1 Introduction

In recent decades, many Southeast Asian countries experienced important and sometimes dramatic transformations of their political or economic structures. Between 1986 and 2002, democratically elected governments replaced authoritarian rule in the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Timor-Leste (Shin and Tusalem 2009). In 2010, the military in Myanmar initiated a process of gradual disengagement from day-to-day politics that led to the election of a democratic government in 2015. Following the inauguration of market-oriented economic reforms in the mid-1980s, Laos and Vietnam experienced profound socioeconomic change. Finally, opposition parties in Malaysia won a historic election victory in May 2018 and toppled the Barisan Nasional coalition, which had been in power since 1957.

Such transformations often contributed to profound shifts in the military's role in politics and society, as illustrated by the decreasing number of military-led regimes in Southeast Asia, from five in 1970 to one in 2010 (Geddes, Wright, and Frantz 2014).[1] Nevertheless, civil–military relations in the region are still diverse and feature a remarkable mix of continuity and change. For example, despite successful democratization, the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) continue "to yield considerable political power" in postauthoritarian Indonesia (Mietzner 2018: 140). In the Philippines, civilian governments forged a symbiotic relationship with military elites, which allowed civilians to survive in office but enabled the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to preserve some of their authoritarian and preauthoritarian prerogatives (Croissant et al. 2013). And in Thailand, the military coups in 2006 and 2014 demonstrated that even after almost fifteen years of temporary retreat from government to barracks, military rule is a continuing danger in that country. Civil–military relations in Timor-Leste, while more stable than in the Philippines or Thailand, are also strained (Sahin and Feaver 2013). Since the general elections of July 2017 and the failed attempt to build a new coalition government, observers noticed a resurgence of "increasingly belligerent rhetoric" that is endangering political stability and the security of the population (Feijó 2018: 212). Finally, recent developments in Myanmar such as a sweeping military crackdown on the Muslim Rohingya ethnic group demonstrate that the *Bama Tatmadaw* (Burmese for "armed forces") remains a power that "state counselor" Aung San Suu Kyi cannot control (Fink 2018: 161).

Such ambiguities of civil–military interactions contrast with the seemingly prosaic routine of civil–military interactions in party-based autocracies. Most

[1] *Armed forces, armed services*, and *the military* are used interchangeably throughout this Element.

features of civil–military relations in Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, and Malaysia have been remarkably constant and coherent, including the undisputed predominance of the civilian sector over the military, the absence of military power centers beyond the reach of the ruling parties, and those parties' invulnerability to coups.

What explains these divergent paths? Why did different types of military organizations emerge in the late colonial and early postcolonial periods, and how did the role of new armies in the process of state- and nation-building affect civil–military relations in the new nation-states of Southeast Asia? What have been the roles and missions of Southeast Asian militaries, and how have they changed from independence until today? What types of civil–military relations emerged, and what are main factors that explain change and continuity in the interactions between soldiers, state, and society?

1.1 The Existing Scholarship

Since its inception in the 1950s, the scholarship on the interactions between soldiers, state, and society in Southeast Asia has moved in different directions. The field initially focused on the role of military elites in processes of decolonization and state-building in new nations. In the 1970s, the scholarship moved toward analyzing the origins and political practice of military rule. Since the 1990s, a new generation of studies in civil–military relations has emerged that illuminates the military's role in the breakdown of authoritarianism and how young democracies struggle with creating a military that is strong enough to fulfill its functions but is subordinate to the authority of democratically elected institutions.[2] Finally, in the 2000s, works on security-sector governance have become the most recent addition to the literature on civil–military relations in Southeast Asia. The focus on the "security sector" and the military as a provider of "human (in)security" reflects the increase in nonconventional threats in the region, such as international terrorism, organized crime, environmental degradation and pandemics, and irregular migration. Yet, compared with the rich literature on security-sector reforms in Latin America, postcommunist Europe, and Africa, the research on Southeast Asia has expanded slowly (Beeson and Bellamy 2008).

Even though the civil–military scholarship in Southeast Asia has grown, the field is still problematic in a number of ways. First, much of the recent scholarship focuses on the role of the armed forces in democratization and in changes in form and/or substance of civilian control over the military in new democracies, failing to explore civil–military relations in dictatorships, even as

[2] For critical reviews of these research trends, see Alagappa (2001a) and Croissant (2016).

authoritarianism remains the rule and democracy the exception in the region (Case 2015).

Second, the extraordinarily diverse nature of Southeast Asia in terms of history, demographics, culture, economy, and political systems has clearly been detrimental to the development of a more comparative research agenda. Most studies of the relationship between the soldier and the state in Southeast Asia focus only on one or two countries and operate in relative isolation from analysis of civil–military relations in other regions of the world. This means that Southeast Asian studies have contributed little to the development of theories and concepts in the general civil–military relations literature, which has focused on other developing areas such as Latin America and the Middle East. As Evan Laksmana (2008: 7) asserts, "Southeast Asian militaries [have] suffered from too little theorizing as the focus thus far has been based on area studies scholarship of military politics."

Third, studies on Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar dominate the civil–military relations research in Southeast Asia mainly due to the turbulences of coup politics and military rule, separatist movements, outbreaks of violence, and other upheavals that have been a persistent feature of their postindependence history. There is considerably less research on the Philippines and Vietnam and very little on the civil–military relations of smaller countries such as Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore, not to mention Brunei, Timor-Leste, and Laos. Often, however, generalizations for Southeast Asia as such apply only to the few "focus" cases of civil–military relations and not to the rest of the region. In fact, a key difference between Southeast Asia, on the one hand, and Latin America, postcommunist Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, on the other, is the lack of a single Southeast Asian pattern of civil–military relations. Latin America, with few exceptions, experienced the rise of military rule in the 1960s and 1970s and a wave of transitions from military governments to democratic regimes in the 1980s and 1990s (Pion-Berlin and Martinez 2017). The relationship between the party and the military in all communist regimes in Europe before 1990 followed the Soviet model of party supremacy, based on an effective mixture of control mechanisms, elite fusion, and co-optation of military leaders into the party's prime decision-making bodies (Croissant and Kuehn 2015). And in the Middle East and North Africa, the military has played a central role in almost all authoritarian republics (Koehler 2016). In contrast, the countries of Southeast Asia represent what is arguably the most diverse collection of civil–military relations of any region in the world. Consequently, we have very little in the way of comparative typologies of civil–military relations in Southeast Asia.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

The key concept used in this Element is *civil–military relations*. This term encompasses the entire range of interactions between the military and civilian society at every level (Feaver 1999: 211). However, political science has typically adopted a more narrow focus on the structures, processes, and outcomes of the interactions between the political system, on the one hand, and the armed forces, on the other (Croissant and Kuehn 2015: 258). In this regard, the term *civilians* encompasses all organizations, institutions, and actors that make, implement, and monitor political decisions and substantive policies. It not only includes the state institutions of the core executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government but also nonstate political actors such as political parties, interest groups, social movements, and associations of civil society, as well as international actors such as foreign governments, international financial institutions, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The definition of *military* used in this study refers to "that organization, or group of organizations, which is permanently established by constitutional law, enjoys a monopoly over certain categories of weapons and equipment, and is responsible for the constrained application of violence or coercive force to eliminate or deter any thing or body that is considered to threaten the existence of the nation-state" (Edmonds 1988: 26). What is excluded from this definition are nonstate armed groups, such as guerilla armies, vigilantes, and terrorist organizations. Also not part of this definition are other core security actors that the policy-oriented scholarship describes as the "security sector," such as police, paramilitary forces, intelligence services, coast or border guards, civil defense forces, and government militias (Edmunds 2012).

The fundamental issue in civil–military relations is how to create and preserve a military that is subordinate to political control but is also effective and efficient (Feaver 1999). There is no agreement on what exactly civilian control over the military entails, nor how this concept should be measured. However, in recent years, scholars have advanced conceptions that share two fundamental assumptions (Croissant et al. 2013; Pion-Berlin and Martinez 2017). First, civilian control is about the political power of the military relative to the nonmilitary political actors. Second, and related, political–military relations can best be understood as a continuum ranging from full civilian control to complete military dominance over the political system.

In this understanding, *civilian control* is a particular form of distribution of the authority to make political decisions in which civilian leaders (either democratically elected or autocratically selected) have the authority to decide on national politics and its implementation. While civilians may delegate the

implementation of certain policies to the military, the latter has no decision-making power outside of those areas specifically defined by governments. In contrast, if a government is subordinate to and exists only at the tolerance of a military that retains the right to intervene when it perceives a crisis, a regime is effectively under military tutelage. Finally, the term *military control* shall be reserved for situations in which the military controls government, either through collegial bodies representing the officer corps (*military regime*) or because decision-making power is concentrated in the hands of a single military officer (*military strongman rule*; Geddes, Wright, and Frantz 2014).

Western models of civil–military relations presume that a military's primary mission is to defend the state against external threats. However, in developing countries and postcolonial states, militaries often fulfill a variety of other roles, including nation-building, economic development, and regime protection. This Element distinguishes four such roles and missions (Croissant, Eschenauer, and Kamerling 2017; Croissant and Eschenauer 2018)[3]:

1. **State- and Nation-Building.** In this role, militaries act as transmitters of nationalism, diffusing anticolonialism and national ideologies among local populations and becoming agents in the early creation of large-scale socio-political organizations. In particular, military conscription is an instrument of military-based state- and nation-building. Besides having a socializing function, military state- and nation-builders regularly steer political agendas and engage in economic and administrative activities.
2. **The Exercise and Organization of Political Domination.** Military-as-ruler constitutes the most obvious and dominant role a military can fulfill in the exercise and organization of political power. The military fulfills the role of ruler if military officers dominate the regime coalition and steer the political process – either overtly or behind a civilianized facade. Military-as-supporter, in contrast, does not rule but instead supports and assists the political leadership in exercising and organizing political power. By deterring political opposition, military supporters ensure the regime's survival and become one of its stabilizing pillars. In return, the military receives concessions, for example, impunity from prosecution for human rights violations, autonomy in its own internal affairs, or other political prerogatives. While ruling militaries possess governing qualities themselves, militaries as supporters exert extensive influence on those holding political power (Croissant, Eschenauer, and Kamerling 2017). Finally, a military can assume a role as the servant of the civilian authorities. Here

[3] This differentiation does not assume a linear or evolutionary succession of military roles. Instead, roles may merge, alternate, or overlap.

the military might provide security for the regime, but it does not autonomously decide the extent of its engagement and does not exert either formal or informal veto rights in political affairs.

3. **Regime Transitions.** Regime transitions sometimes start with mass mobilization. However, military roles in situations of anti-incumbent mass contention vary considerably across dictatorships. Some militaries defend the incumbent government against mass protests, whereas others side with the opposition or organize a coup d'état. The specific role the military plays during nonviolent revolutions – defender, defector, or coup plotter – is key to the immediate outcome. However, military institutions can also be important actors in transitions to democracy that occur without mass mobilization (i.e., transitions initiated from above or through negotiations between government and opposition). As Felipe Agüero (1998) asserts, the stronger the military's influence is during the transition, the more it can maintain its prerogatives and stifle postauthoritarian politics.
4. **Economic Development and Commercial Activities.** Despite the fact that military leaders usually make statements of intention to modernize and develop the nation and improve its standard of living on coming into power, the nature and results of the military's role in economic development vary from country to country and especially between autocratically governed states. The role of the military in the national economy is likely to be a function of the relationship of the military to the political authorities. While active participation of the military in commercial activities can have different economic consequences, it often negatively affects military effectiveness.

Furthermore, building on Amos Perlmutter's idea of general types of military organizations in modern nation-states, this Element identifies four distinct types of civil–military relations (Croissant and Kuehn 2018). These are not mutually exclusive categories; there can be hybrid cases that contain characteristics of two or more types.

1. **Professional Civil–Military Relations.** Under professional civil–military relations, civilian and military spheres of autonomy and responsibility are clearly separated. The army (although it has legitimate political interests) does not intervene in the decision-making activities of the government and other political organizations that are not aligned with the military. That is, governments in such regimes exercise full political control over their militaries.
2. **Revolutionary Political–Military Relations.** As Perlmutter (1977: 13) notes, the revolutionary military also "manifests a strong propensity

to succumb to political influence." Yet, in this second type of political–military relations, the revolutionary movement or party does not emphasize the marginalization of the revolutionary military from political affairs. Rather, the revolutionary military is political by definition, and the structures of the ruling political organization interpenetrate the armed forces, which serve as an instrument of mobilization and regime security for the revolutionary political party (Perlmutter 1977: 13–14). Although the relationship between the soldier and the party can change over time, revolutionary political–military relations are generally characterized by a *symbiosis* of military and party elites. To ensure the convergence of interests between party and military elites, military leaders are co-opted into the party apparatus (Perlmutter and LeoGrande 1982).

3. **Praetorian Political–Military Relations.** This third type emerges in countries with low levels of political institutionalization and a lack of sustained mass support for civilian political structures. Cultural, societal, and political circumstances make the use of military force to settle political disagreements likely. This leads to the rise and persistence of the *praetorian state*, in which the military dominates key political structures and institutions (Perlmutter 1974: 4). The army frequently intervenes in the government, acting either as an arbitrator, controlling affairs behind the scenes through a chosen civilian agent, or as an actual ruler (Perlmutter 1974: 8–11).
4. **Neopatrimonial Political–Military Relations.** In this type, a single leader dominates both the political regime structures and the military. As Geddes (2003: 51) explains, "[t]he leader may be an officer and has created a party to support himself but neither the military nor the party exercises independent decision-making power insulated from the whims of the ruler." In the neopatrimonial type, the military serves as another element in the leader's toolbox of authoritarian control instruments to protect him or her from both popular revolt and insider coups. Simultaneously, the military is a franchise system for the ruler in which officers pursuing career opportunities and financial benefits must seek access to the dictator's patronage system. Military officers hold positions in the military organization with powers that are formally defined, but they gain access to their position of power based on personal loyalty to the ruler; they exercise those powers, so far as they can, as a form not of public service but of private property and because it pleases the ruler. Ultimately, the importance of good connections with the ruler and his or her entourage and individual rent-seeking trump military expertise, corporate interests, and revolutionary commitment. Military behavior is correspondingly devised to display a personal interest or status rather than to perform an official, professional, or revolutionary function.

Types of political–military relations and military roles covariate but are not synonymous. For example, different roles of military in state- and nation-building, in political domination, and as economic actors coexist with more than one type (Table 1).

A final remark concerns the relationship between political regimes and types of political–military relations. Although the empirical realities to which they refer are more or less tightly interwoven, they constitute analytically distinct concepts. While military authoritarianism by definition aligns with praetorian political–military relations, highly personalist dictatorships can have either neopatrimonial or praetorian militaries. A revolutionary military requires, by definition, a revolutionary party. Therefore, it is only found in single-party dictatorships. However, most dictators form parties to support their rule, but not all ruling parties are revolutionary. Hence one-party and multiparty authoritarianism can coexist with different forms of political–military relations, ranging from revolutionary to praetorian or neopatrimonial and even professional. Finally, professional political–military relations are a logical prerequisite for consolidated liberal democracies. This is not so in new and unconsolidated democracies, where the historical legacies of the authoritarian period often include a praetorian or neopatrimonial military, and military officers sometimes play an important part in the transition from authoritarian rule.

1.3 Argument and Plan of the Element

In order to analyze civil–military relations in Southeast Asia, this Element takes a comparative historical perspective. With other works in the tradition of comparative historical analysis, it shares "a concern with causal analysis, an emphasis on process over time, and the use of systematic and contextualized comparison" (Mahoney and Rueschmeyer 2003: 10). To understand why divergent paths of civil–military interaction have emerged, remained constant, or changed, it is argued that four causal factors are particularly relevant: (1) legacies of colonial rule and Japanese occupation during World War II, (2) the mode of transition from colonial rule to independence and the role of coercion, (3) the particular threat environment during the early years of state-formation and nation-building, and (4) the strength of political parties and the type of civilian elite structure.

1. **Legacies of Colonial Rule and Japanese Occupation.** Other than the Kingdom of Siam (since 1939, Thailand), all nations of Southeast Asia experienced Western colonial rule for an extended period. Shortly after independence – and sometimes even before – all new nations except North Vietnam created facsimiles of a Western military establishment. The ranks