Chapter One

Introduction

The Contributions of Southeast Asian Political Studies

ERIK MARTINEZ KUHONTA, DAN SLATER,
AND TUONG VU

After a post–Vietnam War hiatus of nearly a quarter-century, Southeast Asia has recaptured the attention of the world. In 1997 the sudden devaluation of Thailand's national currency (the *baht*) triggered a financial crisis that swept throughout Asia and threatened for a time to engulf the world's richest economies. This "Asian Contagion" had its most devastating economic effects in Indonesia—the world's fourth-most-populous country—where financial implosion helped induce the dramatic collapse of the authoritarian Suharto regime in 1998 amid swelling public demands for democratic reform. The terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001 brought heightened attention to Southeast Asia for quite different reasons, as the region's large Islamic populations and loosely governed territories led pundits to dub it "the second front in the global war on terror." When the SARS epidemic and bird flu outbreaks struck Southeast Asia starting in 2003, they raised the specter of global pandemics from which no country would be immune. And when Indonesia and Thailand bore the brunt of the most cataclysmic natural disaster in modern history—the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004—Southeast Asians' unspeakable suffering not only inspired an unprecedented outpouring of emergency assistance; it also inspired unprecedented calls for international coordination in preventing and limiting the destruction caused by environmental and public-health crises, which respect no boundaries in an increasingly interdependent world.

To be sure, the eleven countries of Southeast Asia—Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam—may still seem geographically peripheral to Western eyes. No other region is so distant from both North America and Europe, where global institutions are primarily housed and global images are primarily shaped. Yet these dramatic (and mostly tragic) recent events should show beyond a shadow of a doubt that Southeast Asia's diverse political systems are far from peripheral to the most momentous global trends. It is a region that the rest of the world can ill afford to ignore or misunderstand.

Thankfully, scholars of Southeast Asian politics have been accumulating valuable knowledge on this complex and crucial region for decades. Southeast Asia may have been *relatively* neglected in the study of comparative politics (especially regarding Europe and Latin America), but it has by no means been neglected *absolutely*.[1] This volume's first mission is to compile and display some of the extensive knowledge that scholars of Southeast Asian politics have produced on pressing global topics such as political Islam, state building, economic globalization, democracy and dictatorship, ethnic conflict, rural development, and civil society. Although students of Southeast Asian politics have produced an impressive range of scholarly works, Southeast Asianists still lack a systematic inventory and synthesis of the wealth of political knowledge that has been accumulated. This book's first goal is to fill this considerable void.

Our second purpose is somewhat broader and bolder. Beyond examining what we have learned about Southeast Asian politics, we also ask this: What can Southeast Asia tell us about the wider political world? This question ineluctably draws us into considerations of how theory, method, and region interact. As political scientists, we wish to consider whether the qualitative analysis of Southeast Asian politics has gone beyond generating particular, fragmented bits of empirical knowledge and whether it has produced more general theoretical insights for our discipline as a whole. We will argue that Southeast Asianists have indeed accumulated *theoretical* as well as *empirical* knowledge but that these general, portable insights are often easily missed when scholars refrain from framing their arguments in theoretically self-conscious terms, or from discussing the potential comparative implications of their arguments.

In sum, this book calls for concerted efforts to improve and invigorate the scholarly synergy between region and discipline. We see this endeavor as long overdue. In the last two decades, fresh theoretical perspectives and qualitative methodological approaches have emerged in political science, and there is

much room for Southeast Asianists both to contribute to and gain from these new developments. Rather than approaching these theoretical and methodological concerns through abstract ruminations on the philosophy of science, the contributors to this volume offer analytic reviews of state-of-the-art Southeast Asian scholarship on key political topics. These reviews are structured in a manner that directly engages relevant concepts and theories in political science. Yet they should capture the interest of scholars working in other disciplines (and other regions) as well. Indeed, we will consistently emphasize the point that some of the most insightful contributions to our understanding of Southeast Asian politics have come from *non*–political scientists.

This introductory chapter tackles four tasks. First, we assess the relationship between area studies and comparative politics to show that they are properly conceived as complementary and mutually enriching. Second, we review recent developments in qualitative methods to bolster our call for area specialists to take advantage of these innovations to engage the discipline—and to do so with self-confidence. In the third section, we elaborate upon how Southeast Asian political studies have contributed to knowledge accumulation through three distinct paths. We conclude the chapter by introducing the chapters to come.

Area Studies in Comparative Politics: The Merits of Dual Engagement

Studying the politics of the developing world has long meant studying the politics of a specific world region. Most prominent scholars of comparative politics have been more than just accomplished theorists: They have also been well-versed Latin Americanists, Africanists, Asianists, etc. Area studies have thus been at the heart of the subfield of comparative politics within the discipline of political science since World War II.[2]

But ironically, area studies and the discipline have frequently been viewed as contradictory rather than complementary fields of inquiry. Since the 1950s, political science, and comparative politics in particular, have been the site of many intense debates between those more interested in universal theory and those more focused on area studies—or, in the words of Isaiah Berlin, between the fox (those who prefer to concentrate their intellectual efforts on the details of a particular region) and the hedgehog (those who advocate universal theory and abstraction) (Berlin 1953).[3] At times, relations between foxes and

hedgehogs have soured to the point that mutual engagement has given way to mutual disdain. One prominent comparativist was even led to lament that although it remained clear "how much political science had to contribute to the study of the developing world," such contributions were threatened by the prospect that political science would "expire in its own disciplinary wars."[4]

Our goal here is to reframe rather than rehash existing debates. We submit that current methodological arguments within comparative politics tend to rest on two mistaken assumptions. First, we reject the view that comparativists necessarily confront a trade-off between regional and theoretical concerns. On the contrary, the chapters to follow show repeatedly that detailed research of a small number of countries can be an ideal route to developing more convincing theoretical claims.

Second, we disagree with area studies pessimists who think that qualitative researchers in political science are fighting a losing battle in a hostile discipline. The evidence suggests otherwise. As Gerardo Munck and Richard Snyder (2005) have systematically shown, qualitative studies of one or two countries not only remain *present* in the most prestigious comparative journals; they also remain *predominant*.[5] Nearly two-thirds of the articles published in *World Politics*, *Comparative Politics*, and *Comparative Political Studies* between 1989 and 2004 were mainly qualitative rather than quantitative, and more than 60 percent of these articles covered no more than two countries.

These data suggest that less has changed in the study of comparative politics than is commonly surmised. Although the field continues to evolve by absorbing new topics and techniques, most of the work in comparative politics is still based on two core elements: general theories and cases steeped in particular histories (Kohli et al. 1996). The existence of an "eclectic" and "messy" center of the field was observed by Peter Evans more than a decade ago, and his observation remains true today. This accords with our view that region and theory are mutually reinforcing in the production of knowledge. We agree with Evans that most comparativists become inspired to study a particular *theoretical* question because of their existing *regional* interests and passions (see Kohli et al. 1996). Although theory generation is crucial to the comparativist enterprise, this is most likely to occur after comparativists have spent significant time familiarizing themselves with one country or a small handful of countries.

The importance of area studies to comparative politics can be further demonstrated by the central role of area studies in knowledge accumulation and

theory building. This has occurred through an iterated dialogue between theory and cases, and a judicious balance between deductive reasoning and inductive analysis. A few key examples should make this immediately evident. Putnam (1993) is based entirely upon Italian empirics but has generated worldwide interest in the concept of social capital (as witnessed in Varshney's [2002] careful application of Putnam's concepts to India); Stepan (1987) is based largely on Brazil, but it has long been at the forefront of studies on military politics more broadly; Bates (1981) built its argument on several African countries, while spurring a broader debate on urban bias as a political basis for economic stagnation. These are all considered landmark works in the comparative politics canon, and their theoretical contributions are rooted in a deep knowledge of one region or country. They do not disdain the particular in favor of the general. Rather, they build their general explanations with the raw material of observations from their particular regions and countries of expertise.

How much have Southeast Asianists contributed to these valuable conversations between theory and region? On this score, the data collected by Munck and Snyder (2005) suggest that Southeast Asia is not currently "punching its weight" in comparative politics. Only 4.3 percent of recently published articles in the peak comparative journals have focused on the region, far less than the Middle East (8.9 percent), sub-Saharan Africa (9.8 percent), or East Asia (17.7 percent)—to say nothing of Western Europe and Latin America, which combine to make up 63 percent of the articles in Munck and Snyder's data set.

To a large extent, this imbalance reflects the simple fact that more comparativists study these other regions than study Southeast Asia. Yet the chapters to follow will exhibit an abundance of research containing interesting theoretical implications in substantive areas of great political importance. Perhaps such work has been underrepresented in leading comparative journals because the theoretical payoff of such studies is often more implicit than explicit. It may also be the case that Southeast Asianists have perceived leading journals as unwelcoming to qualitative analyses that cover only one or a small handful of countries.

Yet comparative politics remains an eclectic enterprise in which qualitative studies of specific world regions continue to play a prominent role. We are confident that it will remain so for the indefinite future if area experts engage in theoretical and methodological debates rather than shunning them. The

opportunities for Southeast Asianists to make a bigger disciplinary splash in political science would appear to be considerable. The big payoff from such mutual engagement will come when Southeast Asianists not only show how their countries of interest *reflect* current theoretical understandings but also help political scientists *rethink* these understandings in creative and rigorous ways.

The next section aims to aid such creative and rigorous mutual engagement with a practical discussion of best practices in qualitative research design. We do not seek to deny or denigrate the value of formal game-theoretic and quasi-experimental quantitative research. We wish instead to highlight and clarify the distinctive contributions of qualitative, area studies research to theoretical knowledge in comparative politics.

Qualitative Analysis in Political Science: Asserting Value Through Rigor

In the parlance of political scientists, "qualitative methods" is a rather unfortunate grab-bag category. It encapsulates the wide range of research approaches that involve neither statistical tests of probabilistic relationships between posited causes and outcomes ("quantitative methods") nor numeric formalizations of political phenomena ("formal theory"). Qualitative comparative analyses typically limit their scope to one or a few countries and use narratives to offer comprehensive accounts or explanations of certain historical events or political phenomena. How can the qualitative analysis of politics within a small number of countries inform a discipline that tends to pursue the explication of the universal rather than the illumination of the particular?

Qualitative researchers have justified their contributions to political science in numerous ways.[6] Until recently, the most common defense involved acknowledging that qualitative methods are only second best, but are still justified because of extraneous factors such as a lack of available data. This kind of defensive justification was often heard among earlier generations of researchers lacking confidence and a vocabulary to make the case for qualitative methods on their own terms.

In the past decade, qualitative researchers have moved beyond these unnecessarily apologetic responses. They have articulated impressive philosophical and methodological explanations for why qualitative analysis is indispensable in the accumulation of theoretical knowledge. Three lines of argument war-

rant special emphasis. First, qualitative researchers deny the common notion that hypothesis testing should be considered the central task in knowledge accumulation. Rather, the choice of research methods depends on the state of existing knowledge. As Timothy McKeown (1999: 187) remarks, "the research task is not how to move from a position of ignorance to one of certainty regarding the truth of a single proposition. Rather, it is how to learn something new about a world that one already knows to some degree." Testing is only one phase in this long process that is not always rational, consistent, or straightforward, but involves much hermeneutics. Judgment, classification, description, and thought experiments play important roles, even if they are creative intellectual processes that are difficult to formalize. It is not that case studies or contextualized comparisons are always second-best choices; rather, they are often *appropriate* responses to the existing conditions of knowledge about the subject to be studied.

Qualitative research is especially indispensable in the construction and elaboration of new theories and hypotheses. By aiding "a dialogue between ideas and data," qualitative analysis forces researchers to constantly reconceptualize the cases and reconsider the causes and outcomes: in short, the phenomena themselves (Ragin 2000: 43–44). It is not inferentially fatal if this kind of dialogue stretches or alters theories to make them consistent with new evidence (King et al. 1995: 104). It is every bit as important to elaborate and refine hypotheses as to confirm or disconfirm them in their existing form (Mahoney 2003: 146–150). Neither is it condemnable that this dialogue often serves heuristic rather than explanatory purposes. On the contrary, it matters that qualitative researchers can tackle and assess (rather than assume) the homogeneity of cases, causes, and causal impacts (Ragin 1997: 24–27).

A second noteworthy recent advance in qualitative methods has come with Henry Brady and David Collier's (2004: 252–255) useful conceptual distinction between "dataset observations" (commonly understood as *n* in statistics) and "causal process observations." This latter type of observation entails systematic attention to causal processes and mechanisms over time. This is one of the most useful analytic tools in qualitative analysis. The value of carefully accumulating observations across time as well as space has long been recognized in discussions lauding the explanatory importance of "process-tracing" in qualitative analysis (George and Bennett 2005). But Brady and Collier have made this value more explicit with their rather straightforward argument that increasing observations is not merely a matter of attaining quasi-experimental

control (namely, gaining sufficient "degrees of freedom"). The best historical analyses of political phenomena in a small set of countries are not "small-*n*" studies at all, but rest on a different sort of *n* (causal process observations) than what is used in most quantitative analyses (dataset observations). In sum, determining the actual number of empirical observations in a comparative political study is not as straightforward as is commonly presumed.[7]

Third, it is important to note that not all qualitative researchers see the goal of social inquiry as one of drawing general causal inferences. For many, the more fundamental task for the researcher is to interpret and understand specific political events and phenomena (Ragin 1997: 35). In fact, causal inferences, rather than being ends in themselves, may only be a means to other ends. As Charles Ragin (2000: 15) argues, "empirical generalizations and social science theory are important, but their importance derives primarily from their service to the goal of interpretive understanding."

Unlike more positivist qualitative analysts, interpretivists believe that the ultimate goal of social science is not to search for causal regularities but to understand social phenomena.[8] It bears emphasizing that although interpretivist work is often based on fieldwork in a single village, this does not necessarily mean that it is "small-*n*" in the conventional sense. The number of individuals observed and the duration of observation decide how many "*n*" there are. If fieldwork takes place over an extended period and if the researcher is culturally well equipped, the number of observations made can be huge. To be sure, generalizations within national contexts by interpretivist studies, if made, do have to assume similar causal mechanisms and similar impacts of national particularities on individual behavior. But works that examine cross-national correlations have to make even more heroic assumptions about homogeneous causal mechanisms *across* all the countries in their samples.

In the interpretive method, as in qualitative methods more generally, hypothesis testing is embedded in the course of research rather than being a separate, formal step. The task of constructing an empirically valid and logically consistent narrative involves numerous steps by which each observation or account has to be matched with others to ensure validity and consistency. The tests are informal, but they do not necessarily lack rigor. Rigor in this method depends less on formal, public, and replicable procedures than on cultural sensitivity.

This is not to say that interpretivists totally disregard causality; they value causes as an inseparable part of their understanding of social phenomena or

human behavior. Yet they commence with the insight that any causal explanation must ultimately incorporate the understandings of the people involved. Because this is inevitably a highly descriptive task, many scholars mistakenly dismiss interpretivist works as purely descriptive. Interpretivists obviously devote substantial effort to constructing a "thick description" of their subjects, but their works can be quite theoretically ambitious and informative—most notably in the research of James Scott, as we discuss at greater length below.

In sum, qualitative methodologists have made important advances over the past few years in developing a distinct logic and terminology of qualitative methods. This development is particularly helpful to Southeast Asianists embarking on projects that aim to inform the discipline of political science. We now turn our attention to some specific paths through which the qualitative analysis of a single region can foster the accumulation of theoretical knowledge in comparative politics.

Three Paths to Knowledge Accumulation in Qualitative Political Research

Each chapter writer in this book has been asked to examine the degree to which there has been *knowledge accumulation* in Southeast Asianists' study of a specific substantive topic. By knowledge accumulation, we refer to the "generation of new knowledge [that] is *dependent on* previously obtained knowledge" (Mahoney 2003: 133). We are particularly interested in locating works by Southeast Asianists that engage in active and creative dialogue with preexisting *theoretical* knowledge in political science.

Although we do imply some amount of progress in using the word "accumulation," we fully recognize that knowledge accumulation is rarely linear and almost never definitive. We see knowledge accumulation as an iterative process in which conventional theories and even received facts are challenged and amended by new empirical findings and theoretical and methodological advances. Equally important, world events have a powerful bearing on theoretical analysis, productively forcing researchers to rethink their claims. The crucial point is that knowledge accumulation entails an effort to better understand political phenomena through intensive conversation within *and across* research communities.

As a way of introducing the concept of knowledge accumulation, it may be useful to look briefly at the career trajectory of one of the most prominent

scholars of Southeast Asian politics: Benedict Anderson. Anderson's research has made profound contributions to knowledge accumulation on the study of nationalism, beginning back in the 1960s through fieldwork in Java. Although Anderson has purposely ignored the fads and trends in political science, his research has persistently addressed questions of theoretical import, and has thereby maintained its broader relevance in the study of comparative politics.

Anderson's first book, *Java in a Time of Revolution* (1972), was an intensive study of a pivotal moment in Indonesian history. Anderson chronicled Indonesia's struggle for national sovereignty as a clash between the revolutionary agendas of the radical youth (*pemuda*) and the diplomatic temper of the pragmatic intelligentsia. The tension between these two visions of national sovereignty had the fading power of the Japanese occupiers and the reemergence of the Dutch and British forces as its historical backdrop. Through interviews with many key players of the period and through archival research, Anderson wove a nuanced analysis of the complexities and tensions of Indonesia's search for independence. He concluded that the pragmatic elite's pursuit of conservative policies to pacify the Western colonial powers had ensured that national sovereignty would ultimately be achieved at the expense of social reform and substantive, lasting democracy.

After being banned from Indonesia for publishing a report questioning the Suharto regime's claims that communists had been responsible for the 1965 coup d'état, Anderson trained his sights on nationalism in Thailand. His penetrating critique of the conservative character of Thai nationalism came through in his review essay, "Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies" (1978). Here Anderson argued that Thai nationalism as propagated by the monarchy was inherently reactionary, in much the same way that he had found Indonesian nationalism as propagated by its conservative elites forestalling hopes for deeper social reform. His comparative skills were brilliantly displayed with his memorable remark that none of Thailand's nationalist heroes had ever spent a day in prison. This beautifully captured the difference between Thailand's official nationalism and the more popular versions of nationalism that dominated in its Southeast Asian neighbors, where icons such as Jose Rizal, Ho Chi Minh, Aung San, and Sukarno had gained legitimacy by clashing with colonial authorities rather than accommodating them.

Imagined Communities (1991 [1983]) was the culmination—but not the end—of Anderson's writings on nationalism.[9] In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson roamed widely across world history, literature, and sociology in shaping

a global analysis of the origins and growth of nationalism. Anderson argued in essence that nationalism emerged in the Western Hemisphere (first in Latin America and then in Europe) out of the confluence of several world-historical forces: the decline of Latin as a universal language; its replacement by vernacular languages enabling distinct identities; the role of administrative units in constraining the travels of civilian officials (especially in Latin America), thereby cementing their sense of place and identity; and, perhaps most powerfully, the growth of print capitalism in enabling people to imagine themselves as sharing a collective community. The erudition and breadth of Anderson's analysis, the depth of his theoretical insights, and the eloquence with which he argued his case ensured that *Imagined Communities* would become a classic in the study of nationalism.

Anderson's career trajectory is far from typical, but his writings on nationalism reflect some shared strengths of Southeast Asian political studies. First, he has shown a sustained personal commitment to the region, as evidenced by a forty-year interest in Indonesia, Thailand, and more recently the Philippines. While *Imagined Communities* has a more global reach, it is replete with Southeast Asian examples. Second, in pursuing nationalism as a central area of inquiry, Anderson has chosen a topic of real-world and worldwide significance. Third, his methodology throughout his career has combined fieldwork research, cross-country political analysis, and comparative literature—a multitude of qualitative methods that trespass disciplinary boundaries with elegant abandon.[10] Fourth, almost all of Anderson's work, whether on nationalism, democracy, or political culture, has deep historical moorings. Among Anderson's many analytical lenses, historical inquiry has remained central to his efforts to explain and interpret Southeast Asian political currents.

Finally—and perhaps most significantly—Anderson advances powerful theoretical insights that resonate beyond the region. *Java in a Time of Revolution* may not have explicitly sought to establish a major theoretical claim, but it implicitly addressed broad theoretical questions—most critically asking what the consequences are for political development when a pragmatic, accommodationist strategy prevails over violent struggle in the pursuit of national sovereignty. *Imagined Communities* initiated an ongoing conversation in the academy over the nature of constructed identities—not just in Southeast Asia but literally *everywhere*.

The following chapters will show that while Benedict Anderson might be the most renowned scholar of Southeast Asian politics, he is far from the only

Southeast Asianist to combine the virtues of deep regional knowledge with sustained attention to the most consequential theoretical topics. For now, the key point is that Anderson exemplifies a broader lesson: *Region and theory are best treated as forces in combination rather than opposition*. Knowledge accumulation in comparative politics is driven primarily by scholars who develop the regional expertise of Berlin's "fox" without losing their interest in the broad theoretical questions that preoccupy Berlin's "hedgehog."

To show more explicitly how Southeast Asian political studies have accumulated knowledge through the interplay among area studies, qualitative methodology, and comparative theory, we now turn to the different pathways through which qualitative methods can lead to knowledge accumulation. These three pathways are causal arguments, conceptual improvements, and interpretivist analysis. These represent the central approaches through which Southeast Asianists have contributed to theoretical findings in political science.

Path to Knowledge Accumulation 1: Causal Arguments

Few political scientists would gainsay the value of area studies research in producing detailed descriptions and locally specific knowledge. There is less consensus on whether and how single-country studies can improve our understanding of *causal patterns* in comparative politics. We now aim to clarify how this can indeed be accomplished, using two concrete examples from the literature on military politics in Southeast Asia: Mary Callahan's (2003) analysis of military-led state building in Burma and historian Alfred McCoy's (1999) study of military socialization and coup making in the Philippines.

Drawing on the discussion above, our starting point is to distinguish between "dataset" and "causal process" observations. Single-country studies such as McCoy's and Callahan's typically have few of the former but an abundance of the latter. When they pay systematic attention to patterns of political and institutional change over time, analyses of single countries in no way suffer from a paucity of empirical observations (the "small-*n* problem").

"Small-*n*" is not the only misnomer commonly attached to such analyses. A second misconception arises from the tendency to call them "case-oriented" rather than "variable-oriented" in approach. When historical one-country analyses are squarely focused on a theoretical puzzle of general import, it is as

misleading to call them "case-oriented" as "small-*n*." Such works do not try to explain cases—indeed, the notion that Callahan aims to "explain Burma" or that McCoy endeavors to "explain the Philippines" is palpably absurd. Their works echo Lijphart's (1975: 160) maxim that "a case study is a study of a certain problem, proposition, or theory" and hence oriented toward general variables *within* a specific case.

The theoretical puzzles that Callahan and McCoy tackle are among the most vital and vexing in the comparative literature on militaries and democratization. First, what makes a military more cohesive or more divided? And second, what factors increase or decrease soldiers' openness to a reformist agenda? Answering these questions helps us understand whether a military will collectively use force against citizens protesting authoritarian rule (as in Burma) or conduct coups against an elected government (as in the post-Marcos Philippines)—perhaps the two most important factors in determining whether democracy can be introduced and consolidated. These books each contribute a verse to ongoing conversations among democratization theorists, fostering the inclusion of Southeast Asian cases into one of the most robust, cumulative research agendas in political science (see Mahoney 2003).

Of course, knowledge accumulation requires that new works *inform* scholarly debates, not just *join* them. Causal arguments should be convincing as well as relevant. Crafting a compelling causal argument in comparative politics typically involves one of two strategies: either comparing and contrasting outcomes *across countries* or accounting for patterns of change and continuity within a single country *over time*. McCoy and Callahan both emphasize the latter approach. History thus serves a critical *explanatory* purpose in both books. Although many comparativists would lament these authors' focus on only one country, single-country designs can actually be ideal for ruling out alternative explanations. Ironically, this basic point was emphasized more than forty years ago by Heinz Eulau (1962: 397), one of the pioneers of quantitative and rational-choice approaches in political science: "[I]f 'control' is the *sine qua non* of all scientific procedure, it would certainly seem to be easier to obtain in a single culture . . . than across cultures."

Callahan's explanation for the remarkable durability of military rule in Burma adopts an especially long historical view. Following Robert Taylor's (1987) work on the development of the Burmese state, Callahan traces the origins of political militarization to the British colonial period (1826–1941). This helps her debunk the essentialist argument of influential scholars such

as Lucian Pye (1962) that military domination in Burma derives from the country's authoritarian "national character": a causal claim that cannot explain the continuity between British and Burmese practices of rule.

Callahan usefully frames this historical continuity in theoretical and comparative perspective. She portrays Burma as an extreme example of what Charles Tilly (1992) has termed the "coercion-intensive" pattern of state formation in the European context: "The lessons of comparative history suggest that negotiation and bargaining between state builders and social constituencies are crucial to the development of responsive, representative governing institutions" (Callahan 2003: 8–9).

It is this bargaining dynamic that Callahan shows to have been utterly lacking throughout modern Burmese history. Ever since the Anglo-Burmese wars of the nineteenth century, Burma has been consistently misgoverned by a militarized Leviathan that denies the possibility of accommodation with internal rivals of all sorts. Callahan (2003: 21–22) usefully contrasts the "coercion-intensive political relationship between state and society" that British authorities crafted in colonial Burma with their approach next door, where "state-society relations in India were becoming more inclusive and more open to accommodation with Indian elites after World War I." Callahan argues that exceptionally violent and divisive colonial practices in Burma left postcolonial elites with little besides coercive institutions to hold a deeply fragmented country together.

The numerous armed insurgencies that rocked Burma after independence in 1947 thus renewed an old historical cycle of rebellion inviting repression, and repression sparking further rebellion. These insurgencies perpetuated and exacerbated political militarization, deepening the chasm between the Burmese military (*tatmadaw*) and any social forces with which it might have sought some sort of political accommodation. Burma's coercion-intensive path may have originated in colonial warfare, but it was *post-colonial* warfare that prevented these pathological colonial legacies from being overcome.

Through Burmese-language archival research and interviews with retired generals, Callahan conducts "causal process observations" to show how military leaders gradually developed both internal solidarity and intense mistrust of their civilian counterparts during the violent upheavals of the 1947–1962 period. The military has never split, Callahan suggests, because it collectively mistrusts civilian politicians as failed protectors of national unity. Shared experience as "war fighters" has given *tatmadaw* leaders a basis for solidarity behind this resolutely anti-reformist stance. Because military fragmentation is

commonly viewed as a primary cause of authoritarian breakdown, Callahan's historical explanation for military cohesion in Burma contains theoretical implications that resonate beyond the Burmese case.

McCoy similarly displays the causal power of history in his analysis of military politics in the Philippines. In theoretical terms, McCoy's puzzle is one that was introduced by political sociologist Samuel Finer more than forty years ago yet insufficiently attended to ever since: "Instead of asking why the military engage in politics," Finer argued, "we ought surely to ask why they ever do otherwise" (cited in McCoy 1999: 355, n. 4). McCoy's passionate interest in this topic was by no means strictly theoretical. Having watched his beloved Philippines wracked by incessant coup attempts against the democratically elected government of Corazon Aquino during the late 1980s, McCoy (1999: 5) felt pressed by events to ask, "What is it, then, that makes an army willing to subordinate itself to civil authority?"

Because the Philippine military has exhibited substantial historical variation in this regard, McCoy was able to assess varied outcomes without taking the methodological risk of "losing control" with cross-case comparisons. After eschewing coup plotting throughout the pre-martial-law era (1946–1972), the Philippine military followed its coup against Marcos in 1986 with nine subsequent coup attempts against Aquino. Why were Philippine officers so coup-averse before Marcos and so coup-prone after him?

Political scientists have paid surprisingly little attention to the puzzle of why militaries accept or reject civilian supremacy.[11] McCoy makes this enormous theoretical question more empirically tractable by exploring the socialization processes undergone by two separate classes of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA). Like Callahan, he tries to apprehend individual soldiers' attitudes by closely examining the statements and behavior of individual soldiers themselves. The first part of *Closer Than Brothers* scours the archives and employs interviews with retired officers to trace how the PMA class of 1940 was effectively inculcated with the PMA's doctrines of obedience to superiors and subservience to civilian commands. This class helped steer the military completely clear of coup politics. McCoy then aims to explain the subsequent breakdown of military socialization, as witnessed by the leading role played by the class of 1971 in the putsches of the mid-late 1980s.

Because the content of PMA socialization did not change significantly over time, McCoy seeks his answers in broader historical shifts in Philippine politics. Much like Callahan, he sees soldiers' shared operational experiences playing the most important causal role. For PMA '40, the democratic lessons of their

"Kaydet Days" were generally *reinforced* by their armed national struggle against Japanese imperial occupiers during World War II.[12] For PMA '71, academy rhetoric about democratic principles was starkly *contradicted* by their enlistment in Marcos's brutal campaigns against leftist opponents and Muslim insurgents.

Most intriguingly, McCoy draws on an eclectic combination of psychological theory, Latin American political studies, and his own face-to-face interviews with coup leaders to develop the argument that officers' political attitudes were profoundly shaped by their personal experience as torturers: "Under the Marcos dictatorship, Class '71 became a fist of repression" and "gradually broke free from the constraints of military discipline" (1999: 347). When these officers turned their wrath against Marcos in 1986, the dictator was thus reaping his own whirlwind. Yet the whirlwind knew no loyalty to regime type: Philippine democracy struggled for years with coup attempts led by soldiers with direct experience in Marcos's torture chambers.

Both Callahan and McCoy thus elaborate causal hypotheses that are the result of countless careful observations. By grounding these observations in a single country where they possess the language skills to conduct primary research, they not only increase their explanatory depth; they also employ a research design that provides impressive control for alternative explanations. Their puzzles are both particular *and* general; their arguments are stated in terms of general causal factors that could certainly be converted to other regional contexts. These works should invite scholars of democratization in other regions to keep examining the military "at close range," and continue the effort to unravel the complex causal effects of colonial legacies, academy socialization, counterinsurgency operations, and experience with torture on military politics.

PATH TO KNOWLEDGE ACCUMULATION 2: CONCEPTUAL AND TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

[T]he progress of quantification should lag—in whatever discipline—behind its qualitative and conceptual progress.

—GIOVANNI SARTORI (1970: 1038)

A second path to knowledge accumulation comes through conceptual and typological analysis. This type of analysis precedes an explanatory, causal

framework in that its main goal is to accurately describe the empirical setting at a somewhat higher level of abstraction. Before one can address the "why" question, it is crucial for the "what" question to have been solidly answered. Whereas conceptual analysis may therefore be considered "proto-theoretical," it is fundamental to advancing knowledge in comparative politics. Without an agreed-upon set of concepts for describing political structures and behavior, theoretical development will be built upon quicksand. Much of the advances in comparative politics, one should note, have come through analytic concepts developed by area studies specialists. Corporatism, bureaucratic-authoritarianism, and consociationalism emerged as concepts to describe a specific political setting, but have then been employed effectively across other regions. It bears emphasizing that these concepts, while descriptive in origin, are also rooted in a strong theoretical position.

The process of conceptual formation involves three goals. The first is primarily analytic: providing some more general level of abstraction with theoretical insights. The second is empirical: ensuring that the concept accurately describes a realistic setting. The third is normative: Concepts are often laden with certain values about politics. The process of conceptual analysis involves then a constant dialogue among theory, empirics, and the pragmatic concerns of the researcher (Collier and Mahoney 1993: 844–855). The analyst must ensure that the concept clearly represents an empirical situation while also providing an adequate level of generalization for broader analytical purposes.

In Southeast Asian politics, concept formation has been widely employed in many areas of research, but it has been particularly notable in the study of the state. The emblematic work in concept formation is Fred Riggs's (1966) idea of the bureaucratic polity. This concept was not intended primarily to describe the state, although the bureaucracy was incorporated as a key property within the concept. Rather, the bureaucratic polity was meant to give life to a vast theoretical edifice that would describe Thailand's "political system," provide an analytical framework for comparing Thailand to other developing countries, and establish a theoretical claim about political development and modernization more generally. At the same time, the concept of the bureaucratic polity contained within it a normative view about political change. Change could occur only in gradual stages, as mandated by the process of political development, rather than in the sharper, revolutionary disjunctures favored by Marxist scholars.