



**The Thai Military Since 1957: The Transition to Democracy  
and the Emerging of the Professional Soldier**

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## **Declaration**

This dissertation contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the dissertation.

I consent to this dissertation being made available for photocopying and loan if applicable if accepted for the award of any degree.

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14 June 2000.

## Summary

This dissertation analyses the role the Thai military played in Thailand's turbulent political history during the second half of the twentieth century. During this period almost 20 successful or aborted coups were staged by the military to takeover from democratically elected governments. Field Marshal Sarit seized control of the country in 1957 and military dictatorship remained for the next 16 years during which another 2 coups were staged. In each case the justification by the military for taking their actions was always publically expressed concern for the welfare and well being of the Thai people. The Thai military has always been a staunch supporter of the Royal Family and have used their influence on the monarchy to legitimize their actions. The last decade, however, has seen a dramatic change in the role of the military. Following the massacre of civilians in May 1992, they were forced to withdraw from absolute power but still strongly influence the Thai political scene. Globalization, a more politically aware public and pressure from the international community were all instrumental in achieving this decline in military power. The Thai military now accepted their role as guardian of the nation and acknowledges that they should serve the country rather than have the country serve them.

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## Glossary

<i>chao pho</i>	'godfather'; term applied to ambitious local businessman
Isan /Esan	north-east region of Thailand
Khana Ratsadorn	The group behind the 1932 revolution
<i>nakleng</i>	a person must be kind to friends, cruel to enemy, engage in drinking, womanizing and renowned for gambling
<i>phattana</i>	development



## Abbreviations

BIFGO	Board of Inspection and Follow-up of Government Operation
CAT	Communication Authority of Thailand
CCC	Counter Corruption Commission
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
INTERFET	International Force in East Timor
ISOC	Internal Security Operations Command
MCOT	Mass Communications Organisation of Thailand
NAP	New Aspiration Party
NARC	National Administrative Reform Council
NCCC	National Counter Corruption Commission
NEDB	National Economic Development Board
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
NGOs	Non-government organisations
NPKC	National Peace Keeping Council
NSCT	National Student Center of Thailand
SEATO	South East Asia Treaty Organisation
STP	Sammakhi Tham Party
TBPP	Thai Border Patrol Police
UN	United Nation
USOM	United States Operations Mission
UTPP	United Thai People's Party