CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
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The central problem of this thesis concerns to the role of Military in Thai Politics. In other words why Thai Military was able to intervene successfully in domestic politics is the main theme of the work. In brief, the object of this thesis is to provide an answer to the problem of why the Thai Military was able to intervene successfully in domestic politics. The Second purpose of this investigation has been to provide data to test general hypothesis developed by scholars in this field. With this task in mind, I presented an Organizational frame work for the study of military intervention in the first chapter of this study. Empirical findings on military intervention in Thailand have been added to substantiate this frame work. Approach to the problem, methodology and limitation of the Study have been outlined in this chapter.

From the great deal of literature on the military in politics or Civil-military relations reviewed for this study, it was found that number of variables were responsible for military intervention in politics. As the scope of this study is limited to Thailand, the country which has its special characteristic, I considered only five factors to be significant to an overall understanding of the role of military in Thai politics. These factors are

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organization of Thai military, military resources both human and material resources, it possesses, claims of the competing institutions for political power such as National Assembly and Thai bureaucracy. Societal conditions and the specific situation or opportunity to military to intervene in politics. Military intervention in politics was not likely to occur in the absence of any one of these variables. From the discussion of the historical development of the Thai armed forces several things became apparent. First of all, the Thai armed forces are an indigenous development. As the society became more complex the organization the armed forces became more complex. This development was accomplished in part by the use of foreign advisors, foreign equipment, and supplemented occasionally by the use of foreign soldiers. The leaders that developed the armed forces also served as the leaders of the Thai nation except for relatively short periods. Finally, these forces have served for the most part in traditional ways such as in the defense of the nation and in the furtherance of foreign policy objectives.

A review of the organization and disposition of military forces indicate that armed forces has been given more importance as compared to Navy and Air force. The armed forces are primarily made up of ground troops, which can be deployed easily for any
political purpose; either suppressing a riot or staging a coup. The other important factors related to military organization which gave the military a greater advantage over other political institutions were coercive sanction and internal group cohesion. The degree of coercive sanction of the military was very high because of the high mobility of military forces, the strategically favorable location of the armed forces unit in the centre of politics, and the unequal distribution of weapons among the army divisions in favour of the one which was in control of the capital. As to internal group cohesion, it was found that comparatively there was a high degree of internal group cohesion within the military organization. This was the result of a closed amiable military social life, strong internal discipline, a high prestige of the military institution and a good system of monetary and military awards. Inter service rivalry, on the other hand, might be a source of internal conflict within the military. However, as the evidence showed the air force and the Navy, by and large remained neutral in almost all times of political conflicts. Thus, all three services together made the Thai military more powerful. The commander in Chief of each Service is responsible to the supreme commander who has in theory control over three armed forces. In practice, it is the Army Chief who is most powerful, since he directly controls the army. Traditional social
considerations in Thailand enhance military internal organization. Among more important of these are the respect for authority and the dependence on hierarchical superior-subordinate relationship. The military is very successful at framing ambiguously the relative ranks of each as it provide group coherence and group solidarity. It is contended here that in a society which has such a socio-psychological taste for hierarchy, a military organization will very likely be strong one, particularly in comparison to groups which seek to follow more egalitarian principles. Respect, deference and loyalty to one's superior is also a large element of traditional social thought and modern military is able to trap these feelings without being embraced by more novel ideas of equality and freedom. Military has its own discipline, own law and military court. Their authoritarian tendencies derived from long established relations between superiors and subordinate in Thai society generally seemed to drive them to utilize the drastic method or harsh action at the time or emergency. Such a organization which is judicially independent, is difficult to bring under the control of outside influence.

Another features of Thai Military organization is the location of its units. It is observed that large number of units have been Stationed in and around Bangkok. Which can be deployed quickly for political
purposes, either suppressing a riot or staging a coup. Consequently, it becomes easier for the military to stage a coup against government to maintain stability in the political system.

For the purpose of intervening in domestic politics, the importance of human and material resources to the military was quite obvious. It was the imbalance of growth in favour of the military that enabled it to intervene successfully in politics. The quantitative growth of military forces since 1932 reflects its crucial role in Thai politics. From 30,000 in 1920, they grew to 1,91,000 in 1971 and more than 250,000 in 1981 in addition regular military forces such as police. The various governments in Thailand established auxiliary services such as Volunteer’s Defence corps which composed in the eighties of 1,50,000 troops. The proportion of military personnel to Thai population comes to 7 percent per thousand population, which is very high compared to other countries viz. India, which is only 0.5 percent. Thus it is proved that the higher level of participation ratio to total population was the main cause of military intervention in Thai politics. Moreover, the percentage of officer’s ratio to enlisted men further provided that the higher the proportion of officers to enlisted personnel, the more likely the military was to intervene.

When we examined further the problem of
military resources, we found that the salient feature of
defense in Thailand is the predominance of ground
troops. The proportion of Armed forces to military
personnel, is comparatively very high as it was 70
percent in 1980. In terms of maneuverability and from
the strategic stand point, this special characteristic
of military was an important asset for its political
involvement, since ground troops could be utilized
easily and effectively to intimidate the public as well
as civilian politicians. This may be the reason why the
army in Thailand has became more involved in politics
than the other two services.

Granted that a considerable quantity of
military resources is prerequisite for military
involvement in politics, yet it is the officer crops
that takes charge in doing the job. In this sense
recruitment and training of military officers is a
crucial to an explanation of military intervention in
politics.

Recruitment procedure shows that there is a
keen competition among the boys to enter into military
services. The soldiers are by and large recruited from
villages and have at best only secondary education.
Their social horizon is not likely to extend far beyond
the village environment and national politics is of
little concern to them. In military they receive no
political education beyond loyalty and obedience to
their superiors, to the military and to the nation. From this, one thing becomes clear that the subordinate body of troops are politically indifferent and docile which serves the military leaders well in the game of power politics.

For the recruitment at officers level the basic qualification is graduate and they are selected by competitive examinations. Here we found that majority of the officers are commissioned form the service military academies and very few are selected form universities. Apart from military training these officers in the second phase gets liberal education which includes both theory and current problems relating to national social, economic and political issues as well as international affairs. As a result they become convinced that they are qualified to play a leading role in economics, international relations and the Government of their country. Thus, it is proved that the educational system served to reinforce the proclivities of the officers crops towards involvement in politics.

In addition the autonomy in selection and control over education of its elites permit the Thai military to mould the officer's mind to uniformity of attitude towards politics. He believes himself as a part of military organization upon which the fate and honor of the nation depends. This tends towards the belief that what is good for the the army is good for the country.
This helps the army officers, to mobilize large number of men for co-ordinate activities.

When we examined military equipment as military resources, we found that the number of fitting units in the all branches have been increased steadily which indicates that military is well equipped with modern destructive equipments. The Thai military also controls the extensive mass communication media network particularly radio and televisions, which has undoubtedly reinforces its political potency specially the capability in political mobilization. When all this military equipments are combined, no organization in the country can compete with it.

When we have used the military expenditure as a criteria to measure military resources, we found that on an average the defence Ministry always gets a major share near about 20 percent of the total annual expenditure. During 1933 to 1943, the budgetary provision for military was increased from 25 percent to 39 percent of the total national budget and during the 1948-60 the budgetary provision for defence, found to be less because of Economic programmes, but a detailed examination revealed that during this period Thailand received considerable amount of money for military expenses from America. In the recent years the defence provision again rapidly increased in 1978 it reached to 30 percent. This clearly shows the importance of
military in national politics and resources it possesses.

The military has also been strengthened by what could be called a military business complex. The military officers are appointed on the board of directors of those government enterprises belonging to Defence Ministry. They are also permitted to involve in private business enterprises. This mechanism not only explains income source of the military officers, but it represents the mechanism of military control over economic activities. This military control over political and economic power ultimately leads to state power. Thus, the Thai military during the course of time developed the forces in large size and accumulated huge quantity of equipment. This has increased the military's capability to intervene successfully in domestic politics.

The most competing institution to military in power struggle in Thai politics has been the National Assembly. With few exceptions, the struggle for power between military and civilian politicians has been the major features in the dynamics of National Assembly. In an efforts to establish some sort of a representative Assembly, would increase the power and influence of the civilian politicians and would thus jeopardize the Army's political monopoly. Since the formation of National Assembly in 1932, it lacked real political
power as half of its members were appointed by promoters group. This system was supposed to exist for only ten years, after which the appointed members would gradually be replaced by elected ones. However, this replacement has never actually taken place indicating the unwillingness of military to relinquish its top political position. Till 1972-73 the representation of the military in the Assembly were as high as 62 percent of the total number. After 1974 this military dominance declined but again in 1976 and 1979 the strength of military officials increased to 44 percent. With such strength of military officers in the National legislature, military never allowed the National Assembly to function as a representative of the people. Moreover the vicious cycle, starting from a coup, followed by an election and a brief period of parliamentary rule before a crisis sets in leading to another coup. This cycle certainly reflects the struggle for power between military elite and elected political elites which has always led to the Army’s seizure of power. The period between 1980 to 1988 has been more durable. But this happened due to kings support to prime Minister prem. In 1988, election to National Assembly were held and coalition government under the leadership of Chatichai was formed. In Feb 1991, when Chatichai Choonzhan was a Prime Minister, Military ousted him by staging a bordless coup. This
clearly shows that the Military continues to be able to influence the government decisions. Moreover after coup, the bureaucracy under the direction of the military draft constitutions and creates these legislatures, and put the various constraints on the legislators, which prevents them from actually participating in rule making process.

Moreover, the National Assembly found ineffective because of the traditional weakness of the political parties in Thailand, party cohesion, loyalty and discipline have been generally weak and elected members of parliament have shifted allegiance with alacrity from one party to another depending on the utility of party affiliation to them. Thai citizens have low regard for legislators because of their corrupt and arrogant nature. All this make the National Assembly weak and ultimately helps the military to control it and if not to destroy it before it could legislate and institutionalize new process that would be detrimental to the interest of the military elite. Therefore, the participants in the Thai political system must view National Assembly as simply a short run phenomenon, which should be used for limited personal advantage. All this leads to the conclusion that the National Assembly could not become the competitor for military in power struggle.

Another institution that has competing claim
along with military in power politics is that of bureaucracy. Thailand has an efficient and competent civil service. It has maintained its continuity over several centuries. Even in the face of economic and social change, the bureaucracy's power remains suprem, and it is still appropriate to term Thailand a "bureaucratic polity". The Thai bureaucracy has remained largely detached from political struggles with the military services and thereby it has provided an element of stability.

In fact, there is no difference between civilian official and military officials as joint heirs of royal administration. They both share the traditional values appropriate to hierarchical, status conscious elite society. They express similar bureaucratic feelings on indifference, condescension, disdain for those outside bureaucracy-professionals, businessmen, peasants etc. However, under social conditions the bureaucracy could not become the competing institution to military because of the elements of solidarity and the resources the military possesses. In addition Thai bureaucracy continues to be hampered by corruption, nepotism and traditionalism. It is also weakened by reluctance of most lower and middle level civil servants to make decisions and accepts responsibility. This practice imposes an enormous administrative burden on a few top level officials. Because of these weaknesses,
the bureaucracy accepted the second position to military in power structure. Actually civilian officials are junior partners of the military in the matters of politics and business. While the administrators are consulted for their technical competence in economics, education, public welfare and diplomacy, they do not make the fundamental strategic decisions. Basically the civilian are obliged to accepts the power and authority of the military coup. Since 1932, the bureaucracy has been controlled by assignment of military officers to crucial positions of authority over civilians and by continual process of co-opting bureaucrats to work amiably and effectively for the military regime. For example, the cabinet overall military representation for a period 1932-69 was 43 percent, the highest 75 percent in 1952 and lower 27 percent in 1945. This enables the military to control bureaucracy. As regard cooption of bureaucrats 5 percent seats in the cabinet were always given to government officials.

In addition military adopted the method of limited decentralisation giving bureaucrats a great deal of freedom to execute economic development budget, fiscal or foreign exchange reforms. Thus, senior technocrats are given strong incentive to remain within the system and what is more important in preserving solidarity leading members of each component share in the spoils of office. However, these incentives are
contingent on their continued tolerance of overall military leadership. To conclude absence of strong competing institutions in Thai politics helped the military to intervene in politics and monopolise the state power.

As observed in preceding pages, the military elite could not allow the national Assembly to function effectively. One important reason for this state of affairs is the prevailing socio-political conditions in Thailand. Thailand is an agricultural country and provide sufficient land to maintain minimum standard of living of an increasing population. Most of the farmers cultivate their own land. Their inability to manipulate and dominant environmental conditions has natured fatalism among them. Thus, the self-sufficient or quasi substance agricultural economy and the fatalistic outlook of cultivators are the basis of Thai rural life. Even though agriculture do nor provide them a very good standard of living, it is a secured situation form them. As a result there is no sign of desperate presently, no class conflict between landlords and tenants. As a result large proportion of the population have been little affected by economic motives. Farmers do not press the government for any economic and political demand.

On industrial side because of the net work of small industry, strong trade union movement could not
develop in Thailand. Thus, Industrial labour and the cultivators that constitute 80% of the population remain politically passive, indifferent to national politics and lacking in experience in political participation. Such passivity and indifference could be explained by the fact that frequent coups d'\'etat since 1932 have repeatedly interrupted the public chances to participate in democratic process. To the people, elections seems meaningless because their result can be abolished at any time by another coup. Hence, it seems unavoidable that the people have low interest in politics. This situation as well the Buddhist teaching together have shaped the political attitude of the Thai people, that have remained remarkably traditional. Generally, most Thais tend to tolerate and recognize the right to govern of any governing elite occupying top positions. The belief that whoever can acquire, possesses and wield power is divinely blessed and spiritually entitled and unquestionably eligible to exercise this right. Once a person acquired the power, he is automatically bound to receive recognition, obedience, respect and loyalty. This is because of the Buddhist impact on the the Thai people. In other words Thai Tradition has been characterised by change from the top leadership and decision from above, with little feedback from masses. No major historical events have broken this consistency in political attitude.
In social and political life deferential relationship and obedience have been stressed. Most Thais feel that men and women should be modest, generous and respectful to elders and those to whom respect is due. In their family, community school and even in religion they are indoctrinated from the earliest years with habit of respect and conformity to parents, elders, priests and government officials (being an representative of king). The family structure is predominantly a system of superordination and subordination. This also prevails in the school system. The villagers normally accept and act upon their superior's authority, without any challenge. Moreover, hierarchical status is support and legitimised by Buddhist teaching, the belief that a man's social position or status is a result of his religious or secular merit. This superior subordinate relationship or hierarchical relations reach their climax in the form of authoritarian rule in Thai bureaucracy, that a superior was entitled to deference and obedience, subordinate was expected to deter and obey.

Thus, this hierarchical relation is a problem of democracy, which demands equality. In that political system, the value of personal equality tends to be absent and there is no institutionalised concept of individual rights. This is the obstacle for development of democratic political culture. This hierarchical
relationship also resulted in high degree of distrust, the most Thais feel toward each other. Because of distrust, group activity becomes impossible on the part of ordinary citizens. Today most Thais cannot be said to have been pervasively interested in public affairs. Political changes are widely believed to be the business of the ruling elites.

Because of submissive nature, the Thais are uncritical towards authority or to demands accountability from their politicians and public officials. Thais react to leadership problems not with open resistance but with passive evasion. They avoid to criticize the leaders, by saying criticism would embarrass superior. Continuous military rule also imposed restrictions on freedom of expression. Due to this, Thai people have developed a distaste of criticism or expression of different opinion. All this made them passive and apolitical.

To conclude, the socio economic and political conditions in Thailand made the people passive, submissive, and indifferent to national politics. The result that the National level politics has always involved only a very few people. Thus, Thailand is superb example of a nation with suitable conditions for military rule which is best organised group in the country.

Though the Thai societal conditions are
favorable to military rule. Yet there must exist some sort of situation favorable to launch a military coup. This situation we call the opportunity to intervene. The study reveals that when economic and political condition of the country had deteriorated, the military was likely to move into politics in order to correct the situation or to provide some sort of public peace and order, political stability and economic prosperity. The 1932, 1947 and 1976 coup were the good examples of this kind of motives of the military. At the same time, the military was also driven by other motives, such as class interest, corporate self interest and individual self interest. The class interest motive of the military was shown when it moved to overthrow the absolute monarchy in 1932. Besides the general motives to provide political stability and economic prosperity, because of adverse of social and economic condition after the second world war, the officer corps took the chance to the political situation in 1947. This was the the manifestation of the corporate self interest and individual self interest of the military. The 1976 coup indicated that the military had moved away from the pre-occupation of the corporate self interest and individual self interest motives towards another direction that is towards serving the national interest. But again returned back to corporate self interest in 1991.
As to the opportunity to intervene in domestic politics, the study reveals that the opportunity to intervene would be great. When there was a decline in the actual need satisfaction of the politically active people. It was found that in 1932 and in 1947 and 1976, the army intervened in politics when civilian government were faced with disastrous economic and social problems which it seemed unable to solve. Some years earlier before 1932, 1947 coup had witnessed a rapid rise in inflation and adverse balance of payments. Purchasing power of baht decreased and the consumer price index increased considerably. Rice shortage and unemployment added fuel to the crisis. In addition to the above in 1947 and 1991 corruption amongst government officials and politicians and rising crime rate were important social problems for which the government seemed to have no solution. The 1976 coup was preceeded by riots. Mass demonstration, protesting American foreign policy, economic and social justice, corruption of government officials and military suppression of communist terrorists violence often erupted as student demonstrators were harassed by military rightist group. In 1991 wide spread corruption, party rivalries inflation and unemployment are the reasons for the coup. But most analysts believe the coup was the result of tussel for influence as politicians tried to sideline the army. As a leader of chart Thai party, which was
dominated by extremely wealthy businessmen and politicians, prime minister Chatichai resisted the attempts by the military to middle in politics.

Loss of civilian government legitimacy was another important factor for 1947, 1976, 1991 coup. In 1947 in addition to the economic issue, the legitimacy of Pridi’s regime was shaken when king Anand was found shot in bed, thus giving rise to wide spread rumours that Pridi was involved in the regicide. In 1976 the ineffectiveness of Kukrit and Semi Governments in coping with political unrest and conflicts among government parties substantially reduced their legitimacy coupled with anti-leftist mobilization by the military, the silent majority began to loose faith in civilian government and resorted again to support a military regime to restore peace, order and security. During the period of 1980–88 democratic government become stable under the prime Minister General Prem who had formed a coalition Government. He was not an elected member of any House. During this period two coup took place but failed due to Kings support to prem. After 1988 election, Chatichai Choonhavan formed a cabinet government. However form 1980 to 1990 no party could secure majority seats in elections. In addition member of parliament shifted allegiance with alacrity from one party to another, just to gain cabinet posts. The Chatichai cabinet came to be regarded as one of the most
corrupt ever. Addition to this the ministry was very critical of military. Specially of Army commander General Chaovalit and Suprem commander Sunthorn. At this stage military decided to take advantage of political dissatisfaction among the people to protect the military's corporate interest. On February 23, 1991 when prime Minister Chatichai was to fly by plane, Air force chief served the arrest order on him. Announcement was made on radio and television by interrupting the regular programme that the armed forces had taken over the government. The new government imposed Marshal law, abolished the constitution, and dissolved the parliament and dismissed the cabinet. Thus in 1991 without firing a single shot, military to takeover or intervene in political affairs was completed.

To conclude, Thai military resorted the coups and taken over the civil government only when specific situation creating a dissatisfaction among the public or political elite was developed. It is proved that opportunity to intervene is a necessary factor for the military take over.

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is the combined effect of all the factors that helps the military to intervene and to expand its role in the political affairs of the country.