

Independent Study: The Role of The Army and Thai Political Development's Problems

Author: Mr. Sa-ard Koonyosying

M.A. (Political Science): Politics and Government

Examining Committee:

Associate Prof. Somsak Keawkingkeo Chairman

Associate Prof. Dr. Narong Sinsawasdi Member

Associate Prof. Prachid Na Bangchang Member

Abstract

The main objective of this independent study is to examine the roles and behaviors of Thai military which involve in political changes of Thailand. In addition, the study intends to find out what are the main motivations that induce Thai military to get involved in politics. Moreover, the study explores various recommendations of how to correct and develop the roles of Thai military in the direction which is in accordance with the development of democratic political system of Thailand.

The methodology of the study is based on doing research and collect data and information from documentary research which is available in any library.

The study indicates that throughout the history of Thai democratic system since its establishment in 1932, Thai people have never had real participation in politics of the country. Eventhough Thailand has had some popular elected governments coupled with having civilian prime minister, but these governments never last long and would be toppled down after short periods of having the

state power. Thus as a rule of Thai politics. the state power is vested in the hands of influential extraparliamentary elements which mostly comprise of civilian and military cliques. These political cliques have used state mechanisms and parliamentary system to conserve the interests of each member and of their own clique as a whole. By this process, Thai people have been refrained from having any participation in the process of political decision making. Deprived of political participation, dictatorial rule or powerism flourishes and take turn to take the reign of the country by staging coups d'etat time and again.

In the early stage of political intervention by the military, especially in the case of the revolution in 1932, the military plays the role of liberal and modernized element which is willing to give support to democratic rule in Thailand. Consequently, after 1947, the military roles in Thai politics become negative to the progress of Thai political development. The military involvements in politics have created the so called "vicious cycles" which always repeat themselves again and again. Denouncing the existence of vicious cycles by the Thai middle class has led to the tragic May incident. It is quite certain that the military has to stop its involvements in politics, but for how much and for how long that the military prepares to accept the changes still remain to be seen.