The Same Old Story: The collapse of the semi-democracy regime in 1930s Japan and 2006 Thailand

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Abstract—: Both Thailand and Japan have experienced turbulent democratic processes. In addition, both countries are considered as semi-democratic according to Dahl's framework. It is undeniable that both countries have failed in democratization itself, at one stage, despite being almost 100 years apart, and Lipset's prerequisite having been met. There were three main factors that led to such occurrences, these being too many unelected offices, which have considerable authority over the electoral force, politicians who side with the non-democratic side for their gain, and the belief that there existed a better alternative form of government. These have been accompanied by six circumstantial similarities that have made the situation in Thailand and Japan similar. Lastly, we can see that the military have played an important role as an undemocratic force or democratic force supporter depending on how much the civilian government can assert their control over them.

Keywords : Taisho democracy, 2006 Thai coup d'état, 1932 attempted coup, Civil-Military relations

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Introduction

History often repeats itself. The collapse of semi-democracy regimes in the 1930s in Japan and in 2006 in Thailand were no different despite being 70 years apart. Despite the bright prospects for democracy to thrive and mature in their respected times, both had failed. Both cases are interesting because, there are many similarities, both circumstantial and in the direct actions by the respective governments, that effect their strength. The operation of non-democratic forces in the political landscape appears in both cases and succeeded in reversing the course of democracy and injecting non-democratic forces into society for years to come. Although there are various reasons, this was due, mainly to the rise of non-democratic forces. Non-democratic forces can come in various ways and accumulate, waiting for the right trigger. The factors can be divided into three categories: internal, external and trigger.

For the first factor, in both countries, the structural problem of controlling unelected offices through election was one of the flaws in the system, which made it doomed to fail. Another factor was the existence of external influences, like the semi-loyal characters in the regime who were loyal to the side that offered greater gains. Lastly, the trigger came from the loss of legitimacy of the regime. When it lost legitimacy to a certain level, people started looking for the alternative, and military initiative against the government could also arise. Within this essay, the aforementioned will be discussed through the second-order of Dahl's Polyarchy.

It is very important to notice that both Thailand and Japan have their own uniqueness in the political landscape. The existence of the Network Monarchy in Thailand and the special regards given to the military by the constitution of Japan posed a challenge to the regime since it created another uncontrollable variable whose presence and decisions could shape the political landscape.

Apart from the three aforementioned factors that led to the collapse of the regimes, both cases can be seen as counter to

Lipset's notion of democratization; this will be discussed later. There are other circumstantial similarities between these two countries. For example, both countries failed to hand over the control of the military to the people, preventing a norm to discipline the military. There were also calls for a transcendentalist cabinet before the collapse of the regime and which appeared right after the collapse. Both regimes could have raised the representation of the lower classes and have demilitarized the armed forces while the government was legitimate, and during which the military was unpopular. Lastly, before semi-democracy could emerge, there was an powerful oligarchy in both countries. One of the things to be discussed is the timeframe of the beginning and the end of semi-democracy of both countries.

In the Japanese case, even though Takenaka (2014) pinpointed the start date to be the beginning of party cabinet by Okuma in Japan in 1914, continuing to the 1932 attempted coup, other authors suggest otherwise (52-65). Takayoshi (1966) points out that it could be between 1905 and 1925 because he looks at the trend of democracy, which died out in 1925, along with emperor Taisho, while Takenaka put more emphasis on the practice (1). Some other sources mark 1936 or 1940 as the end of democracy in Japan as political parties had virtually no power, and the Imperial Rule Assistance Association was established (Gordon 2003, 197-198; Jansen 2000, 618-619).

For Thailand, it is closer to a semi-competitive civilian regime, rather than the electoralism which Japan is closer to, as Takenaka (2014) argues in his book that Thailand during the 1980s was semi-democracy (19-21). Post-1997 Thailand was more aligned with the electoralism where elections were held, and competitions were fierce but the control over non-elected offices were minimal. The study timeframe ranges from the creation of party cabinet in Japan in 1914, to the rise of non-party cabinet in 1936 and, for Thailand, the adoption of the new constitution in 1997, to the 2006 coup. However, during the first few years of the 1997 constitution of Thailand, there were not a lot of issues, apart from the economic crisis.

It should be noted that Takenaka (2014) based on his book Japanese book in 2002, it is impossible for him to learn about the Thaksin administration, which is closer to 1930s Japan than the Prem administration. It was only after the Thaksin administration got elected that the constitution showed its flaws. The regime collapsed in 2006 when a coup took place. However, it could be argued that the semi-democracy tradition in Thailand still remains up until the 2014 coup or even today due to the enabling nature of the regime. However, if we look at the constitutional design, we can see that the 1997 constitution was the most democratic compared to the latter two. After the 2006 coup, the political parties were greatly limited in their power and control, bringing it closer to the inclusive hegemony where liberalization got limited. The author hopes that this work will contribute to the historiography of the fall of the transitional regime through the operation of non-democratic forces, as well as identifying the dynamics that led to 2006 coup in Thailand in comparative aspects.

Theoretical Framework

According to Lipset (1959), after the prerequisites of democracy, which are industrial growth, the level of education of its citizens and the spread of urbanization are met, democracy can be sustained. However, democracy is often put to the test, especially during its Developmental state period. In many cases, democracy at its early stage cannot withstand the challenge and collapses in the end (Dahl, 1989). Within this theoretical framework, we shall revisit the main theory of democratization and some factors that lead democratization to fail.

It is impossible to discuss democratization without mentioning Dahl's (1971) work. There are three possible ways to achieve Polyarchy, also known as democracy. In the first, a country will go through liberalization becoming a competitive oligarchy then through the development of inclusiveness, resulting in a polyarchal regime (Dahl 1971, 7-9). In the second, the country will go through inclusiveness first, then liberalization, which will

result in inclusive hegemonies before proceeding to be polyarchy (Dahl 1971, 7-9). The Third is to have both liberalization and inclusiveness developed together to achieve polyarchy (Dahl 1971, 7-9). However, there is a flaw in this framework since it does not account for the electoral control over political office. If we use Dahl's framework as an example, the 1930s Japan and 2000s Thailand would have been Polyarchies since there were protests and those protests could impose change on the government whereas is universal meaning that the participation rate was high (inclusiveness). Even though the voter turnout might be low in some elections, the inclusiveness of democracy was high, and it became the people's choice, not to participate in the election. Under the auspice of Diamond's suggestion, we could see the alternative interpretation of Polyarchy, to have electoralism in its framework (Karl, 1986).

Hence, Takenaka (2014) came up with his framework, which is the second order of Dahl's Polyarchy (74). With liberalization and inclusiveness developed, the political competition emerged. The political competition means that the parties have to compete to gain the vote. This cannot happen if there was no liberalization in the participation of the people. Therefore, both are combined as political competition in the second order framework. Another side of the framework is the electoral control over political offices, which shows the level that democracy actually works. It could be seen that, in Japan and Thailand, even though it fell into the Polyarchy path by Dahl, it was still considered semi-democracy. This is because the civilian government could not really control political offices, especially the military. Therefore, the regimes in both countries were more of an electoralism rather than democracy or semi-competitive civilian regimes.

As Takenaka (2014) mainly uses a structural approach and having conditions as the trigger, we could see the importance of institutions. However, there is an important definition used in this paper which is the legitimacy that this paper will use the same definition as the book given by Juan Linz (1978) which is "the belief that in spite of shortcomings and failures, the exist-

ing political institutions are better than any others that might be established" (16). By that, it does not need the legitimacy to be completely ruined for the regime to be changed. A significant distrust from the people is enough to overthrow the regime.

According to Takenaka (2014), there are three main factors that could lead a regime to its downfall. Those are the lack of legitimacy, the polarization of semi-loyal characters and the inability of electoral control over political office (33-44,73). As for the legitimacy, it is the belief of the people to believe that the regime is the most suitable regime for the country. We could see that when the legitimacy of the government was eroding, the call for alternative regimes such as authoritarian arose. The semi-loyal characters are those who are not totally loyal to the regime. By that, if the chances arises, they can resort to using undemocratic moves for their gain. Lastly, the electoral control over political office is highly important because if the government retains a high level of control, it can exercise its power as it wants and it will answer to the pressure from the people. However, if the electoral control over political office is not high, there will be many autonomous bodies within the government which will make the government unable to control them (Veerayooth 2016). As a result, the government will be just a representative body with no power. We can see that during the time that the civilian government was strong, it could exert more control over such autonomous bodies e.g. the military.

In order to understand Thai politics, it is impossible to neglect the existence of the Network Monarchy (Veerayooth & Hewison 2016). The Network Monarchy is the loose body of a different group of people that have the same interest (Harris 2015; McCargo 2005). Therefore, the main duty of the Network Monarchy is to make sure that every party will continue supporting the network in exchange for the benefits (McCargo 2005). As a result, we could see that the Network Monarchy in Thailand was really strong as we could see several interventions by the Network Monarchy through the king and his proxies (McCargo 2005, 501). The king, as the deal broker, constantly manipulates the politics (McCargo 2005, 502). Whenever it found an obstacle, it could

intervene in order to change the status quo or to put pressure on the target through its apparatus (McCargo 2005, 501). We could find it intervening in the Thaksin administration several times to express its discontent, such as by promoting dismissed public officials to the privy council (McCargo 2005, 505).

As a matter of fact, Thaksin, himself, was a part of the Network Monarchy (Tejapira 2016, 229). However, he created another network of his own during his tenure. By that, there was another network which could threaten the existing Network Monarchy. Also, with the even more popularity of the Thaksin administration, it was clear that Thaksin became a threat to the network (Tejapira 2016, 228-229). By that, there was an unintentional race between the rising power and the incumbent power for the hegemony leading to the hegemony crisis.

The Network Monarchy used the War of Position through various means such as giving implicit support to the protest and showing its discontent in public to the Thaksin administration (Veerayooth & Hewison 2016). At the same time, Thaksin, himself, started to commit to this war of position to many parts of the Network Monarchy such as the business oligarch (Pasuk & Baker 2009, 266-270). He also elevated himself by organizing a making merit ceremony at the Grand Palace which was practically reserved only for the royal family ("Chabkohhok "Thaksin" maimeephrabaromrachanuyathainangprachan 'thambun' naiwatphrakeaw " 2005). With the hegemony crisis, the king decided to commit to the war of manoeuver by ratifying the coup. As a result, we could see that the Network Monarchy played an important role in Thai politics, something that does not happen much in Japan, apart from the royal intervention that the military have to be disciplined which partly resolved the Taisho Political Crisis and that Kato had to find who was responsible for the assassination of Zhang-Tso Lin (Ryota 2014).

Similarities

Against Lipsett's notion that after prerequisite are meet, democracy will be sustained

Thailand and Japan have several similarities. One of them is the failure of democracy, even though this took place at different times. It is contrasted with the notion provided by Lipsett (1959) that once literacy rate, economic performance and urbanization reach a certain level, democracy will be sustained. However, it is evident that both Thailand during the 2000s and Japan During the 1930s achieved, these prerequisites. For the case of Japan, it reflects from the rise of the Minseito party, the urban party, to be the incumbent government and the Japanese economic performance during the First World War (Jansen 2000, 510, Halliday 1975, 115). As for Thailand, Thailand experienced exponential growth in the 1980s and economic growth in the 2000s (Baker & Phongphaichit 2009, 241-246). The dominance of the urban population in national politics should also have contributed. These prerequisites should sustain democracy; yet, democracy could not be sustained. This can be seen in the collapse of the party cabinet after 1932 in Japan and the coup d'etat in Thailand in 2006. Therefore, it could be seen that the prerequisites that commonly sustain democracy cannot be applied in this case.

Politicians who side with non-democratic force (Semi-loyalty)

According to Takenaka's (2014) framework, there are three main factors that led to the collapse of semi-democracy. Those are: Semi-loyalty, Lack of legitimacy and exceeding a critical mass of un-elected incumbents in the office (Takenaka 2014, 33-44,73).

First, the polarization of the partisan, as we could observe in both Thailand and Japan, that are the minority party, would do anything to gain premiership (Conference on Taisho Japan 1974; Phongpaichit & Baker 2009). This forces semi-loyal characters to be disloyal. The best example came from the Seiyukai during Hamaguchi and Wakatsuki cabinets that opposed as much legislation as possible so the government would fail to deliver the

promised policies to the people (Takenaka 2014, 131). During the London Naval Treaty, they even went as far as to fabricate a constitutional crisis by convincing the Navy Chief of Staff to go against the ratification by Hamaguchi (Takenaka 2014, 125-126). In addition, when the Kwantung army fabricated the Manchurian incident. The Seiyukai justified this uncontrollable behavior of the army which weakens the ability of the government to curb the situation (Takenaka 2014, 127-128). All of these occurred because the Seiyukai admitted more non-democratic forces to the democratic regime. In other words, they were disloyal toward the regime, which eventually diminished their power.

On the other hand, in Thailand, the Democrat party is known to be majority-seekers since the Prem Tinsulanonda cabinet (McCargo 2005, 507-509). During the Thaksin Shinawatra era, the Democrat party became the minority. And in the subsequent election in 2005 they lost more seats. Without help, the Thai Rak Thai would be able to establish a one-party majority cabinet. This fear, together with other parties led the Democrat and some other parties to boycott the election, since they knew that they would not get a chance to be the government ("Opposition may boycott Thai election; demonstrators want Thaksin out" 2006). With this course of action, they were disloyal to the regime since they were denying participation in the system that gives the power and legitimacy to them. By denying it, they were fabricating a political deadlock that required non-democratic force to intervene. Moreover, there were protests on the street by the People's Alliance for Democracy or "PAD", asking for the resignation of Thaksin Shinawatra ("Thaksin rebuffs resignation calls while elite call for appointed PM" 2006). Many politicians were supporting PAD's protest. The PAD protest per se was not disloyal to the regime, in the beginning. But later, the proposal demanding the incumbent government to return their power to the king and let the king chooses the new Prime Minister according to their interpretation of section 7 of the constitution that "Whenever no provision under this Constitution is applicable to any case, it shall be decided in accordance with the constitutional practice in the democratic regime of government with the King

as Head of the State." similar to the use of section 5 during the Sarit regime (Preechakul 2013; Thai 1997 Constitution). Even though the king declined to use such authority, the government legitimacy was already undermined by the rise of non-democratic forces (Threesuwan, 2017). In other words, the disloyal gave the non-democratic forces political power which created an alternative choice for the current democratic regime which undermined its legitimacy, since some saw the alternative as a new and better choice.

The Lack of Legitimacy of the Government (Belief that there is another better regime)

The second point that Takenaka (2014) made was the lack of legitimacy that contributes to the fall of a democratic regime. In Japan, it was obvious that the regime's economic performance from 1929 was poor, judging from the unemployment rate and number of strikes (Halliday 1975). The situation became even worse during the Japan banking crisis, which gave rise to the Zaibatsu and its decision to go back to the Gold Standard during the Showa depression, which put pressure on the government to levy tax on the people (Halliday 1975). By having a poor economic performance, it prompted people to yearn for a past alternative such as being ruled like the Genro's era (The founding oligarch of Japanese modern politics). Moreover, the government between 1929 and 1932 issued and ratified their policy decisions without the consultation of the parliament (Takenaka 2014, 168-169). This made the situation worse when the parliament was not content with their role. As a result, many members of the parliament criticized the government harshly, followed by a series of scandals from the government and parliament.

The most prominent one was the meeting in which the president of Seiyukai, Minseito and Rikken Doshikai met and agreed to withdraw the motion of no confidence (Takenaka 2014, 109). This enflamed the distrust between the people and the regime and the feeling of indifference, since all the parties were colluding anyway. Much of the press expressed its discontent with the regime. Yet, some critics still said that despite the flaws

in democracy, the system was still the best regime Japan could adopt (Takenaka 2014, 148); nevertheless, the country there were significant minorities who wanted an alternative regime. However, the true extent of the dissent cannot be measured due to the fact that the Peace Preservation law was enacted during that time which imposed a ban on political public gathering and arrested protestors as though criminals. This favoured the calls by ultranationalist groups for the military to intervene in the politics. Some groups believed that the emperor was surrounded by a group of corrupt politicians and these people must be killed in order to liberate the emperor (Halliday 1975). We could observe that the dissent was growing significantly and providing reasons for the non-democratic force to intervene in politics.

In Thailand, as we could observe from the previous point, there are disloyal politicians that have boycotted elections and have invited non-democratic forces to intervene. After the 2005 election, the Thaksin administration finally gained the absolute majority in the parliament which allowed it to be a majority government, since the opposition boycotted the election (Treesuwan 2018). By that, the government could issue policies at its will. At the same time, there were series of scandals regarding the government such as Shincorp shares and Ms.Potjaman's land deed transfer, that gave cause for demonstrations and the opposition to go against the government and act with disloyalty (Phongpaichit & Baker 2009, 160-165).

As we could observe from the protest on the streets, there were significant minorities that wanted an alternative regime. While some called for a new prime minister according to the section 7, others pleaded for the military to intervene ("Kerdaraikhuenbangkorn-lang "ratthapraharn 19 kor.yor. 47"chakprakotkarnlaithaksin thueng pholmaipis kormorchor " 2020). All of these reflect that the legitimacy of the government was problematic and ,thus, gave rise to the belief in the alternative regime.

Too many un-electorate offices that have considerable authority

The Last among the list in Takenaka's framework is the number of un-elected officers that have considerable authority. In Japan, the most prestigious and the most powerful institutions are Genro, a group of elder statesmen. However, the Genro were dying and left Prince Saionji as the only Genro after the death of Matsukata (Gordon 2003, 166). Genro was the one who recommended the next prime minister to the emperor who would appoint him (Gordon 2003, 166). After an attempted coup in 1932, the Genro felt that they needed someone not affiliated with any political party who would enjoy more legitimacy to discipline the military, resulting in the end of the party cabinet (Takenaka 2014, 142). The next one was the Privy council. The Privy council was responsible for giving advice to the emperor (Takenaka 2014, 57). Their main duty was to ratify treaties and emergency decrees (Takenaka 2014, 79). However, their decision not to ratify the financial emergency decree led to the chronic state of the banking crisis and the collapse of the first Wakatsuki cabinet (Jansen 2000, 503). It reflects that the elected body was still subject greatly to the unelected body in Japan. Thirdly, the House of Peers, all of them came from the election within the peers (Gordon 2003, 126). They were ultra conservative and turned down several progressive bills such as the universal suffrage bill and others (Takenaka 2014).

Lastly, the military, they were the greatest obstacle in the exercising of power by the government. It is true that during the Takaaki cabinet, even though the government cut down 4 army divisions along with ratification of the Washington naval treaty a year prior (Takenaka 2014, 89), the influence of the military was not reduced. They just chose to obey the government which had more legitimacy than them. The scale balance between the military and the civilian government existed because the Meiji constitution aimed at limiting the civilian government from interfering with the military. The Minister of Army and Navy did not report to the Prime Minister but directly to the emperor

(Takenaka 2014, 83). Moreover, the Army and the Navy also havda choice to withdraw their minister if they were not satisfied with government policies (Takenaka 2014, 77). If the government did not receive the substitute minister, the cabinet would collapse automatically, since it was the Prime Minister's duty to fill all of the post (Jansen 2000, 77). Moreover, since Genro controlled the politics, the Military Ministers to be Active-Duty Officers Law was installed by Yamagata Aritomo, from the Choshu clique to limit the possible influence of the party politicians on these posts (Edgerton 1999). However, this law was repealed by Prime Minister Yamamoto from the Satsuma clique (Takenaka 2014, 84).

Nevertheless, the practice that military ministers had to be an active-duty officer still remained and there were no civilians appointed in such positions except during the Washington Naval treaty, in which Prime Minister Hara also served this post in lieu of the actual minister that went to negotiate the treaty (Takenaka 2014, 88-89). The division of responsibility within the armed forces was also problematic to the system. The problem was the division of works in the military ministry were ambiguous. The minister oversaw the resources the military possessed (organizational matters) while the chief of staff utilized those resources (operational matters) (Edgerton 1999). This made it hard to distinguish between the duties of the two positions. During the time when the party cabinet was strong, the military ministry could control the resources while the chief of staff had to allocate their personnel according to what they had, for example, during the Washington Naval treaty negotiations. However, as the party cabinet weakened, the chief of staff had more power and coerced the minister to increase the personnel. These balances between civilian and military and within the military made it harder for the cabinet to control the armed forces.

In Thailand 's case, there were many un-elected officers that were not subject to the control of democratic forces. First of all, it is true that the judges in the constitutional court came from the nomination of a Senate's committee and were approved by the Senate, which came from the election of the people. However, out

of fifteen, seven judges came from a small candidate pool among civil judges, while the rest came from the recommendation of the Senate (Thai 1997 Constitution). As a result, the significant minority of them were not elected. Moreover, one of the most significant aspects of Thai 1997 constitution was that it gave vast power to the independent organization which could bring down the government. The ombudsman, the National Anti-Corruption Commission and the State Audit Office of the Kingdom of Thailand came from the recommendation of the Senate. However, the choosing procedure minimally involved the Senate and usually came from selection by the chief of the supreme court, the chief of administrative court and the chief of the constitutional court ("Theemakhong por.por.chor. chakratthathummanun 40 tueng ratthathummanun korsorchor " 2018). All of them had vast power and were able to sue the cabinet in the constitutional court, which resulted in the verdicts to withdraw members of parliament or members of the cabinet.

The next one is the privy council. The members of the privy council are appointed by the king at his wishes and is consulted by the king on the state affairs ("Botbathnatheekhongkamontriphaitairatthathummanun " 2007). However, the monarch usually demonstrates his discontent in the state affairs. For example, the ousted cabinet members were appointed to the privy council members which acted as the royal's personal messenger (McCargo 2005, 505). Many times, the monarchy also expresses its discontent verbally through their birthday speeches or the speeches in front of official servants (McCargo 2005, 501). Both the privy council, who acts as the king's messenger and the monarch himself are not under the democratic forces.

Lastly, there are the military and the police. It is true that in Thailand the Minister of Defence controls both organizational and operational matters of the armed forces while the Office of Prime Minister controls the police. However, their board of executives which control the appointment of the personnel is totally different. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence get only one vote each. They are the minority in the voting since the

board of executives consists of many others unelected members such as the chief of staff and the chief commander of each armed force ("Bigtu"reakporborlaothap thokboard 7 suakalahome kuyphotaharnklangpee " 2021). By that the appointment of armed force personnel is not subject to democratic force. Lastly, even though Thailand allows civilians to serve in the defence post, no civilians actually have ever been posted as the minister of defence apart from the Prime Minister who appointed himself for the role. Meaning military force has never truly been in the hand of the people before.

The Failure to Make Civilian Control of the Military Become a Norm, and to Discipline the Armed Forces.

Although civilian control over the military is not pointed out as one of the pillars according to Takenaka's (2014) framework, it is an important aspect across literature on democratization. It is clear that both Thailand and Japan failed to hand over the military to the people. Since whenever the civilian government is stable and secure, the military would usually comply with the government and be more disciplined. Despite that some of the Prime Ministers of both countries such as Thaksin and Tanaka had military backgrounds and used to work in the armed forces, both of them failed to earn respect from the military. As a result, both governments experienced the insubordination from their own military.

In Japan's case, the most prominent example was the Manchurian incident in which the military was completely against the standpoint of the Tokyo government that favored a pacifist stance against China (Takenaka 2014, 103-105). The Kwantung army, without consultation with the ministry or the cabinet, acted on its own accord because it believed that it was best for Japan's interest (Jansen 2000, 525-526). The same happened in the Jinan incident, when the Kwantung army went to disrupt Chiang-Kai Shek's Northern expedition. The government's hands were tied and they had to let the situation play out (Takenaka 2014, 104). In short, the government was unable to stop the military from invading China and was only able to accept the consequence. As

a result, the military's lack of obedience grew and started its own initiatives such as the formation of the state of Manchukuo, which was contrary to the policy of the Tokyo government (Takenaka 2014, 128). The most prominent evidence is the assasination of Zhang Tso Lin, the warlord in the Northern part of China, who lost the war against Chiang-Kai Shek and withdrew to his stronghold in Manchuria, which was under the sphere of influence of Japan (Jansen 2000, 526-528). A group of a few military officers defied their commander and placed a bomb on Zhang Tso lin's train carriage (Jansen 2000, 526). This was for Japan to expand its controlled area over Manchuria. However, the policy from Tokyo was that Tokyo needed Zhang Tso Lin to be a buffer state from the Nationalist army (Takenaka 2014, 104). After the act of terror, Zhang Tso Lin's son chose to side with the Nationalist led by Chiang-Kai Shek (Takenaka 2014, 198).

Both the Jinan incident and the assassination of Zhang Tso Lin deteroriated Japan's international relations among neighboring countries and annulled the non-interventionist approach advocated by Shidehara and the government's pacifist policy. Prime Minister General Tanaka was tasked to investigate this act of terror by the emperor Showa. However, the military, fearing losing prestige, outright denied the investigation to take place (Takenaka 2014, 121). Failing to hold the military accountable, Prime Minister Takana had to resign. Even with all his power as the representative of the people and past backgrounds, Prime Minister Takana was still unable to question the army. Thus, a significant signal that the military was a force of its own but not for the people it should be serving. The level of insubordination against the government within the armed forces had also been documented throughout the period. There were three Prime Ministers of Japan assassinated during that time namely, Hara, Hamaguchi and Inukai (Jansen 2000, 503). The former two were assassinated by ultranationalist navy officers while the latter was assassinated by the army. In addition to all of these, mostly came from the mid-ranking officer from major to colonel which demonstrated the reality that the government could only control the generals and admirals while the lower-ranked officers still had

some authority and were able to revolt on their own (Halliday 1975). Lastly, although the "Military Ministers to be Active-Duty Officers Law '' installed by Yamagata was repealed, the military posts in the cabinet were still occupied by the military, which reflected the failure to make civilian control over the military become a norm.

In Thailand, it is well-known that the military has several prerogatives. One of them is the fact that the military is always run by a general who is appointed by the civilian government to govern itself (Chambers & Waitoolkiat 2016, 427). In times when the government wants to exert more control over the military, the Prime Minister tends to serve in the post himself, or commissions a general close to the Prime Minister instead. Even though the army was quite autonomous, there were attempts to lessen army's influence and hand the command to the public such as the Thaksin government cutting the budget ("20 Pi chak Thaksin Shinnawatra tueng Prayut Chan O-cha Chai "Ngobklang" 5 lanlan 14.5% khongngobruem " 2016). However, the armed forces, led by General Surayut launched an attack on Myanmar's border in 2001 (Hewison, 2006). The attack on the border furthered the crisis and caused casualties which was not what the government ordered or planned. As a result, the government had to investigate this matter. The result was that General Surayut was transferred from the Commander-in-chief of the Army to Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, a less influential post ("Perdprawat 'polake Surayuth Chulanon prathanongkamontrikhonlasud'" 2020) General Surayut, later, served as the Prime Minister after the 2006 coup. It shows that the civilian government tended to be more lenient with insubordinations of the armed forces similar to Japan which allowed them to expand their influence and network over the politics without fear of repercussion. By the time of his retirement, he was appointed as privy council member immediately, showing the king's favour to General Surayut ("Perdprawat 'polake Surayuth Chulanon prathanongkamontrikhonlasud" 2020). By showing tolerance towards the military's misconduct to avoid conflict within the country, the government was enabling the defiance to go on. As a result, the military staged a coup in

2006. After that, General Surayut served as the transcendentalist Prime Minister by the appointment of the king.

The Appeal for Non-party Cabinet Before the Coup/attempted Coup

In both Thailand and Japan, the unpopularity of the government and the loss of legitimacy of the democratic regime raised a motion for a non-party cabinet. It was popularized because it was believed to solve the political deadlock within the society. In Japan, the call for a non-party cabinet was popularized by the mass and the intellectuals, who learned about the government's scandals (Takenaka 2014, 135). They were discontent by the acts of the government that did not respect the people, such as having a back-door deal to prevent the vote of no confidence (Takenaka 2014, 109). It became worse when the semi-loyal politicians also inflamed this discontent and appealed for the military to intervene (Takenaka 2014). In Thailand, the call for transcendentalists was predominated by the PAD and semi-loyal politicians. Their demand was to enact section 7 of the constitution so that the king could select the new Prime Minister without election. However, the king denied the proposal (Niemsorn 2018). Nevertheless, with the significant minority joining the PAD cause and the lack of legitimacy of the 2006 election, the non-party government became a more viable choice. In the end, it gave a justification for the military to execute a coup in order to break the political deadlock.

The Appearance of the Transcendentalist Cabinet After the Coup/attempted Coup

After the 1932 attempted coup in Japan and the 2006 coup in Thailand, the transcendentalist cabinet emerged. This was to remove the military and politicians from the scene. It was believed that the transcendentalist government would generate less fric-tion and discontent in society (Takenaka 2014, 143). Following the 1932 attempted coup in Japan, Saionji, the last remaining Genro who was also on the hit-list, decided to end the era of the party cabinet and named Saito Makoto as the next prime minister (Takenaka 2014, 155-157). This is because Saionji believed that

a transcendentalist cabinet was the only way to reduce friction and the insubordination of the Armed force (Takenaka 2014, 143-144). Also, to act as leverage on the growing influence of the Army, the new Prime Minister came from the Navy. The practice of transcendentalist government continued until the end of the Second World War (Gordon 2003).

It is clear, although beyond the scope of Takenaka's work, that the practice of transcendentalist government failed to accommodate the growing ultra-nationalist sentiment. It became clear after February 26 incident or the 1936 attempted coup lead by the military, that the amount of the military's influence over the cabinet decision still existed and the military could even order a "government by assassination" by eradicating the influence of politicians from the arena (Gordon 2003, 166). Another significance of the 1936 attempted coup was that it marked the end of Kodo-ha faction or the imperial way faction which was those who believed that the emperor was righteous and only surrounded by corrupted officers, which was popular among the middle-rank officers (Jansen 2000, 600-601). It marked the end of the factionalism in the army and the rise of Tosei-ha or the control faction led by the generals (Jansen 2000, 656-657).

In Thailand, the transcendentalist government was established after the 2006 coup in order to lower the friction within the society. The coup was welcomed by PAD supporters while opposed by the government's supporters. General Sondhi decided not to serve as Prime Minister and the post was given to General Surayuth, who previously served as a privy council member. This move reflected that the army could not control the overall hegemony and had to resort to the royal hegemony of the king (Sattayanurak 2014). Moreover, it shows the influence the king had, through his proxies, over the armed force.

Government's Empowerment of the Lower Class

It is clear that one of the achievements of the government prior to the coup or attempted coup was that it contributed greatly to the lower class. Japan was not egalitarian in terms of

representation. Prior to universal suffrage, the representation of the urban mass area was outweighed by the representation of the rural area (Gordon 2003, 162-167). The universal suffrage greatly benefitted the Seiyukai party since its popular base was set in the rural area (Gordon 2003, 162-167). Moreover, as the minimum tax constraint was set, only people with assets such as those who owned lands in the rural area could meet (Gordon 2003, 162-167). This threw off the balance between the urban and the rural. Nevertheless, under the auspice of Kato Takaaki's cabinet, universal male suffrage was finally passed, despite many attempts by the house of peers to delay it (Takenaka 2014, 100). At the same time, the true universal suffrage was proposed (Takenaka 2014). This made the representation of the people in the urban area and the rural area became more egalitarian.

For Thailand, the transfer of representation was set in the totally opposite way. It is believed that the people in the urban area have more representative power (Laothammatas 2013). According to Two democracies in Thailand by Laothammatas (2013), the rural people elect the government while the urban masses were the group that oust the government. It means that the representation of the urban mass was bigger than the geographical record. However, everything changed during the Thaksin cabinet since the rural mass became empowered greatly. The empowerment could come in terms of prevention of out-of-pocket healthcare, village funds and several schemes which lifted the rural area from impoverishment (Phongpaichit & Baker 2009, 93-94). These became an incentive for rural people to vote for Thaksin-affiliated candidate and rallied people to vote. It is best reflected in the 2010 political crisis in Thailand that these people started to protest for an election. In both cases, the empowerment of the lower class contributed to the popularity of the government while generating discontent among those who were losing their influence. The rural mass in Japan wanted to retain its representation to maintain the favourable policy from the government while the urban mass in Thailand had discontent to see the rural community get more benefit.

The demilitarization of the armed force during the healthy government

One of the achievements of both governments before the collapse of the democratic regime was that they were able to demilitarize the armed forces. In Japan, despite the trend that the armed forces got bigger, the government was able to reduce its size by four divisions in exchange for the re-equipping of the army in 1924 (Takenaka 2014, 89). As a result, it is evident that at that time the government was in complete control over the army, since it was subjected to ordinance from the government and made the fullest of their operational matter. The same happened to the Navy in that it was subjected to the implementation of the Washington Naval treaty and the London Naval treaty (Takenaka 2014). Nevertheless, the changes also received substantial criticisms that it was unpatriotic to do so (Takenaka 2014, 87-89). Prime Minister Hara and Hamaguchi also got assassinated due to these issues (Takenaka 2014, 137).

As for Thailand, the Thaksin cabinet was able to promote General Surayuth to the position of the commander-in-chief at its own will (Hewison 2006). That represents the ability of the government to control the armed forces. In addition, the Thaksin cabinet was also able to reduce the budget of the military for the first time in many years ("20 Pi chak Thaksin Shinnawatra tueng Prayut Chan O-cha Chai "Ngobklang" 5 lanlan 14.5% khongngobruem" 2016). The armed forces were no longer an autonomous part of the cabinet but rather an integral branch. However, as the situation worsened in both Japan and Thailand when their government's legitimacy declined, the influence of the armed forces grew back and the civilian government could no longer control the armed forces.

The Unpopularity of the Military in the Beginning of the Semi-democratic Regime

During the beginning of the semi-democratic regime, the military was unpopular. That might be the reason why the military was obedient to the civilian government. From sources, it is clear that the Japanese military was unpopular during and after the Siberian intervention in 1922. So much that the military was discouraged from wearing military uniforms outside their barracks (Halliday 1975; Jansen 2000; Takenaka 2014). With the legitimacy of the military so low, the civilian government could enforce its power on the military through various means such as cutting down the budget and signing international disarmament treaties. However, as the discontent toward the civilian government grew, the influence of the military also grew since the military was the protector of the regime.

In Thailand, the military was also unpopular after the Black May incident which resulted in the resignation of General Suchinda (Baker & Phongpaichit 2014, 248-250). As the military's popularity hit rock bottom, the people gave their support to the civilian government which was the opposite of the military's authoritarian regime. As a result, the military withdrew itself from the political scene but still retained its previous form as an autonomous body within the government, up until an effort to control the military by the Thaksin administration (Kanchoochat 2016).

The existence of competitive oligarchy before the Semi-democracy era

Lastly, it was before the era of Semi-democracy that there were oligarchies with election rule in both Japan and Thailand. It is true that Takenaka's book rules out the Prem administration as semi-democracy (Takenaka 2014, 20). It is worth noting that Semi-democracy is a spectrum. It depends on which side of the spectrum the regime will fall into. Prem's administration fell nearer to the Semi-competitive civilian regime than the Japanese case which was electoralism. This is because in Thailand the participation of the citizens is universal whereas in Japan, during the

party cabinet, it is limited to male voters. However, the public contestation in Japan was different since it was full of protest whereas in Thailand, during Prem's era, there were less protests. Moreover, the political competition between Genro during their era in Japan was greatly intense since all parties were willing to win the house seats. The legacy of this intensity continued to be intense during the party cabinet era since each party was also associated with the Genro during the early party cabinet era (Halliday 1975). In Thailand 's case, it was different since the political competition during Prem's era was low due to the fact that, in the end, the premiership would be awarded to Prem as a head of coalition government according to the favor of the king (Handley 2006, 283). It was no difference who was running in the competition since the result would remain the same. However, there is another factor that determines the side the regime leans towards, which is the electoral control over political office. The electoral control over political office in Japan was low as we know from the existence of many extra-constitutional organs such as Genro, the Privy council and the military minister. However, in Thailand during the Prem government, the electoral office which ended with Prem being the Prime Minister could control the political office almost completely under the support of the king himself (Handley 2006, 284). The best reflection was the Young Turk rebellion which reflects that the government could control most of the military against the rebellion (Bunnag 2020). As a result, both regimes were oligarchy with the electoral rule. Lastly, as Dahl (1989) stated, the young age democracy is more prone to collapse. As a result, both semi-democracy in Thailand and Japan which were young did not survive.

Conclusion

All in all, we could see that there are many similarities between the collapse of semi-democratic regime in 1930s Japan and 2006 Thailand. It proves that Lipsett's notion is not universally applicable. We see that semi-loyal characters are dangerous to the regime since they are willing to change sides just for personal gain. Semi-loyal characters are prone to invite the undemocratic force

to the system and provoke them to action that is undemocratic. The legitimacy of the government is important since it is the basis of power. The belief that the regime is the best regime possible can boost the regime's legitimacy and maintain it ,while, on the contrary, the disbelief could make the regime lose its legitimacy rapidly. The disbelief is also equal to the invitation for the non-democratic forces to make a move. The number of un-elected offices also needed to be watched since too many of them could make the government dysfunctional because its will and policies could not be implemented or even obstructed by these un-elected forces. To maintain democracy, the military have to be disciplined or else they could be a threat to the regime itself. The appeal for a non-party cabinet usually arises when the regime's legitimacy is low and it is dangerous when a significant number of people agree with that idea. Transcendentalist cabinet is a viable choice when the friction in the society needs to be lowered, but it usually does not work out and, in turn, imposes more undemocratic forces. The empowerment of the lower class could contribute hugely to the popularity of the government but it can create a shift in the representation. The unpopularity of the military could be one force that leads to the demilitarization. It greatly contributes to the democratic force. We can see that the competitive oligarchy existed in both countries. They are an undemocratic force, but with the inner conflict and rising awareness of the people, the transfer of power to semi-democracy is possible. Overall, we can see the vicious cycle within this loop of power. Whenever the civilian regime is weak, the undemocratic force will arise and it will leave undemocratic legacies to the country, even the transcendentalist, the dark valley in Japan and the 2007 constitution in Thailand. It is always a race between the civilian and military. All in all, these similarities reflect the lesson we could learn from the repeated history that legitimacy of the government is important as much as controlling number of unelected officers and semi-loyalty characters.

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