also opened diplomatic relations with neighboring communist countries. The group of "Young Turks" were called upon to hold crucial military positions. It was upon their urging that an Amnesty Act was introduced for those persons involved in the October 1976 uprising. Many who joined the Communist Party in the hills returned home under the authority of the Royal Thai Government.

During his rule, the thirteenth constitution was promulgated on December 22, 1978. The thirteenth constitution declared the bicameral legislature. The House of Representative had the power to pass a vote of no-confidence in the Prime Minister. While the Prime Minister had the power to dissolve the House of Representatives. The Prime Minister was not required to be a member of the

House of Representatives. In the election on April 22, 1979, there would be 301 seats in the House of Representatives, 225 appointed members in Senate, total seats were 526. Thus, the new Prime Minister needed only 39 votes from the elected members of the House of Representatives (plus 225 votes from the appointed members in Senate) to gain him a majority (Ramsay, 1979, pp.110-112).

5.5 Political Reform during the Semi Democracy (1979-1992)

Likhit Dhiraregin (1992) indicated that Semi Democracy in Thailand had the following exponents: (1) Parliament consisted of elected House of Representatives and appointed Senate; (2) the Prime Minister was elected by a coalition of political parties; (3) the coalition government was controlled by the parliament while the military and bureaucrats were the powerful actors in politics; (4) an independent judicial system consisted of the courts of justice. Semi Democracy in Thailand started after the general election on April 22, 1979.

According to the 1978 constitution, there would be 301 members in the House of Representatives, and 225 appointed members in Senate. Thus, total members who had the right concerning the vote of confidence were 526. General Kriangsak appointed 225 senators on April 22, 1979. Following the general election on the same day for 301 seats in the House of Representatives, the Social Action Party won 83, Thai Nation Party won 38, Democrat Party and Thai People Party each won 32 seats (Ramsay, 1980: 114). General Kriangsak could not depend on the members from these political parties to gain the vote of confidence. His vote came from 89 members of small political parties, and other votes came from 225 senators appointed by him. General Kriangsak faced great difficulties in forming his cabinet. He was only able to include 8 members of the House of Representatives when forming his 44 members of cabinet. He was known for creating national unity, and a flourishing foreign policy, but he lacked in gaining support from politicians and military leaders. The worsening economic situation and the suspension of support from the Young Turks forced him to resign from office on February 29, 1980. With the support of the Young Turks and politicians, General Prem Tinsulanond became a new Prime Minister on March 3, 1980 (Niksich, 1981, p. 229).

General Prem formed the coalition government from the Social Action, Thai Nation, and Democrat. His instruction of the Order 66/2523 had decreased the communist insurgency in Thailand. Almost all students and intellectuals left the Communist Party of Thailand. It had to dissolve itself due to the factionalism and conflict of ideologies within the party. Within a year in office the Young Turks put pressure on General Prem to abolish the parliament and return to despotic rule. General Prem refused. The Young Turks turned to General San Chitpatima in preparing for a coup and the coup was staged on April 1, 1981. The coup failed and brought about the end of power for the Young Turks, and General Arthit Kamlanek emerged as the new leader in the military (Niskch 1982, p.193).

In 1982, the Thai people celebrated the bicentennial year of the reign of the Chakri Dynasty. In the same year, the fifth National Education Development Plan (1982-1986) was launched. This plan concentrated on the improvement of administration and management in tertiary education, promoting quality of education and education technology, accelerating training of in-service teachers, as well as mobilizing resources for tertiary education. Since the transitory clauses of the 1978 constitution would terminate on April 21, 1983, thus in early 1983 there was a movement to amend the constitution to make the transitory clause permanent but the movement failed. Therefore, the appointed 225 senators were not allowed to vote on confidence in government, both military and civilian bureaucrats were not allowed to hold bureaucratic positions and political positions concurrently (Suchitra Punyaratabandhu-Bhakdi, 1984, pp. 187-189). The general election in 1983 was held three days before the termination of the transitory clauses.

After the general election on April 18, 1983, General Prem, who did not belong to any political party, was invited to form the coalition government which consisted of Social Action (101 seats), Democrats (57 seats), Thai Citizens (36 seats), and National Democrats (15 seats). Thus he gained 209 seats out of 324 seats in the House of Representatives (Suchitra Punyaratabandhu-Bhakdi, 1984, pp.189-190). During this term, the Royal Thai Government honored the cremation of Queen Rambhai, the Queen of King Rama VII in April 1985. Five months later, a

group of retired military officers staged another failed coup on September 9, 1985 (Juree Vichit-Vadakarn, 1986, pp. 176-177). On May 1 1986 the government was defeated in the voting of Land Transportation Bill. General Prem decided to dissolve the House of Representatives and set another general election on July 27, 1986. Two months before the general election, a new commander-in-chief of the Royal Thai Army (General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh) was appointed (Neher, 1987, p. 222).

In the general election on July 27, 1986, the Democrats won 100 seats, Thai Nation (63 seats), Social Action (51 seats), and Rasadorn (18 seats). General Prem once again was invited to form another coalition government. He formed his 44 members of cabinet from the Democrats (16), Thai Nation (10), Social Action (8), Rassadorn (3), and his own quota (7). By bringing these political parties in his new coalition government, he gained 232 out of 347 seats in the House of Representatives (Neher, 1987, p. 225). In 1987, the Sixth National Education Development Plan (1987-1991) was announced. This plan aimed to reduce the production of teachers with bachelor degrees, for which there was a lower demand, and to improve the quality of instructors in teacher - training institutions, to encourage research, as well as to encourage teacher - training institution to provide academic service to the community. This plan resulted in the expansion of the production of graduates in the field of science and technology.

King Bhumibol Adulyadej 60th birthday was celebrated on December 5, 1987. General Prem enjoyed the confidence and support of the public (Neher, 1987, p. 227). He completed his eight years in office as a Prime Minister in March 1988. In the following month there was a conflict on the Copy Right Bill, General Prem decided to dissolve the House of Representatives on April 29, 1988 and set the next general election on July 24, 1988. During his premiership, democracy flourished and economic growth was rapid. He carried out three general elections in 1983, 1986, and 1988. He succeeded in ending communist insurgency and increased the budget for rural job creation project. However, he refused to stand for any general election.

The result of the July 24, 1988 general election showed victory of the Thai Nation which gained 87 seats in the House of Representatives, followed by

Social Action (54 seats) and Democrat (48 seats). Since General Prem refused to form a new coalition government, General Chatichai Choonhavan, the leader of Thai Nation Party, decided to form a new one. His coalition government consists of Thai Nation, Social Action, Democrats, Rassadorn, Muan Chon, and the United Democratic Party, with 229 vote of confidence from the total 357 votes in the House of Representatives (Niks, 1989, p. 168).

General Chatichai took several measures upon taking office. He cut the budget for the rural job creation project while increasing salaries for bureaucrats and military officers. He halted the privatization of state enterprises and decentralized administrative power. He turned the battlefield in this region into a market for trade. He was well known in foreign affairs. He reshuffled his cabinet in June 1990 and again in November of the same year after a young student, Thanavud Clingchua, burned himself to death in an antigovernment rally at Ramkhamhaeng University on October 14, 1990 (Christensen, 1991, pp.199-200). He formed another coalition government in December 1990, but the situation became worse due to the conflicts among political parties and corruption in the coalition government. By the end of February 1991, a coup d'état was staged under the leadership of General Sunthorn Kongsompong. In the aftermath, General Chatichai was arrested, the parliament was dissolved, the constitution was repealed, and martial law came into effect (Suchit Bunbongkarn, 1992, pp.131-132). Throughout the era of semi democracy, Thailand was able to keep peace and order, people were happy, and the coalition governments were strong. The February 1991 coup brought the era of semi democracy to an end, and a period of turmoil and uprising was about to begin.

5.6 February 1991 Coup d'état

General Suthorn Kongsompong led a coup d'état on February 23, 1991 and gave various reasons to justify the coup. He indicated that there was corruption by ministers in the cabinet. Politicians intimidated the bureaucrats and military officers, and there were assassination plots against some very important persons by General Chatichai's officers. The military junta then abolished the 1978 constitution, dissolved parliament and enforced martial law. An interim constitution was drafted and Anand Punyarachun was appointed as Prime Minister.

The interim constitution which was the fourteenth constitution was proclaimed on March 1, 1991. This constitution declared that the king was the constitutional monarch. The National Legislative Assembly was established to draft a new permanent constitution. The National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC) was created to give advice to the cabinet. The Chairman of NPKC and the Prime Minister had the emergency power to prevent or suppress any act threatening the stability and security of the Kingdom (Suchit Bunbonkarn, 1992, p. 133). After taking office as Prime Minister, Anand requested that the NPKC lift martial law and release General Chatichai to which they complied. His political platform urged economic development and social justice. He also maintained that political reform and modernization of the armed forces were a top priority (Suchit Bunbongkarn, 1992, p.135).

The new constitution which was the fifteenth constitution of Thailand was proclaimed on December 9, 1991. It declared a bicameral parliament. The Prime Minister was not required to be an elected member of the House of Representatives. Military officers and civilian bureaucrats could not hold bureaucratic and political positions concurrently. Senators were appointed in the name of the King. Political parties that had the most seats in the House of Representatives had the right to form a new Cabinet (Suchit Bunbongkarn, 1992, p. 136). After the promulgation of the fifteenth constitution in December 1991, Prime Minister Anand remained in power until the next general election on March 22, 1992.

In education, from 1974-1978, the sweeping reform in education concentrated on equal opportunities, unity in education administration and management, modification in content and learning process, promoting private education institutions, and revising educational legislation. These policies were not implemented successfully due to the political instability of the country. During Prime Minister Thanin Kraivichien's government, the Eleventh National Education Scheme was announced in March 1977, resulting in reducing compulsory education to 6 years and requiring teacher-training institutions to be organized at tertiary level. In the same year the Fourth National Education Development Plan (1977-1981) was launched. This plan concentrated on raising the quality of education,

encouraging institutional autonomy, producing teachers of high quality required by the economy, providing more equal opportunities in access to education. Some of these policies were viewed as leftist and too radical, thus they have never been implemented.

Under the government of General Prem Tinsulanond, the Fifth National Education Development Plan (1982-1986) was launched. This plan concentrated on improving the quality of education, promoting educational technology, accelerating teacher-training, and mobilizing resources for education. The general elections in 1983 and 1986, as well as the narrowed perspective of some bureaucrats became obstacles for the Minister of Education to implement these educational policies effectively. The Sixth National Education Development Plan (1987-1991) was launched in 1987. This plan began to reduce the production of teachers and enhanced the production of graduates in the field of science and technology.

5.7 Summary

Prime Minister during this period consisted of Sanya Dharmasakti, Prime Minister (October 14, 1973-February 26, 1975), Seni Pramoj, Prime Minister (February 15, 1975- March 13, 1975 and April 20, 1976-October 6, 1976), Kukrit Pramoj, Prime Minister (March 14, 1975 – January 12, 1976), Thanin Kraivixien, Prime Minister (October 8, 1976-October 1977), General Kraingsak Chamanan, Prime Minister (November 11, 1977-March 3, 1980), General Prem Tinsulanonda, Prime Minister (March 3, 1980-August 4, 1988), General Chatichai Choonhavan, Priminister (August 4, 1988-February 23, 1991) and Anand Punyarakun, Prime Minister (March 2, 1991-March 23, 1992).

The period between 1973-1977 was traumatic for the Thai people. Besides Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn there were four more Prime Ministers during this period. They saw strikes, demonstrations, assassinations, bloody elections, and the defeat of neighboring countries to the communists. This was too much to bear for the Thai people and they welcomed the coup that brought about the National Administrative Reform Council (NARC). Only a handful of politicians, intellectuals, and students fled to the hills to join forces with the Communist Party of Thailand. General Kriangsak began to pave the way for Semi Democracy. General

Prem enjoyed the confidence from various political parties in forming his coalition governments. The new government under General Chatichai Choonhavan could not control the bureaucracy; educational policies were not implemented efficiently. Conflict and confusion in the coalition government prevailed leading to another coup d'état in February 1991 as well as the end of Semi Democracy.

6. POLITICAL REFORM AFTER MAY 1992 UPRISING (1992 - 2006)

6.1 *The May 1992 Uprising*

The general election in March 1992 resulted in the victory of Samakkitham, which was the pro-military political party that gained the most seats in the House of Representatives. General Suchinda Kraprayoon was invited to form a coalition government. His new government consisted of Samakkitham (79 seats), Thai Nation (74 seats), Social Action (31 seats), Prachakorn Thai (7 seats) and Rassadorn (4 seats). Thus General Suchinda gained 195 seats from 360 seats in the House. The invitation of General Suchinda to form a new coalition government turned out to be a big mistake and led to several demonstrations. The middle class did not want the military to play an important role in politics. They thought that the Prime Minister should come from members of the elected House of Representatives.

In May 1992, a pro-democracy demonstration was led by Major General Chamlong Srimuang. They demanded the resignation of General Suchinda and an amendment to the constitution stating the Prime Minister had to be an elected member of the House. General Suchinda did not comply, instead he savagely suppressed them causing severe civilian casualties. On May 20, 1992 General Suchinda and Major General Chamlong had an audience with the King. At a later time General Suchinda decided to step down after only 48 days in office (Suchit Bunbongkarn, 1993, p. 220).

After the resignation, Anand Punyarachun was once again appointed as Prime Minister. He dissolved the House of Representatives and arranged a new general election in September of the same year. The 1992 National Education Scheme was announced in June 1992. This scheme concentrated on promoting

academic excellence, enhancing sustainable development, reforming teacher education, and strengthening the teaching profession. In the same year, the Seventh National Education Development Plan (1992-1996) was launched. This plan emphasized promoting science and technological education, reforming teacher - training, and encouraging the private sector to participate in providing tertiary education.

6.2 Political Reform during the Transition to Participatory Democracy

In the general election on September 13, 1992, the Democrat gained 79 seats, New Aspiration (51 seats), Palang Dham (47 seats), Social Action (22 seats), and Solidarity (8 seats). Chuan Leekpai formed a new coalition government from members of the Democrat, New Aspiration, Palang Dham, Social Action, and Solidarity parties (Suchit Bunbongkarn, 1993, pp. 221-222). Though his government won 207 seats out of 360 seats in the House, it continued to face the problems of faction and lack of unity within the coalition.

Chuan took an important step in political reform by creating the Democratic Development Committee and amending the fifteenth constitution of 1991 three times. The amendment on June 29, 1992 indicated that the Speaker of the House of Representatives was President of the Parliament. On September 10, 1992, it was declared that the Prime Minister had to come from the elected members of the House of Representatives. On February 10, 1995, it was indicated that male and female had equal rights and the voting age was lowered from 20 to 18. In addition, Prime Minister Chuan was able to promulgate the Tambon Council and Tambon Administrative Authority Act on November 26, 1994 (Kusuma Snitwongse, 1995, p. 195). Unexpectedly in the following month the New Aspiration Party withdrew from the coalition government, Prime Minister Chuan was able to invite the Chart Patana to join the new coalition. In the no-confidence debate in May 1995, Chuan could not provide explanation in the issuing of land right documents (Sor Por Kor – 401) to wealthy supporters of the Democrat, resulting in the withdrawal of the Palang Dham Party from the coalition. Before a vote of no-confidence could take place, the House of Representatives was dissolved and a new general election was set on July 2, 1995.

The Princess Mother passed away on July 18, 1995. A series of ceremonies and a 100 days of mourning were set. In politics, the July 1995 general election result went in favor of the Thai Nation Party which won the most seats. Banharn Silpa-archa formed a new coalition government from the Thai Nation (92 seats), New Aspiration (57 seats), Palang Dham (23 seats), Social Action (22 seats), Nam Thai (18 seats), Prachakorn Thai (18 seats), and Muan Chon (3 seats). His coalition government gained 233 seats out of 391 seats in the lower House (King, 1996, p. 136).

The year 1996 marked the 50th anniversary of the ascending to the throne of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. In politics the cabinet formed by Banharn had an unethical background, some of them facing corruption charges during General Chatichai's government. Finally, there was a no-confidence motion on September 21, 1996. The opposition accused him of dishonest, inefficient, and unlawful conduct, while his coalition parties pressed him to resign. After survival from the vote, he decided to dissolve the House of Representatives and arranged another general election in November 1996 (King, 1997, p. 161).

The general election on November 17, 1996 resulted in the victory of the New Aspiration Party (NAP). General Chavalit Yongchayudh formed his coalition government with the support from the NAP (125 seats), Chart Patana (52 seats), Social Action (20 seats), Prachakorn Thai (18 seats), Seritham (4 seats), and Muan Chon (2 seats). His new coalition gained 221 seats out of the total 393 seats in the lower House (King, 1997, p. 161). During General Chavalit's government, five more Rajabhat Institutes (formerly called Teacher Colleges) in five provinces namely, Chaiyaphun, Kalasin, Roiet, Sisaket and Nakhon Phanom, were established concurrently in 1997. Since the promulgation of the Rajabhat Institute Act of 1995, there were 41 Rajabhat Institutions scattered in most provinces of the Kingdom. The Rajabhat University Act of 2004, collectively elevated them to become Rajabhat University. It should be noted that on September 2, 2005. Nakhon Phanom Rajabhat University was combined to Nakhon Phanom University. On July 18, 2015, Suan Dusit Rajabhat University became Suan Dusit University. On September 9, 2015 Kalasin Rajabhat University was combined to Kalasin University. Thus, there were only 38 Rajabhat Universities remaining in the Rajabhat University System. The

Eighth National Education Plan (1997-2001) was launched in 1997. This plan concentrated on improving the quality of education, promoting research, introducing institutional autonomy, mobilizing resources for tertiary education and the development of an information technology system. In July 1997, the Royal Thai Government faced a financial crisis and had to depreciate the value of Thai currency, as well as seek emergency aid from the International Monetary Fund (which offered a U.S.\$17.2 billion loan package).

On October 11, 1997, a new constitution which was the sixteenth constitution of the Kingdom was enacted (Suchitra Punyaratanaabandhu, 1998, pp. 162-164). The sixteenth constitution of 1997, provided that the King is a constitutional monarch. Civil rights and liberties were protected. Directive principles of fundamental state policies were formulated. A new Election Commission was established for election reform. Decentralization of government was promoted. The supervision of the exercise of state power was imposed by creating the Ombudsmen, National Human Rights Commission, the Constitutional Court, the Administrative Court, National Counter Corruption Commission, the Supreme Court's Criminal Division for Persons Holding Political Positions, and the State Audit Commission on November 9, 1997, General Chavalit resigned from the position of Prime Minister due to the problems of rural poverty, bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, drug trafficking, and the financial crisis. He was replaced by Chuan Leekpai just one month after the promulgation of the 1997 constitution.

6.3 Political Reform after the Promulgation of the 1997 Constitution

Chuan Leekpai was the first Prime Minister after the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution. During his premiership economic conditions were improved. Representative democracy was transformed into participatory democracy. The exercise of power by executive and legislative branches were controlled. The Constitutional Court, Administrative Courts, Ombudsmen, National Corruption Prevention and Suppression Commission, Supreme Court's Criminal Division for Persons Holding Political Positions, and State Audit Commission were established. Civil rights and liberties of Thai people were promoted. Decentralization of administrative powers through local government was encouraged.

In education, the National Education Act of 1999 was enacted on August 14, 1999. The Act contained several innovations in key features including: the development of the Thai people in all aspects, lifelong education for all, education rights and duties, education system, education guidelines, education administration and management, education standards and quality assurance, teachers, faculty staff and education personnel, resources and investment in education and technologies for education. The National Education Act of 1999 was an act of educational reform for further development of the Thai people drafting in accordance with the requirement of Section 81 of the 1997 Constitution.

Significant celebrations took place in 1999 such as the 53rd anniversary of the King's Bhumibol Adulyadej's ascendance to the throne, and the King's 72nd birthday. In military affairs, Royal Thai Army Task Force was sent to East Timor on October 4, 1999 under the United Nations Transitional Administration Authority (Bidhya Bowornwathana, 2000, p. 97). In March 2000, the election of 200 members of the Senate took place with new rules and regulations for campaigning. In the same month, the National Counter Corruption Commission determined that the Minister of Interior had misrepresented assets on a loan when making a compulsory declaration of his account to the NCCC. The Minister of Interior resigned due to that charge (Montesano, 2001, pp. 172-174). The election of 200 members of the Senate and the resignation of the Minister of Interior in March 2000 proclaimed the changing of political context in the new era toward the supervision of the exercise of state power as implied in the constitution of 1997. Prime Minister Chuan was able to complete his term despite various corruption scandals and the social crisis. The general election on January 6, 2001 resulted in victory for the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party which won 248 seats. Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra, leader of TRT, became the new Prime Minister.

6.4 Prime Minister Thaksin's First Term

The general election of January 2001 was the first election under the new Constitution of 1997 which was designed to promote a new paradigm of democratic governance based on openness, transparency and accountability, and emphasized a strong executive government. During the general election campaign,

the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party, under the leadership of Thaksin Shinawatra, emphasized the policy of Baht 30 per hospital visit for medical care, grants of Baht one million for every village, three years moratorium on repayment of farm debt, the establishment of a national asset management company to manage non performing loans (NPL) of commercial banks, and a war on drugs. These policies were popular among Thai people (Montesano, 2002, p. 91).

On January 6, 2001 Thai voters handed an electoral victory to Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai Party who won 249 seats out of 500 seats (400 are elected from single member constituencies, 100 from party lists). Thaksin Shinawatra formed his coalition government from the Thai Rak Thai, New Aspiration, and Chat Thai parties and became Prime Minister on February 9, 2001. In July 2001, Thai Rak Thai merged with Seri Tham, and in January 2002 Thai Rak Thai merged with New Aspiration. By merging with Seri Tham and New Aspiration, Thai Rak Thai was able to increase its members in the House of Representatives to 364 out of a total of 500 seats (Mutebi 2003, p. 102) giving Thai Rak Thai an absolute majority in the House of Representatives, the first such majority since the September 1957 coup.

In 2002, the National Education Scheme of 2002 – 2016 was launched, covering the 15 year period from 2002 – 2016. The National Education Scheme of 2002 – 2016 stipulated 3 objectives as follows: (1) all-round and balanced human development; (2) building a society of morality, wisdom and learning; and (3) development of social environment. The National Education Scheme of 2002 – 2016 would enable Thai People to adjust to global trends and events and also to develop in Thai people the characteristics of virtue, competency, happiness and self – reliance.

In October 2002, the New National Administration Act was proclaimed. This act, which raised the number of ministries to twenty, centralized most decision making under the direct control of the cabinet. Prime Minister Thaksin managed to promote his cousin into the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army in October 2003, followed by the appointment of his brother-in-law to the position of Deputy Police Commissioner – General of the Royal Thai Police. Prime

Minister Thaksin managed to weaken the whole political system of checks and balances, manipulate his supporters into key positions in the Constitutional Court, Election Commission, National Counter Corruption Commission, and the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO). He also intimidated the press and investigated the assets of several prominent journalists. He used strong measures to eradicate drugs; from February to April 2004 approximately 2,200 suspected narcotic dealers were killed (Murphy 2006, p. 8) Some of them were innocent. He also implemented forceful policies in making war on organized crime and various types of criminal activity. Prime Minister Thaksin was able to survive a full term as prime minister until his term expired on March 11, 2005. His autocratic and arrogant style had prompted academics, the intelligentsia, leftist activists, and the urban middle class to challenge his authority.

6.5 Crisis in the south

Separatist movements have existed in Southern Provinces since the 1950s; by 1990 less than 500 persons were engaged in armed resistance, followed by a program of training radical insurgency as a religious duty for the youth (Albritton, 2005, p. 168). Since early 2003, after Prime Minister Thaksin resorted to extreme measures to eradicate drugs, radical separatists in the south began to burn schools, seize arms from soldiers and police, skirmish with local officials and daily assassinations of innocent people throughout Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani provinces.

Military forces assaulted Krue Se Mosque on April 28, 2004 with 108 civilian deaths in Patani Province, and the suppression of a mob in Tak Bai, Narathiwat Province on October 25, 2004 in which 85 militants died, only increasing the degree of distrust and the degree of disrespect for Thai authorities. As a result of the mishandling of these incidents by government authorities, the rate of daily assassinations of local police, teachers, and civilians in the south escalated. The violence further accelerated into burning schools, bombing restaurants and torching telecommunication facilities. These terrorist acts only made the three provinces insecure for Buddhist Thai citizens (Albritton 2005, p. 166).

In March 2005, the National Reconciliation Commission was established in order to find solutions to the conflict in the south. In late 2005, the Emergency Decree was declared for the three provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, followed by the establishment of the Independent Commission on Justice and Civil Liberties for the Southern Border Provinces in January 2006. Nevertheless, neither the National Reconciliation Commission, the Emergency Decree, nor the Independent Commission on Justice and Civil Liberties for the Southern Border Provinces were able to address grievances in the southern provinces effectively (Albritton, 2006, p. 144).

6.6 Prime Minister Thaksin's Second Term

Prime Minister Thaksin was re-elected in the general election on February 8, 2005. During the February 2005 election campaign, Prime Minister Thaksin visited all provinces, promising government funds for local projects, more loans, better medical care, a new education funding scheme, and social provisions for the disabled and elderly, as well as new business deals for businessmen. He said he knew how to run Thailand and he was committed to the Thai people. Thus Prime Minister Thaksin was able to capture the vote of rural farmers, street vendors, workers in restaurants and stores, laborers in factories and on construction sites, as well as the business sector. He promised the Small, Medium, Large Village Program, eradication of poverty within four years, land title for landless farmers, and that Thailand would become a country safe from corruption, poverty, drugs and organized crime.

In the February 2005 general election, Thai Rak Thai party captured 377 seats out of 500 in the House of Representatives. (Albritton, 2006, p. 141). His second term of office was from March 11, 2001 to September 19, 2006. Election of 200 new senators in April 2006 also increased the parliament members who were Thai Rak Thai supporters. Only a small number of members in the House and Senate dared to challenge Prime Minister Thaksin in the parliament. However, he was overthrown in a military coup on September 19, 2006.

6.7 People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD)

In September 2005, Sondhi Limthongkul, a prominent journalist and critic was taken off a Thai television talk show program. He started a weekly talk show in Lumpini Park calling for Prime Minister Thaksin to resign. (Murphy, 2006, p. 7).

The year 2006 marked the 60th anniversary of the ascension to the throne of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. In politics, Prime Minister Thaksin's family decided to sell off their 49% stake in the family's telecommunication firm, Shin Corp to Temasek, a Singaporean government – owned investment firm in January 2006. The U.S. \$1.9 billion deal was tax – free (Warr, 2006, p. 15). It was considered to be a sale of a national asset to a foreign country by the urban middle class, academics and the intelligentsia. They felt that Prime Minister Thaksin no longer had the moral legitimacy required to lead the nation. On February 9, 2006, the People's Alliance for Democracy was formed and was comprised of leaders such as Sonthi Limthongkul, Chamlong Srimuang, Somkeit Pongpaibul, Somsak Kosaisuuk, Pipob Thongchai, and Suriyasai Katasila. Several rallies and street protests were organized at Sanam Luang, Siam Paragon, etc., in central Bangkok, which resulted in the closure of roads around government house. The demonstrators demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Thaksin (Terwiel, 2011, p. 291).

The People's Alliance for Democracy or more commonly called the Yellow Shirts accused Prime Minister Thaksin of selling a telecommunication firm that was a national asset to a foreign country, weakening the checks-and-balances system, manipulating his supporters into key positions in the government bureaucracy, decreasing the level of importance of the House of Representatives and the Senate and that his cabinet passed laws by executive decree not legislation.

The People's Alliance for Democracy also accused Prime Minister Thaksin of mishandling the conflict in the southern region, selling off state enterprises, borrowing from future government revenue that would cause increasing debt to rural Thai people, and skirmishes with the press. In response, Prime Minister Thaksin declared that the People's Alliance for Democracy came from a small urban middle class in Bangkok and did not represent the voice of the real Thai

people. He declared that he would not yield to this small number of people. Thus, political turmoil, street protests, and road closures in Bangkok continued for months until the by-election in April 2006. Because of political turmoil, demonstrations and street protests mostly organized by the People's Alliance for Democracy, Prime Minister Thaksin decided to dissolve the House of Representatives and set a new general election for April 2, 2006 (Murphy, 2006, p. 11).

6.8 April 2006 General Election

The April 2006 general election was boycotted by the three main opposition parties but the rural people who comprised the majority of Thai citizens voted for Prime Minister Thaksin. The Thai Rak Thai political party won a landslide victory in the House of Representatives. Nevertheless, after an audience with the King on April 4, 2006, just two days after the election, Prime Minister Thaksin proclaimed that he would not accept the position of prime minister but would remain as a caretaker prime minister until a new prime minister was selected.

The Chief of the Administrative Court and the Chief of the Supreme court of Justice had an audience with the King on April 28, 2006, they determined to settle the political conflict through judicial means. Consequently, on May 8, 2006, the Constitution Court declared the general election on April 2, 2006 to be null and void. On July 25, 2006 the Criminal Court imprisoned three election commissioners for conducting the general election by unlawful means (Pichit Likitkijsomboon, 2006, p. 50).

June 2006 was a month of jubilation for Thailand, particularly in Bangkok. There was no political turmoil or any street protests since it was necessary to maintain harmony in Thailand for the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the King ascending the throne. In the meantime, Prime Minister Thaksin, who was acting as a caretaker prime minister, still maintained his autocratic and arrogant style; over five years, he had managed to politicize the annual reshuffling of police and military commanders, and manipulate his supporters into key police and military positions. He also tried to mold Thai society with his mixture of aggressive and populist policies. Prime Minister Thaksin tried to convert the rural poor into an enterprising

capitalist community; he managed to get support from rural people within a period of four to five years. (Murphy, 2006, p. 24). There were continuous demonstrations and protests after September 2006. Eventually, the military stepped in and the coup d'état took place on September 19, 2006; the coup was led by General Sonthi Boonyaratkalin.

6.9 September 2006 Coup d'état

Following the coup on September 19 2006, the 1997 Constitution was abrogated and the junta called the Council for Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy ruled Thailand by martial law and executive decree until the promulgation of an Interim Constitution on October 1, 2006. On this day, the Council for Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy was transformed into the Council for National Security (Ukrist Pathmanand, 2006, p. 36).

The junta accused Prime Minister Thaksin of causing severe division within the country, and ruining national unity, which resulted in political conflict and social turmoil and led to the devastation of the national economy. Thaksin was also accused of corruption, nepotism, interference in independent bodies, and human rights violations. Thus, it was necessary to conduct the coup in order to recover the structure of democracy. Public support for the coup has been widely published in the media. There were displays of public kindness to soldiers; people brought food, drinks and flowers to troops. However coup, there were also several protests most markedly at Democracy Monument on September 20, 2006, Siam Center on September 22, 2006, Thammasat University on September 25, 2006; and Chulalongkorn University on September 27, 2006.

6.10 The 2006 Interim Constitution

The Interim Constitution of 2006 with 39 articles, is the seventeenth constitution of Thailand. It was signed by General Sonthi Boonyaratkalin as the Head of the Council for Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy on October 1, 2006. The Interim Constitution included King Bhumibol's theory of a self-sufficient economy in the preamble. It indicated that Thailand is a unitary and indivisible Kingdom with the King as the Head of State. This 2006 interim

constitution allowed the President of the Council for National Security to appoint a Prime Minister, members of the National Legislative Assembly, a Constitution Drafting Assembly and the Constitution Drafting Committee. The New constitution requires a referendum. The Council for National Security maintained peace, order and security of the nation. It granted amnesty to the junta for executing the coup. It also allowed the Chairman of the Council for National Security to carry out the duties of the Prime Minister and the cabinet until a prime minister and the cabinet assumed duties.

The new Prime Minister, General Surayud Chulanont, was appointed on October 1, 2006, and the new cabinet was set up on October 8, 2006, the New National Legislative was proclaimed on October 11, 2006 with 242 members. The Constitution Drafting Assembly with 100 members under Chairman Noranit Setabutr was established on January 2, 2007. The Constitution Drafting Committee, consisting of 35 members under Chairman Prasong Soonsiri, was proclaimed on January 23, 2007 for the purpose of drafting the 2007 permanent constitution, which would be based on the provisions of 1997 Constitution. Several democratic innovations, such as election reform, greater separation between the executive and legislative branches, human rights, decentralization of government, increasing in check and balance through new independent government agencies, were included. The majority of the voters passed approval on promulgation in the referendum on August 19, 2007. The eighteenth constitution was enacted on August 24, 2007 (Terwiel, 2011, p. 292).

6.11 United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD)

The United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) or commonly, called Red Shirts was a pressure group that was formed in 2006 to oppose the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), the September 2006 Coup d'état, and the military government. The UDD also focused on dissolving the "aristocratic" polity. Famous UDD leaders included Jatuporn Prompan, Veera Musikapong, Nattawut Saikua, Charan Dittapichai, Weng Tojirakarn, Kokaew Pikulthong, and Thida Thavornseth. UDD organized anti-government rallies during

the government of General Surayud Chulanont in 2006-2007 and opposed the 2007 Constitution. The UDD stopped protests after the 2007 general election, which the People's Power Party won. UDD supporters have been anti PAD since the September 2006 Coup d'état. From that time, clashes between supporters of the UDD and the PAD have occurred from time to time. Membership of the UDD consisted of rural people in north and northeast Thailand, urban lower classes from Bangkok and other cities, as well as some intellectuals (Terwiel, 2011, pp. 292 – 293).

6.12 Summary

Prime ministers during this period included Anand Punyarakun (March 2, 1991-April 6, 1992 and June 10, 1992-September 22, 1992), General Suchinda Kraprayoon (April 7, 1992-May 24, 1992), Chuan Leekpai (September 23, 1992-July 12, 1995, and November 9, 1997-February 9, 2001), Banharn Silapa-archa (July 13, 1995-November 25, 1996), General Chavalit Yongchaiyuth (November 25, 1996-November 8, 1997), and Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra (February 9, 2001-September 19, 2006), and General Surayud Chulanont (October 1, 2006-January 29, 2008). Political reform after the May 1992 uprising transformed Thailand from a representative democracy to a participatory democracy. Drafting of the constitution was at the heart of political reform. The 1997 Constitution was eventually promulgated in October 1997 under the government of General Chavalit. While Prime Minister Chuan had a neo-conservative vision, Prime Minister Thaksin's vision was that of a neo-liberal. Political reform became the essential feature of his government. During his first premiership, government was stable, accountable, efficient, and transparent at a certain level. Some abused politicians were investigated and judged. During his second term of premiership (March 11, 2005 – September 19, 2006) there was political turmoil, and demonstrations and protests which led to the military coup against him on September 19, 2006.

7. CONCLUSION

Modern political reform in Thailand began in 1892. King Chulalongkorn's great reformation laid the foundation for the present system of government. The June 1932 revolution brought about the transformation of absolute monarchy into constitutional monarchy and the establishment of democratic government with the King as Head of State. Several political reforms brought Thailand from a bureaucratic polity to a participatory democracy through the progressive stages of semi – democracy and representative democracy. Political reforms during 1997-2006 included the drafting and promulgation of a new constitution which aimed to promote and protect civil rights, introduced more transparency and accountability to the public, as well as framing particular rules to screen politicians, and set up a better system of checks and balances for good governance.

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