Basic Facts

• Population: 61.2 million
• Ethnic groups: Thai (75%), Chinese (14%), etc.
• Religions: Buddhism (95%), Muslim (3.8%)
• Main exports: computers, parts, textiles, etc.

Thai Politics: Unconsolidated Democracy

• Regime Instability
  – 1932 Monarchy toppled and parliamentary system
  – 1950s-60s Military control
  – 1973 Student uprising and democracy
  – 1976-7: Military coup
  – 1980-8: limited parliamentary system
  – 1988-: civilian control, etc.
  – 1992: temporary military control
• Sixteen constitutions
Thai Politics: distinctive features

- 1. Weakness of administrative states (military not deeply penetrating into society)
- 2. Ceding much autonomy to local business
- 3. Openness to ethnic Chinese
- 4. Party independence (a distinctive route for elite status)
- 5. Active civil society (frier demonstrations, strikes, press)

Influential but fragmented military 1

- Essential for national unity
- Important government positions (defense, finance, home affairs, etc.)
- Factions within the military—coup, counter-coup, and the mobilization of social forces
- PM Pridi ousted by the Rachakhru group. => Sarit
- American aid during the Vietnam war: more generals more factions

Influential but fragmented military 2

- Ideological split
  - Young Turks (1970s), criticizing corruptions and emphasizing social justice
  - Class 5, right wing
  - Democratic Soldiers: moderate and preferring to use parliament
- Links to social forces
  - Unions, farmers, etc.
  - Mobilizing for faction support
- Conflict between factions

Bureaucracy

- Bureaucratic polity
  - Exclusion of social forces
  - Competition among factions
    - Meanings of bureaucracy?
- Dependent upon Chinese business
- Emergence of technocrats in the 1980s
  - Sound monetary and fiscal policies
  - Strategic protection for the development of export-led industries
- Technocrats overpowered by rent-seekers
  - Political leaders’ access to insider information
Business

- Dynamic economic transformation
  - Different business elites
- Provincial
  - Commodity exports—food and raw materials
- Urban—from the 1960s
  - Non-durable consumer goods—textile and simple appliances
- New-generation
  - Stock market boom in the 1990s
  - Financial transactions (market liberalization)

Party