Professionals and Soldiers: Measuring Professionalism in the Thai Military

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Abstract

Thailand's military has recently reclaimed its role as the central pillar of Thai politics. This raises an enduring question in civil-military relations: why do people with guns choose to obey those without guns? One of the most prominent theories in both academic and policy circles is Samuel Huntington's argument that professional militaries do not become involved in politics. We engage this premise in the Thai context. Utilizing data from a new and unique survey of 569 Thai military officers as well as results from focus groups and interviews with military officers, we evaluate the attitudes of Thai servicemen and develop a test of Huntington's hypothesis. We demonstrate that increasing levels of professionalism are generally poor predictors as to whether or not a Thai military officer prefers an apolitical military. Indeed, our research suggests that higher levels of professionalism as described by Huntington may run counter to civilian control of the military. These findings provide a number of contributions. First, the survey allows us to operationalize and measure professionalism at the individual level. Second, using these measures we are able to empirically test Huntington's hypothesis that more professional soldiers should prefer to remain apolitical. Finally, we provide an uncommon glimpse at the opinions of Thai military officers regarding military interventions, adding to the relatively sparse body of literature on factors internal to the Thai military which push officers toward politics.

Keywords: Thailand, civil-military relations, coups, professionalism, Huntington

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Introduction

In September 2013, the commander-in-chief of Thailand's Army, General Prayuth Chan-ocha, warned politicians that "they'd better watch out." Addressing reporters, Prayuth declared that the people were growing weary of political conflicts plaguing the country.[1] Only eight months later in May 2014, the general made good on his threat by staging the second coup in less than a decade.[2] Prayuth's comments were a not-so-gentle reminder that, even during civilian rule, the Thai military remains intimately involved in politics.

While such events are unsurprising to most scholars familiar with Thailand, it is indicative of a fundamental tension in politics. How does a civilian government maintain control over its counterparts in the military, or as Holmes[3] asks, "Why do people with guns obey people without guns?" One popular response based on the work of Samuel Huntington is that the most effective insurance for civilian control of the military is through increasing the level of professionalism in the officer corps. The soldiers' commitment to be professionals is also a commitment to remain generally separate from politics.[4] While this thesis has been contested,[5] the professionalism argument remains popular in both academic and policy circles, being taught at the United States Military Academy for many years.[6] Indeed, the US military curriculum, based in part on Huntington's professionalism argument, has long been part of Thailand's officer training, and most military officials are aware of Huntington's theory.[7] Academically, it has likewise been applied to explain the Thai military's withdrawal from politics from 1992 through 2006.[8]

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[1]   "Army Leader Warns Politicians to Cease Continual Quarreling," *Bangkok Post,* 16 September 2013.

[2]   For a detailed discussion of the 2014 coup, see International Crisis Group (ICG), *A Coup Ordained? Thailand's Prospects for Stability* (Brussels: ICG, 3 December 2014), http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/thailand/263-a-coup-ordained-thailand-s-prospects-for-stability.pdf.

[3]   Stephan Holmes, "Lineages of the Rule of Law," in *Democracy and the Rule of Law*, eds. Jose Maria Maravall and Adam Przeworski (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 24. See also Peter D. Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control," *Armed Forces & Society* 23 (1996): 149–178.

[4]   Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1957).

[5]   Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960); Samuel Edward Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, 5th printing (New Brunswick, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962); see also James Burk, "Theories of Democratic Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society* 29 (2002): 7–29.

[6]   Suzanne Nielsen, "Review Article: American Civil-Military Relations Today: The Continuing Relevance of Samuel P. Huntington's *The Soldier and the State*," *International Affairs* 88 (2012): 369–376; Christopher P. Gibson, *Securing the State: Reforming the National Security Decisionmaking Process at the Civil-Military Nexus* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 70; Feaver, "The Civil-Military," 150–155.

[7]   Army officer, interview by authors, Bangkok, 26 January 2014. See also Jennifer Morrison Taw, *Thailand and the Philippines: Case Studies in US IMET Training and Its Role in Internal Defense and Development* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994), 26–27.

[8]   Surachart Bamrungsak, "Thailand: Military Professionalism at the Crossroads," in *Military Professionalism in Asia: Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Honolulu, HI: East-West Center, 2001), 77–91. See also the critique offered by James Ockey, "Thailand's Professional

In this essay, we provide evidence that Huntington's thesis on professionalization does not hold in the Thai context. The level of professionalism among Thai military officers, at least as defined by Huntington, has little to do with their feelings about whether or not they should be involved in politics. Using a new opinion survey of 569 Thai military officers, we demonstrate that among our respondents, higher scores along most measures of professionalism do not necessarily coincide with a desire to remain apolitical. These findings imply that theories of civilian control over the military in developing countries should not focus on the definitions of professionalism currently found in the literature. Instead, we suggest that further research needs to be conducted regarding the incentives and motivations within politically active militaries, an area that has received relatively scant attention in Thai studies.

Thus this article makes a number of contributions. First, we present findings from a new survey of the Thai military. Addressing one of the more politically active militaries in the world, this survey grants us an unprecedented glimpse into military opinions regarding political interventions. It also allows us to measure professionalism at an individual level. Second, drawing on this dataset as well as focus groups and interviews, we provide an empirical test of Huntington's hypothesis that professional soldiers should prefer to be apolitical. Third, we speak to the Thailand-specific literature, furnishing new insight on the military as well as suggesting directions for future research.

The remainder of the essay proceeds as follows. In section 2 we review the definition of professionalism and identify two major shortcomings in its application. In the next section, we briefly review the approaches Thailand specialists use to explain coups, before turning to our survey. In section 4 we explain our data collection methods. Section 5 describes measures for each of the components of professionalism Huntington outlined, weighing professionalism at the individual level. We then statistically test a version of Huntington's hypothesis, demonstrating that professionalism is a poor predictor of an officer's support for an apolitical military. We also discuss the findings of the analysis. Finally, in section 6, we conclude by identifying the implications of these findings for Thailand and for the question of civilian control over the military. We also offer some suggestions for further research.

Are Professionals Apolitical?

Samuel Huntington famously argued that one of the best guarantees for civilian control over the military is the development of professionalism in the officer corps.[9] While states could rely on powerful politicians or interest

groups to control the military, this type of subjective control potentially politicizes the military and is a dubious way of ensuring civilian supremacy.[10] In contrast, Huntington advocated the importance of objective control, or the reliance on military professionalism.[11] As the military becomes more professional, officers will remain in the barracks to pursue their career ambitions as soldiers. Having a professional officer corps creates an apolitical military, allowing civilian authority to prevail. Thus Huntington's hypothesis, at least in relation to civil control over the military, is that the more professional the soldier, the less likely he will engage in politics.[12] Despite being based on the narrow American experience, this hypothesis has been broadly applied to militaries around the world. It also spawned numerous responses, including many challenges, both empirical and theoretical.[13]

Empirically, while the American case upon which Huntington's argument was based offered no leverage to test his proposition, research on developing states provides strong challenges to Huntington's claim. Militaries in Pakistan,[14] across the Middle East,[15] and Latin America[16] all became much more involved in politics after going through periods of professionalization. While the scholars addressing these countries did not explicitly test Huntington's claims, they each suggested that the hypothesis was problematic. Supposedly professional military officers, often those who had received American training, appear to have little compunction about conducting coups.[17]

Theoretically, scholars have proposed a variety of reasons that professionalism could actually be counterproductive to civilian control and a political military. Possible causes for professional soldiers to intervene in politics range from political threats on their professionalism[18] to preserving order in society[19] to bureaucratic structures and behaviour.[20] In essence,

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[10]   Huntington, *Soldier,* 80–82.

[11]   Huntington, *Soldier*, 94–97.

[12]   Feaver wrote the hypothesis slightly differently: "A professional military will always remain subordinate to civilian authority." Feaver, "The Civil-Military," 161.

[13]   For more detailed reviews of this literature, see Burk, "Theories of Democratic," 7–29. Also see Peter D. Feaver, "Civil-Military Relations," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): 211–241.

[14]   Aqil Shah, *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 256.

[15]   Mehran Kamrava, "Military Professionalization and Civil-Military Relations in the Middle East," *Political Science Quarterly* 115 (2000): 67–92.

[16]   Alain Rouquie, *The Military and the State in Latin America*, trans. Paul E. Sigmund (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 42–44, 376–380.

[17]   Recent work provides contradictory findings regarding the effect of American training on coup likelihood. See Tomislav Z. Ruby and Doublas Gibler, "US Professional Military Education and Democratization Abroad," *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 3 (2010): 339–364; Jesse Dillon Savage and Jonathan D. Caverley, "Foreign Military Training and Coup Propensity," Working Paper (1 October 2015), http://www.jonathancaverley.com/uploads/2/9/7/2/29726853/caverleysavage_sept17_2015.pdf.

[18]   Finer, *Horseback,* 25–30.

[19]   Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977). See also Alfred Stepan, *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 62–66.

these critics of the Huntington hypothesis propose a counter-claim of their own: professional soldiers may actually be more prone to interventions.

While more recent work has tried to push past this debate,[21] Huntington's thesis and its critics served as important advances and are the basis for much of today's work on civil-military relations. They also remain prominent in both policy and theoretical circles.[22] Even so, quantitative tests of these hypotheses are "virtually nonexistent."[23] This is partly due to the fact that they suffer from two major shortcomings that inhibit empirical testing.

First, the unit of analysis is problematic. Much of this literature treats the military in totality, thus the degree of professionalism would be measured based on the organization as a unit. On the contrary, militaries are not unified blocks in which all officers share the same level of professionalism. Indeed, they are often rife with divisions that shape their political ambitions, as Geddes has argued.[24] Reflecting this, specialists on Thai politics have often highlighted divisions within the Thai military in their discussion of the 2006 coup and its aftermath.[25] In this perspective, military obedience to civilian authority hinges on the organization's own internal coherence and politicking.

Thus assigning a professionalism value to an entire organization is dubious. Testing Huntington's hypothesis requires being better able to differentiate professional soldiers from less professional soldiers within the body. Professional soldiers might indeed prefer to remain apolitical while their unprofessional counterparts drag them into politics. We argue, therefore, that professionalism should be measured at a more basic level than the entire organization, such as at the individual officer level.

The second major obstacle to empirical testing found in the literature above is the operationalization of professionalism. In many cases, following Huntington's example, the application of the term is somewhat tautological. A professional military does not get involved in politics. Since this military

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[20]   Edward Luttwak, *Coup D'etat: A Practical Handbook* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 19–21, 35–36. Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times: On Professionals, Praetorians, and Revolutionary Soldiers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 2, 85. Beyond the three points listed here, Belkin and Schofer identified twenty-one causes of coups in the literature, a number of which could be theoretically tied to professionalism arguments. See Aaron Belkin and Evan Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47, no. 5 (2003): 600–605.

[21]   Feaver, "Civil-Military Relations," 235–236; Feaver, "The Civil-Military," 169–170; Jonathan Powell, "Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups d'ètat," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56 (6): 1019–1021.

[22]   Nielsen, "Review Article," 369–370; Burk, "Theories of Democratic," 8–9.

[23]   Powell, "Determinants," 1022.

[24]   Barbara Geddes, "What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): 125–129.

[25]   Ockey, "Professional Soldiers," 95–127; see also James Ockey, "Broken Power: The Thai Military in the Aftermath of the 2006 Coup," in "*Good Coup" Gone Bad: Thailand's Political Developments since Thaksin's Downfall,* ed. Pavin Chachavalpongpun (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2014), 49–78; Paul Chambers, "Thailand on the Brink: Resurgent Military, Eroded Democracy," *Asian Survey* 50, no. 5 (2010): 850–854.

is not involved in politics, it is professional. Such an approach does not give us much analytical leverage. Others have measured professionalism through the acquisition of technology, training, or military funding.[26] These proxies, though, are far from the concept Huntington proposed. In order to test the hypothesis, we must first gauge professionalism. How do we identify a professional military officer when we see one?

Both of these obstacles, unit of analysis and operationalization, hinder any attempt to evaluate the claim that professionalism should lead to civilian control of the military. In the remainder of this essay, we address these two issues with a new dataset based on a recent survey conducted among Thai military officers. The data from this survey allows us to define and measure professionalism at the individual officer level as well as develop a test of the Huntington hypothesis. Before discussing our data, though, we demonstrate how this project contributes to the literature specific to Thailand.

A Political Military

Thailand is among the most coup-prone countries in the world.[27] As Thailand's long history of military coups and coup attempts has been documented elsewhere,[28] we do not recount it. Instead we briefly review common explanations of coups found in the literature. Scholars on Thai politics provide a number of accounts for military influence in politics, especially the most recent coups in 2006 and 2014. These can be organized into two categories based on Zimmerman's "pull" and "push" factors, with pull factors being those conditions in politics or society that create space for military intervention and push factors being those internal to the military that encourage politicization.[29]

By far, the dominant approach among scholars of Thai politics has been a focus on the sociopolitical determinants, or pull factors, for coups. These can be further subdivided along three main themes, although each is not exclusive. Thailand specialists often apply more than one of the themes in their discussion of Thai military interventions. The first theme suggests that much of the fault for military intervention lies at the feet of politicians

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[26]   Kamrava, "Military Professionalization," 69–70; Powell, "Determinants," 1022.

[27]   For the years 1946 through 2010. See Aurel Croissant, David Kuehn, Philip Lorenz, and Paul W. Chambers, *Democratization and Civilian Control in Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1–11. Thailand has experienced at least nineteen coup attempts from 1912 through 2014, although using a broader definition of coup, Chambers identifies more than thirty events during the same period. Paul Chambers, ed., *Knights of the Realm: Thailand's Military and Police, Then and Now* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2013), 583–587.

[28]   Paul Chambers, "A Short History of Military Influence in Thailand," in *Knights of the Realm: Thailand's Military and Police, Then and Now,* ed. Paul Chambers (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2013), 109–421; Thak Chaloemtiarana, *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2007), chapters 1 and 2; ICG, *A Coup Ordained,* 9–16.

[29]   Ekkart Zimmerman, *Political Violence, Crises, and Revolutions: Theories and Research* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1983), 246–281.

themselves, especially those of Thaksin Shinawatra. Some scholars considered the Thai military to have retreated to the barracks by the late 1990s, due in part to the reprimand it had received following General Suchinda's failed attempt to rule the country as prime minister in 1992 as well as the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution.[30] When Thaksin Shinawatra became prime minister in 2001 he sought to solidify his power base, which included regular involvement in the annual military reshuffle to ensure that military officers favourable to his government found their way into top positions.[31] This "repoliticization" of the military was meant to remove one potential threat to Thaksin's continued rule, but it also encouraged military officers to reengage with the political sphere.[32] In this perspective, military leaders staged the 2006 coup and remained active in politics thereafter in order to preserve their power and autonomy from political meddling. This explanation suggests that the missteps of politicians, especially Thaksin and those who followed him, are partly to blame for military interventions.

Second, institutional analyses focus on the fact that the Thai state's democratic structures are comparatively weak and unable to reign in their unelected counterparts.[33] Political parties are poorly institutionalized,[34] and constitutions and courts are weak and subject to capture.[35] In contrast, scholars highlight the strength of the "tripartite tutelage" of the monarchy, the Privy Council, and the military, which have historically been able to dominate elected civilians.[36] Strong and enduring links between military officers and the palace, especially between members of the Privy Council and top military leaders, have ensured that the military remains intimately enshrined in the political atmosphere.[37] Such ties are especially relevant as

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[30]   Chai-Anan Samudavanija, "Old Soldiers Never Die, They are Just Bypassed," in *Political Change in Thailand*, ed. Kevin Hewison (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 42–57; Surachart, "Thailand," 77–85. Other scholars argue that the military had never truly disengaged from politics due to its close connections with the unelected power brokers in Thai politics, especially the palace. Duncan McCargo and Ukrist Pathamanand, *The Thaksinization of Thailand* (Copenhagen, Denmark: NIAS Press, 2005), 127–134; James Ockey, "Thailand: The Struggle to Redefine Civil-Military Relations," in *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 208.

[31]   Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thaksin*, 2nd ed. (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2009), 176–184; McCargo and Ukrist, *Thaksinization*, 134–140.

[32]   Pavin Chachavalpongpun, "Thaksin, the Military, and Thailand's Protracted Political Crisis," in *The Political Resurgence of the Military in Southeast Asia: Conflict and Leadership,* ed. Marcus Mietzner (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 54–56.

[33]   This is similar to Zimmerman's "praetorianism" category. Zimmerman, *Political Violence*, 257–268.

[34]   Erik M. Kuhonta, "Thailand's Feckless Parties and Party System: A Path Dependent Analysis," in *Party Institutionalization in Asia*, eds. Allen Hicken and Erik M. Kuhonta (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 280–306; Allen Hicken, "Party Fabrication: Constitutional Reform and the Rise of Thai Rak Thai," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 6 (2006): 388–389.

[35]   Erik M. Kuhonta and Aim Sinpeng, "Democratic Regression in Thailand: The Ambivalent Role of Civil Society and Political Institutions," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 36, no. 3 (2014): 345–351.

[36]   Chambers, "Thailand on the Brink," 837–839.

[37]   McCargo and Ukrist, *Thaksinization*, 127–134; see also Duncan McCargo, "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand," *The Pacific Review* 18, no. 4 (2005): 503–509.

questions of monarchic succession have emerged.[38] Thus the institutional arrangement of Thai politics matches weak democratic institutions with historically strong non-democratic institutions. As the younger democratic system provided challenges to its predecessors, military coups occurred to protect historic power structures.

Third, society-based explanations describe the events leading up to the recent coups as a result of competition and polarization between different segments of Thai society.[39] On the one hand are clashes between the new elites, represented by Thaksin, and the old elites, which include the bureaucracy, military, and palace.[40] Such elite conflicts draw the military into politics. On the other hand are considerations of the broader shifts in society, including the rise of peasants into the middle class[41] and the tensions created by inequality. In this narrative, class conflict has become especially important in describing the events leading to military interventions. These analyses highlight the 2010 unrest wherein scholars have identified the role of inequality and class conflict in creating public unrest, especially in April and May of 2010, when the United Democratic Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) took to the streets of Bangkok before being brutally suppressed.[42] Later, in late 2013 through early 2014, the middle and upper classes, facing the potential of wealth distribution and feeling more comfortable with the traditional elites, called for military intervention to forestall democracy.[43] These conflicts between different segments of society, at both the elite and popular level, have created situations in which the military felt compelled to intervene in the political system.

Such pull factors are extremely important in understanding Thailand's military interventions, especially reflecting the fact that the majority of Thai specialists use one or more of them to understand the impetus for a coup. Even so, politicians' faux pas, a combination of weak democratic and strong unelected institutions, and contentious shifts in society only create the environment for a military intervention. They fail to address the supply side of the equation: why, despite decades of professionalization training, often provided by the US and based on Huntington's claims, did military officers still see fit to intervene?

The motivations internal to the military deserve attention. Among

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[38]   Andrew MacGregor Marshall, *A Kingdom in Crisis* (London: Zed Books, 2014), 186–207.

[39]   These roughly align with Zimmerman's "social mobilization" and "democracy and political culture" categories. Zimmerman, *Political Violence*, 255–256, 268–269. On polarization see Suchit Bunbongkan, "What Went Wrong with the Thai Democracy?" *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2015): 360–364.

[40]   Kevin Hewison, "A Book, the King, and the 2006 Coup," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 38, no. 1 (2008): 205–207.

[41]   Andrew Walker, *Thailand's Political Peasants* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

[42]   Kevin Hewison, "Thailand: The Lessons of Protest," *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspective on Asia* 50, no. 1 (2014): 11–13.

[43]   Nicholas Farrelly, "Why Democracy Struggles: Thailand's Elite Coup Culture," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 67, no. 3 (2013): 290–292.

Thailand specialists, these push factors have accounted for a relatively small body of work on Thai civil-military relations.

The primary focus in this area has been on competition between military factions. In this perspective, the 2006 coup occurred due to struggles between different factions in the military, especially the army, which has led most political interventions. The organizational structure of the military draws on loyalty to graduating classes from the Armed Forces Preparatory School (AFPS) and the military academies attached to each branch.[44] Promotions are often based on networks drawn from these graduating classes, thus creating strong competition between different cohorts as they rise through the ranks. That competition became especially strong in the mid-2000s due to a sharp increase in admissions to the Royal Military Academy in the early 1970s as well as a shrinking budget in the wake of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Prime Minister Thaksin became patron of Class 21 (1969), which had attended the Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School alongside him.[45] As this faction, also known as Wongthewan, began to rise up the ranks of the army, assisted by the prime minister, another faction closely associated with Privy Councilor General Prem Tinsulanonda felt threatened. This group, called the Eastern Tigers or Queen's Guard, viewed itself as more "professional" than others, and was resistant to the growing role of civilian politicians in determining military promotion.[46] As the 2006 military reshuffle approached, competition grew fierce among the various military factions.[47] The coup came shortly before the promotion list was to be issued, allowing the coup leaders to control the process and promote their own faction as well as increase the military budget.[48] Thus, in this perspective, internal military politics were a major force behind the 2006 coup.

As of writing, relatively few academic pieces have emerged discussing the internal tensions in the military relative to the 2014 coup; instead scholars have continued to focus on the pull factors of protests and institutional conflict.[49] The Eastern Tigers continue to dominate most top army posts following the 2006 coup, but there has been growing pressure for recognition of the Wongthewan and other pro-Thaksin officers, which are more common

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[44] John Cole and Steve Sciacchitano, "Coup Calculations in Thailand," *Asia Times Online*, 17 January 2014, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/SEA-02-170114.html.

[45] Before entering politics, Thaksin was a lieutenant colonel in the Royal Thai Police and had been part of Class 10 of the Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School.

[46] It should be noted here that "professional" in this context is self-perception rather than an evaluation based on Huntington's criteria. Ockey, "Professional Soldiers," 104–107.

[47] Chambers, "A Short History," 272–274.

[48] Ockey, "Broken Power," 56–57.

[49] Duncan McCargo, "Thailand in 2014: The Trouble with Magic Swords," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2015): 338–342. McCargo does provide a few paragraphs (344–345) discussing the motivations of top leaders in the military, but this is not his main focus. See also Suchit, "What Went Wrong," 359–369.

among lower ranks.[50] Factions have remained important after the coup, as reshuffles have been used to consolidate the Eastern Tigers' hold on top offices.

Beyond factions, though, relatively little research has been conducted on either professionalism in the Thai military or the opinions of military officers regarding interventions, despite the fact that professionalism is widely taught and touted among the officer corps.[51] Surachart argued that rising professionalism was one of the reasons behind the military withdrawal from politics in the 1990s. Surachart, though, adopts both of the shortcomings of the professionalism literature by assigning the characteristic to the military as a whole while also defining military professionalism as "equivalent to noninvolvement in politics."[52] Ockey, on the other hand, does focus on factions within the military, one of which he labelled "Professional Soldiers." He, though, points out that this "professional" faction of the military was based on self-perception rather than strict adherence to Huntington's definition.[53]

To the best of our knowledge, only two previous works have surveyed the opinions of Thai military officers regarding military interventions. Shortly after the 1991 coup, Phrutipongse sought to test the effect of a training program on officer opinions, including questions regarding political interventions. At that time, many officers in his survey felt that the military should not get involved in politics, although a large proportion (51.6 percent) of the officers were in favour of the coup.[54] The survey, though, was limited to thirty-one officers, and it also failed to provide any measures of professionalism. A second piece produced in 1991 evaluated the opinions of 162 students in the military officer school regarding democracy, including questions about military interventions.[55] The analysis, though, failed to report all of the survey results and focused more on definitions of democracy than on professional norms in the military.

In sum, most of the Thailand-specific literature seeking to understand the role of coups in Thai political life has placed scant focus on the incentives and opinions of military leaders, despite their importance. As far as we are aware, no other piece has explicitly sought to evaluate the effect of

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[50]   Paul Chambers, "Thailand's Divided Military," *The Wall Street Journal,* 30 June 2014.

[51]   Army officer, interview by authors, 26 January 2014. Taw, *Case Studies in US IMET Training,* 20–27. Thailand is one of the top recipients of US funding for military training through the IMET program, which includes emphasis on professionalization based, in part, on Huntington's work.

[52]   Surachart, "Thailand," 77.

[53]   Ockey, "Professional Soldiers," 107–117.

[54]   Phrutipongse Prayoonsiri, "Khwaamkhid Thaang Kaanmyang Khɔɔng Naajthahaan Radab Suung Khɔɔng Kɔɔngthab Thaj Thii Sygsaa Naj Widthajaalaj Pɔngkan Raadchaʔaanaacag Run 30–33" [Political Thinking of High Ranking Military Officers in the National Defense College, class 30–33] (master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1992), 174–176.

[55]   Varunee Kittithamavoot, "Khwaamkhid Thaang Kaanmyang lɛʔ Kaanjɔɔmrab Rabɔɔb Prachaathipataj khɔɔng Naajthahaan naj Roongrian Seenaathikaan Thahaanbog Laksuud Lakpracam lɛʔLaksuud Sinlapaʔsaat Mahaabandid (Kaanthahaan)" [The Political Thinkings and the Acceptance of Democracy of the Student Officers in the Army General Command and Staff College's Regular and Master of Military Science Programs] (master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1991), 207–212.

professionalism on officer opinions. Thus the results we present here add an important dimension to understanding the role that professionalism plays in determining the actions of the Thai military. We now turn to our data.

Data Collection

We draw our data from a survey of 569 military officers in Thailand.[56] As far as we are aware, this is the first survey of its size and breadth available for academic use, and it relied on unprecedented access to military officers granted by the Thai armed forces.[57] The first author of the paper conducted the survey as part of a project in conjunction with the Ministry of Defense and with support from the Thailand Research Fund. The purpose of the questionnaire was to evaluate professional ethics among military officers and determine the distribution of those ethics across different branches of the armed services including the Army, Air Force, and Navy. The questionnaire included a battery of queries useful for measuring professionalism as well as one question specifically designed to gauge officers' opinions regarding military intervention in politics.

With cooperation from the Ministry of Defense, a primary, exploratory round of the survey was administered in early 2011. The primary round was followed by focus groups, after which the survey was revised to reflect some necessary changes. The full survey was then distributed to approximately 800 military officers through the Ministry of Defense, of whom 569 completed and returned the survey, making the response rate approximately 71 percent. The survey was followed by another focus group composed of high-ranking officers. The authors of this paper then conducted follow-up interviews with military officers in early 2014.

Unfortunately, due to the nature of cooperating with the Ministry of Defense, survey respondents were not chosen through random selection. The strongest efforts were taken on behalf of the researchers to ensure that responses were gathered across military branches and across military ranks. The Ministry of Defense, though, had the final say in distribution. As such, we must remain aware of the potential for bias as we draw conclusions from the sample regarding the broader body of the Thai military, especially since the survey over samples the Air Force and Navy and contains a

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[56]   Respondents included 300 commissioned officers and 260 non-commissioned officers (NCOs). There are important distinctions in the training programs of both of these groups, and NCOs often have limited opportunities for advancement in the officer ranks. Coup leaders come from commissioned officers. We chose to retain both groups in our analysis, though, as the support and obedience of NCOs are essential for military operations, especially in the event of a coup. Throughout the following analysis when we use the term "officer" in reference to the survey, we are referring to both commissioned and non-commissioned officers. The focus groups and interviews, in contrast, included only commissioned officers of high rank.

[57]   While the Thai-language literature includes a number of surveys of military officers, the vast majority of these have to do with health issues. Examples can be found in *Waarasaan Phaed Tahaanbog* [Royal Thai Army Medical Journal] and *Waarasaan Phajaabaan Thahaanbog* [Journal of the Royal Thai Army Nurses].

disproportionately smaller number of Army officers. Despite the lack of random sample and the skewed representation, though, the unprecedented access and breadth of the survey makes it the most comprehensive snap shot of the Thai military that we are aware of. The descriptive statistics of the survey can be found in table 1.

The majority of survey questions were posed as statements with which the respondent could indicate his or her agreement or disagreement along Likert scale measures. Instructions were given to tick one of five categories ranging from "least important" to "most important" or "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." All survey questions were posed in Thai; subsequent translation to English was conducted by the authors of this essay.

Measuring Professionalism and Its Effect

Measuring Professionalism

The first task necessary for analysis is to develop measures of professionalism from the survey data. To do this we turned to Huntington's work, drawing out the three components of his professionalism definition: expertise, responsibility, and corporateness.

The initial component of military professionalism is expertise. Huntington argued that "expertise is only acquired by prolonged education and experience."[58] In our dataset two responses were directly related to this definition: education level and years of military service. Education was ranked on a scale of one to four including: less than a bachelor's degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctoral degree. Years of military service were also ranked on a scale from one to four with categories being 0–5 years, 6–10 years, 10–20 years, and over 20 years. Higher scores along both of these measures should indicate higher levels of expertise and thus a greater degree of professionalism.

Second, Huntington defined responsibility as the "technical love [a professional has] for his craft and the sense of social obligation to utilize his craft for the benefit of society."[59] We focused on the "social obligation" portion of this definition. From the survey we chose five indicators for a military officer's level of social responsibility. These were drawn from officer responses to the statements found in table 2. Each of these responses was selected as they represent officers' opinions toward employing their military expertise for the benefit of society. The responses were based on officers' rankings of the statements along a Likert scale with five points from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These five responses were then combined into an index variable.[60]

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[58]   Huntington, *Soldier*, 8.
[59]   Huntington, *Soldier*, 15.
[60]   Testing for internal consistency along these indicators resulted in a Chronbach's Alpha of 0.775. Factor analysis was also employed as a secondary check, resulting in a single factor.

Table 1
Description of Survey Respondents

		Frequency	Percent of respondents*
Gender	Male	557	97.9
	Female	3	0.5
Age range	20–30	113	19.9
	30–40	320	56.2
	40–50	84	14.8
	50–60	44	7.7
	60+	1	0.2
Rank	*Nai Phon* (General)	9	1.6
	Nai Phan (Col., Lt. Col., Maj.)	194	34.1
	Nai Roi (Capt., 1st Lt., 2d Lt.)	105	18.5
	Nai Sib/Ja (Sgt., Cpl., PFC)	241	42.4
	Phan Ja (Warrant Officer)	1	0.2
Education	PhD degree	8	1.4
	MA degree	85	14.9
	Bachelor's degree	258	45.3
	Less than Bachelor's	190	33.4
Years of service	0–5	87	15.3
	6–10	199	35
	10–20	156	27.4
	20+	93	16.3
Branch of military	Army	148	26
	Navy	191	33.6
	Air Force	230	40.4

* Percentages may not add up to 100 due to missing responses.

Table 2
Summary Statistics of Survey

	Obs	Mean	St Dev	Min	Max
Dependent variable					
"I believe that soldiers *should not* become involved in politics."	561	3.897	1.176	1	5
Responsibility indicators					
R1: "Military officers must realize that their basic duty is to protect the country."	561	4.636	0.843	1	5
R2: "Military officers have a duty in developing the country both in times of peace and war."	561	4.275	0.908	1	5
R3: "I believe that military officers must support government policy in relieving public suffering."	552	4.029	1.140	1	5
R4: "I believe that military officers work to help the public with all their capacity both in peace and wartime."	553	4.344	0.879	1	5
R5: "I believe military officers have a favorable disposition toward the public."	552	4.290	0.905	1	5
Responsibility index variable	550	4.32	0.674	1	5
Corporateness indicators					
C1: "I believe military officers have love for the organization [military]."	560	4.136	0.850	1	5

Table 2 continued
Summary Statistics of Survey

	Obs	Mean	St Dev	Min	Max
C2: "I understand the code of ethics of the Department of Defense."	560	3.625	0.951	1	5
C3: "I work in strict accordance to the orders of my superior officers."	561	4.357	0.803	1	5
C4: "I follow the responsibilities given me by my superior officers without questioning whether or not they are part of my duties."	561	3.906	0.902	1	5
C5: "I revere and give respect to senior officers, even if they are retired."	560	4.375	0.834	1	5
Corporateness index variable	558	4.079	0.656	1	5
Expertise measures					
Education	541	1.835	0.736	1	4
Years of military experience	535	2.477	0.961	1	4
Controls					
Age	562	2.110	0.818	1	5
Army variable	569	0.260	0.439	0	1
Rank	550	2.943	0.928	1	5

The final component of professionalism is corporateness, which Huntington defined as the "sense of unity … which formalizes and applies the standards of professional competence and establishes and enforces the standards of professional responsibility."[61] Here again we chose five indicators based on the definition. These were also combined into an index variable.[62]

The results of the survey indicate that generally the officers in our sample exhibited relatively high levels of professionalism. Averages of both the responsibility and corporateness index scores were above four on a scale of one to five. In other words, Thai military officers in our sample do feel a great deal of social responsibility as well as strong ties and unity with the military. Expertise, though, is less clearly distributed. This is likely due to the fact that our sample population had a large proportion of officers with ten or fewer years of service (50.3 percent of the sample) as well as those with less than a four-year degree (33.4 percent of the sample, primarily among the non-commissioned officers). Even so, over two-thirds of our respondents had at least a bachelor's degree and approximately 65 percent served in the military for at least five years. Summary statistics of these measures as well as the indicators which were used can all be found in table 2.

These results lead us to note that the majority of respondents in our survey could be considered professional soldiers according to Huntington's definition. If the survey were representative of the entire military, we could argue that Thailand's officer corps could largely be considered professionals.[63] During focus groups as well as interviews, active military officers generally exhibit high levels of social responsibility and a strong degree of corporateness. Most officers are also subjected to significant periods of training and practice in order to develop their expertise.[64] In fact, the military training draws from the West Point curriculum, and officers are aware of Huntington's thesis.[65] One interviewee estimated that half of officer training was focused on inculcating the values of professionalism among soldiers.[66]

Testing the Huntington Hypothesis

If Thai military officers are professional, then Huntington's hypothesis would predict that they should prefer to remain apolitical. Yet the military as an organization reentered politics in 2006. What then can explain the military's

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[61]   Huntington, *Soldier*, 10.

[62]   Testing for internal consistency among these indicators resulted in a Chronbach's Alpha of 0.812. Factor analysis also resulted in a single factor.

[63]   As mentioned before, since it was not a random sample, we must exercise some caution. Even so, as we have been granted broad access to military officers for the survey, and considering that the survey did receive a response from a wide range of officers, we proceed to draw conclusions as best we can from the data.

[64]   Air Force officer, interview by authors, Bangkok, 26 January 2014; Army officer, interview by authors, Bangkok, 26 January 2014; Naval officer, interview by authors, Bangkok, 30 January 2014; ACM Anan Klintha, interview by authors, Bangkok, 28 January 2014.

[65]   Army officer, interview by authors, Bangkok, 26 January 2014.

[66]   Air Force officer, interview by authors, Bangkok, 26 January 2014.

decision to return to politics? Again, we emphasize that professionalism should not be judged at the organizational level. Instead it should be applied to either groups or individual officers. Thus, if the Huntington hypothesis were true, professional soldiers may abstain from political activity while their less professional counterparts intervene.

Of course the alternative, posed by a number of Huntington's critics, is that professional soldiers do actually have incentives to engage in politics.[67] These two competing hypotheses invoke the question of the effect of professionalism on the probability that a soldier will become involved in politics.

The survey included a measure of military officers' opinions about military intervention in politics in order to assess this question. The respondents ranked the value they placed on the following statement: "I believe that soldiers **should not** become involved in politics."[68] Again, officers ranked their views on a scale of one to five, with five being the score associated with a great deal of importance placed on the statement and one being the score of those who did not support the statement. The vast majority of military officers felt that the military should not be involved in politics. Out of 561 valid responses, approximately 72 percent of respondents (403 respondents) marked either four or five on the survey, demonstrating their disapproval of military intervention in politics. Slightly over 12 percent of the officers surveyed (69 respondents), though, scored either a one or two, indicating that they felt the military still has a role in politics.[69] The distribution of responses is presented in figure 1.

Using just these numbers we might hypothesize that the professional soldiers, or those who scored high on professional marks, should have also expressed higher marks in their response to this question. This, though, is a question subject to statistical testing. In essence, if Huntington is correct and professionalism does lead military officers to prefer to stay out of politics, then we should observe a positive correlation between our measures of professionalism and a military officer's opinion about remaining out of politics. On the other hand, if Huntington's critics were correct and professionalism could lead to intervention, we should expect to see a negative correlation between measures of professionalism and a military officer's opinion about being apolitical.

Using officers' opinions about military involvement in politics as the dependent variable, scaled one through five with higher scores reflecting support for an apolitical military, we applied our measures of expertise,

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[67]   Finer, *Horseback*; Nordlinger, *Soldiers*; Ockey, "Professional Soldiers."

[68]   Emphasis in original. "*Khaaphacaw chya waa tahaan **maj khuan** khaw paj mii bodbaad thaang kaanmyang.*"

[69]   Follow-up interviews and focus groups suggested that these numbers were likely underestimating the support for political interventions.

Figure 1
Distribution of Respondent Opinions on Military Involvement in Politics

I believe that soldiers *should not* become involved in politics
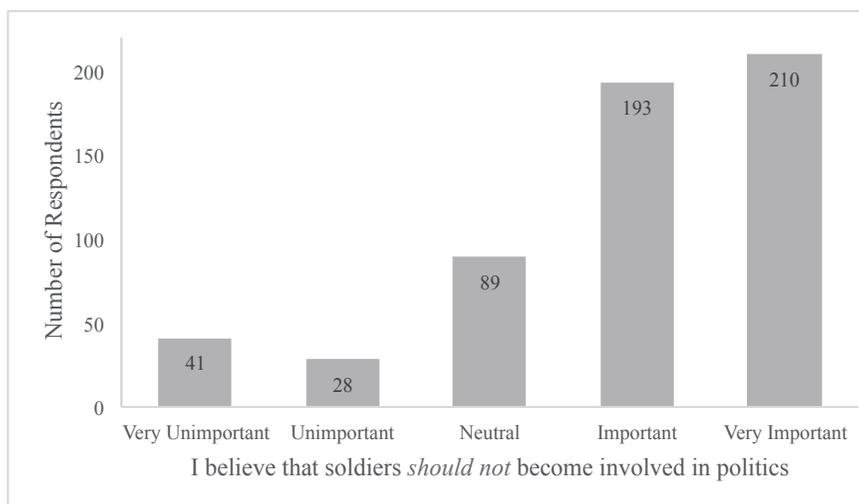
responsibility, and corporateness in a regression model. These results are labelled as model A. We used our index variables as measures of responsibility and corporateness, while education and years of military service were included separately.[70]

We also included a model that incorporated three control variables which could explain an officer's opinion about military interventions in politics, reported as model B. First, we hypothesize that older officers may be more committed to the military's role in politics as those officers would have had more experience under military rule. Second, we also include a variable measuring military rank, as perhaps those of higher rank may also have stronger interests in politics. Finally, we include a dummy variable indicating whether or not the officer was a member of the Army, as military coups in Thailand are generally led by Army officers.

Age and Years of Military Service, though, are highly correlated (Pearson Correlation of 0.845). While not perfectly corresponding, this does cause us to question the value of using both variables, as they may be measuring approximately the same thing. In other words, we may run the risk of multicollinearity. Thus we ran a second model wherein we did not include the Age variable. This is reported as model C. We also ran a third model where we included Age but dropped Years of Military Service. This is model D. The results of the linear models can be seen in table 3.

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[70]   We also conducted a second set of regression models substituting predicted latent variables drawn from factor analysis for both responsibility and corporateness. These alternate models produced outcomes consistent with those reported here. These results can be obtained from the authors upon request.

	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
Age		-0.212 (0.134)		-0.020 (0.080)
Army variable		-0.092 (0.136)	-0.098 (0.137)	-0.060 (0.129)
Rank		-0.248* (0.098)	-0.252* (0.098)	-0.206* (0.094)
Education	0.033 (0.706)	0.202 (0.114)	0.230* (0.112)	0.204 (0.111)
Years of military Service	-0.049 (0.059)	0.205 (0.111)	0.052 (0.071)	
Responsibility	0.156 (0.119)	0.159 (0.120)	0.153 (0.121)	0.135 (0.112)
Corporateness	0.386** (0.123)	0.370** (0.127)	0.382** (0.127)	0.413** (0.121)
Constant	1.690** (0.402)	2.022** (0.424)	1.893** (0.406)	1.947** (0.387)
Observations	501	495	495	519
Adjusted R square	0.073	0.093	0.087	0.091

Robust Standard Errors are in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

The statistical results provide some interesting findings.[71] First, in model A, which only included measures of professionalism, we see that only Corporateness has a statistically significant relationship with our dependent

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[71]   We conducted the same analysis using only the data from the 300 commissioned officers as a check on our findings. The results were largely consistent with those presented here. In these tests, the only consistent significant effect observed was again a positive relationship between corporateness and the preference for an apolitical military. Results available on request.

variable. It is positive, which is in the direction predicted by Huntington's hypothesis. Thus it appears that increasing feelings of unity with the military body are positively correlated with an opinion that the military should remain apolitical. This result is consistent across all four of the models we tested. The effect of the other components of professionalism, expertise, and responsibility, though, is not sufficient to disqualify the claim that there is no effect.

Second, in our other models, which included control variables, the effects of our professionalism measures changed only slightly. In model C, education appeared to have a slightly significant positive effect. In fact, throughout all models that contained control variables, education's effect was almost statistically significant. This would indicate that high levels of education are likely also correlated to the probability that a military officer would prefer an apolitical military. While this is promising, we are also cautious about drawing too strong a conclusion regarding this relationship.

Among our control variables, only rank maintained a consistent, and negative, effect. Thus it appears that, at least among our sample, lower-ranking Thai officers are more likely to espouse the opinion that the military should not be involved in politics.

These models indicate that, out of our measures of professionalism, only an officer's sense of corporateness has a consistent correlation with his or her opinion of military involvement in politics.

Discussion

What do these findings mean for the relationship between professionalism and an apolitical military in Thailand?

First, it appears that, at least among the officers in our sample, only one aspect of professionalism from Huntington's definition was related to their opinions about military intervention in politics. Corporateness, or feelings of military unity and coherence, does seem to be associated with support for an apolitical military. We argue, along similar lines to Geddes, that one of the main concerns of military officers is maintaining unity within the organization.[72] Involvement in politics undermines this unity. Indeed, Thailand's military is riddled with factions that become increasingly salient when the organization intervenes in politics.[73] For instance, after the 2006 coup and the strife which followed, military leadership struggled to root out those branded "watermelon soldiers," a label based on the colour-coded conflict in Thai politics. Red was the colour worn by supporters of the elected

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[72]   Geddes, "Democratization," 125–129.

[73]   Chambers, *Knights,* 366–376; McCargo and Ukrist, *Thaksinization,* 134–140; Ockey, "Professional Soldiers," 100–107. The military is only one example in Thai society of how unity to factions or networks shape social and political behaviour. McCargo, "Network Monarchy," 500–503; Joseph Harris, "Who Governs? Autonomous Political Networks as a Challenge to Power in Thailand," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 45, no. 1 (2015): 5–7.

government ousted by the military. "Watermelon soldiers" were officers who wore the green military fatigues but were red on the inside, meaning either sympathetic to or loyal to the party ousted by the coup. Such disunity and mistrust created "discomfort among professional soldiers who may truly be colourless but are being watched with suspicion anyway."[74] Interviews with military officers also indicated uneasiness with the lack of unity which comes from political intervention.[75] Thus having an increased feeling of corporateness, or a desire for unity, would logically fit well with a Thai soldier's desire to remain apolitical.

At the same time, increased levels of corporateness would also be associated with a desire to follow orders to maintain unity. As a result, soldiers who highly valued unity would follow orders to conduct a coup despite their own preferences to remain apolitical. One interviewee explained that even if officers held deep-seated reservations, "we have to obey our leaders."[76] High levels of corporateness within the military, therefore, could imply that only a small number of well-placed officers are necessary to make the decision to intervene in politics; tied with the importance of factions in the Thai military discussed above, such compelling feelings of unity could open opportunities for a small number of officers to easily direct the organization toward political actions. Indeed, with our finding that higher-ranking officers in our sample are more likely to favour political interventions, corporateness among lower-ranking officers may run counter to the goal of civilian control.

Responsibility, on the other hand, does not appear to be linked with officer opinions on military intervention. This may be due to the contrasting pulls and pushes of high levels of responsibility. Indeed, one army officer we interviewed said, "Most of us feel responsibility to not get involved in politics, but we also feel a responsibility for the security of the country and the people."[77] Thus high levels of responsibility may have dual effects, which may be what is driving the fact that neither Huntington nor his critics receive support from our data.

Levels of expertise also appeared to have little effect. There is some weak evidence that higher levels of education are associated with a desire to remain out of politics. As the relationship is weak, we cannot draw too many conclusions regarding the effect. Even so, if there is an effect, it does not necessarily follow that highly educated officers would find their way into positions of authority. The promotion system is based largely on patronage and cohort relationships. Taking time away from the ranks to pursue an education beyond a bachelor's degree means sacrificing networking and

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[74] Wassana Nanuam, "Hunt for the 'Watermelons' is Upsetting Career Soldiers," *Bangkok Post,* April 8, 2010.

[75] Army officer, interview by authors, Bangkok, 26 January 2014; Air Force officer, interview by authors, Bangkok, 26 January 2014.

[76] Air Force officer, interview by authors, Bangkok, 26 January 2014.

[77] Army officer, interview by authors, Bangkok, 26 January 2014.

promotion opportunities, especially if the degree takes an officer overseas. Some officers who return to the military after pursuing post-secondary education find the doors to promotion closed as younger officers from competing cohorts have already eclipsed them.[78]

Anecdotal evidence also indicates that training efforts to increase professionalism do not necessarily lead officers away from military intervention in politics. Many prominent members of the Thai military officer corps have taken part in the International Military Education and Training program operated by the US Military.[79] The program is geared towards exposing military officers to democratic values, increasing their professionalism, as well as encouraging international military cooperation. Among the officers who have participated in this and other professionalization programs of the American military are many who have led coups or been involved in military rule, such as Suchinda Kraprayoon and Sonthi Boonyaratglin.

Thus it appears that professionalism, as a concept defined by expertise, responsibility, and corporateness, is not the best predictor of whether a military officer prefers to remain apolitical. Nor does it follow that increasing these characteristics among Thai military officers would actually result in a less political military.

Professionals and Politics

The results presented here provide three major contributions to our understanding of civil-military relations as well as the military in Thailand. First, we overcome the obstacles to empirical testing of the professionalism hypothesis found in the literature through our use of a survey of Thai military officers. We were able to identify measures of the three aspects of professionalism according to Huntington's definition: expertise, responsibility, and corporateness. Thanks to the individual-level data, we were then able to gauge these for military officers, demonstrating that most of the officers in our survey scored highly along these measures. This indicates a high degree of professionalism among the Thai officer corps. Admittedly, the data which we used in this analysis is not a random sample of the Thai military, nor was it a complete picture of the entire organization, thus we must be modest about our claims regarding the entire military. Even so, broad access was granted by Thailand's Ministry of Defense to conduct a survey of military officers, and the survey did capture a wide spectrum of military officials.

Second, this survey allows us to test the effect of professionalism on officers' opinions regarding military intervention in politics. The test results show

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[78]   Army officer, interview by authors, Bangkok, 26 January 2014.
[79]   See Taw, *Case Studies in US IMET Training*, 20–27.

that degree of professionalism, at least as defined by Huntington, is only partially related to an officer's opinion regarding whether or not the military should be involved in politics. Only on the measure of corporateness did we see a consistent relationship. With both academic and policy circles often citing professionalism as a solution to a politicized military, our findings suggest that continued attempts to increase the professionalization of the Thai military may not achieve stated goals of making the armed forces apolitical.

Finally we add to the literature describing the motivations of Thai military officers. Through the survey, focus groups, and interviews, we provide a glimpse of opinions within the military regarding political interventions. By showing that professionalism, at least as Huntington construed it, is largely unrelated to these opinions, we are able to set aside the much-touted claim that increasing professionalism training would improve civilian control over the military. We also found a negative correlation between rank and the desire to remain apolitical, showing that officers of higher rank tend to favour military intervention more than their subordinates. This adds to the relatively sparse body of Thailand-specific literature on push factors that shape military interventions in politics.

Of course, there are limits to what the data can tell us. Due to the constraints of working with the military, our survey sample was not representative. Air Force and Navy officers were overrepresented in the sample, and respondents were not randomly selected. The survey questions considered here told us little about factions or their role in shaping officer opinions, an issue that is of vital interest in understanding the internal politics of the Thai military. Despite these shortcomings, the results, combined with the information drawn from focus groups and interviews, serve as an important step in understanding why the Thai military remains entwined in politics, if for no other reason than we can eliminate one of the hypothesized reasons that a military might not become involved in politics. Our data, drawn from the survey as well as interviews, shows conclusively that professional soldiers can still favour political intervention.

Although this research is limited to Thailand, the findings have broader implications for militaries in developing countries. Much military training around the world operates on the basic application of Huntington's thesis that a professional military is apolitical. We demonstrate that the fundamental assumption undergirding this type of training is flawed. This suggests that experts seeking to diminish military influence in politics should look beyond a focus on training, as increasing professionalism among the officer corps does not necessarily mean the depoliticization of the military.

We suggest that regardless of the degree of professionalism in the Thai military, professionalism is not the key to understanding the actions of Thai officers in the political arena. While officers' feelings of social responsibility may endow them with the opinion that the military should remain outside

of the political sphere, this feeling of obligation could cut both ways. Thai protest groups, especially in recent years, call upon the military to stage coups to overturn what the groups perceive as unjust government. Feelings of responsibility may cause military officers to side with these groups, thus linking responsibility to the possibility of military involvement in politics. Increased corporateness also could limit the effectiveness of increasing professionalism in reducing military interventions as pressures to maintain unity, especially among junior officers, may reduce internal military demands to remain apolitical.

These findings provide empirical support for Feaver's call to move beyond the professionalism hypothesis.[80] In Thai studies, this means that many scholars interested in military interventions are correctly seeking to understand the sociopolitical factors that pull the military toward politics. Such studies will continue to provide important insights into Thai politics. Even so, further research, both theoretical and empirical, remains to be done on the incentive structures that push Thai military officers toward politics. More detailed understanding of military factions and their interactions, systems of advancement and promotion, training within the organization, and the distribution of military budgets could inform both theoretical and policy debates about civil-military relations in Thailand.[81]

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Singapore Management University, Singapore, September 2015

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[80]   Feaver, "Civil-Military Relations," 235–236.
[81]   See Claude Welch, *Civilian Control of the Military: Theory and Cases from Developing Countries* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1976), 317–326.