

**Observation no: 84**

**Country-year: 1939**

**1. Did the current regime come to power in a military coup?**

**Yes.**

The military took power in a 1932 coup.

**2. Has the country ever experienced a military coup?**

**Yes.**

In 1932, the Thai military led a coup against the existing Thai monarchy.

**3. Is the country's top leader a former military officer?**

**Yes.**

Plaek Phibunsongkhram was a former artillery officer and a Field Marshal while serving as head of state.

**4. Is the military officer corps largely closed to those who do not share the leader's ethnic or sectarian background?**

**Yes.**

Membership in the military was largely restricted to ethnic Chinese and therefore was dominated by Buddhist Thai personnel.<sup>1</sup>

**5. Are there strict ideological requirements for entry into the senior officer corps?**

**No.**

However, the senior officer corps were remarkably homogenous and came from a very small group of the population that represented very similar beliefs about the role of the military and governance in Thailand.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Moshe Lissak, *Military Roles in Modernization: Civil-Military Relations in Thailand and Burma*, (London: Sage Publications, 1976), pg. 93.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 107.

**6. Is party membership required for entry into the senior officer corps?**

**No.**

The military was seen as separate from traditional party politics and therefore was not associated with a particular political party.

**7. Does military training involve extensive political education or ideological indoctrination?**

**No.**

While the Thai military was highly nationalistic at this time and generally pro-Phibun, training was not extensively ideological based.<sup>3</sup>

**8. Has the military been used to repress internal dissent in the last five years?**

**No.**

I could find no evidence of the use of the military in repressing internal dissent from 1934-1939, though evidence suggests the Phibun government actively put down political opponents, including arrests and executions.

**9. Has the military been used to govern the country in the last five years?**

**Yes.**

The military was in charge of Thai governance since 1932, with military members serving as head of state, cabinet ministers, and other governance positions.<sup>4</sup>

**10. Is there a paramilitary organization separate from the regular military, used to provide regime or leader security?**

**No.**

I could find no evidence of a paramilitary organization separate from the regular military.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

**11. Is there an internal intelligence apparatus dedicated to watching the regular military?**

**No.**

I could find no evidence of an internal intelligence organization tasked with watching the regular military.

**12. Has a purge of the officer corps occurred in the last five years?**

**No.**

I could find no evidence of a purge of the officer corps from 1934-1939.

**13. Is there an institutionalized forum through which civilian leaders and military officers regularly exchange information?**

**No.**

Decisions were made through the military council and no significant differentiation existed between civilian and military governance in 1939.<sup>5</sup> A full 50% of the cabinet posts were held by acting military officers.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Warren Matthews, "Civil-Military Relations in Thailand: Military Autonomy or Civilian Control?" NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL THESIS (Monterey: 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Moshe Lissak, *Military Roles in Modernization: Civil-Military Relations in Thailand and Burma*, (London: Sage Publications, 1976), pg. 97.