4 Men on horseback and their droppings: Yudhoyono's presidency and legacies in comparative regional perspective

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Conventional understandings of the Yudhoyono years have long been framed in terms of personal leadership. This focus on personal leadership has been abundantly evident in journalistic treatments of Indonesian politics, and in everyday commentaries, comparisons and counterfactual musings about the strengths and weaknesses of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's presidency. There is also a long history of academic preoccupation with questions of leadership in Indonesian politics, dating back to Herbert Feith's account of the tensions and conflicts between 'solidarity-makers' and 'problem-solvers' in the decline of constitutional democracy in the 1950s and extending into the writings of William Liddle over the long rule of the Suharto regime (Feith 1962; Liddle 1996). Recent years, moreover, have seen a wide range of institutions and authors in the so-called development industry emphasising and extolling leadership as a (if not *the*) crucial ingredient in enacting economic reforms, enhancing good governance and otherwise promoting development (see, for example, Grindle 2007).

This tendency to emphasise—and essentialise—leadership as a personal quality of individuals has almost always served as a substitute, rather than a starting point, for serious analysis of Indonesian politics. It is often said that Presidents B.J. Habibie and Abdurrahman Wahid were mercurial and erratic; President Megawati Sukarnoputri was staid and standoffish; and President Yudhoyono was indecisive and conflict-averse. In lieu of references to traditional Javanese culture and jargon from the heyday of modernisation theory, today's political analysis simply uses

the language of personality tests, pop psychology, pulp fiction and the tabloids. Indonesian presidents, it is assumed, have different personalities that explain the different politics they pursue and produce. Thus, after the July 2014 presidential elections, leading commentators on Indonesian politics breathed a collective sigh of relief that the hot-headed, ill-tempered, violence-prone Prabowo Subianto had lost his presidential bid and would not be subjecting Indonesian society to his authoritarian personality disorder and childish antics for the next five years, and that the appealingly approachable, earnest, easygoing and apparently incorruptible Joko Widodo (Jokowi) had been cast in the leading role in Indonesia's political drama instead (Mietzner 2014).

If this kind of individualised 'great man'/personality-based approach to Indonesian politics is ultimately unhelpful, inaccurate and obfuscatory, a comparative perspective on presidential leadership in Indonesia may prove more illuminating instead. Indeed, Stephen Skowronek has shown how a longitudinal analysis of presidential leadership in the United States reveals striking patterns suggestive of structural logics exceeding the personal foibles and fortes of individual national executives.

> Certainly it is no accident that the presidents most widely celebrated for their mastery of American politics have been immediately preceded by presidents generally judged politically incompetent. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, James Buchanan and Abraham Lincoln, Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan—this repeated pairing of dismal failure with stunning success is one of the more striking patterns in presidential history, and accounting for it forces us to alter the ways we have been thinking about that history. In the first place, we are prompted to think about what incumbents in very different historical periods have in common with one another and not with their immediate predecessors or successors. What conditions for leadership did the latter presidents in each of these pairs share; what could they do that their predecessors could not? Conversely, what conditions for leadership did the first presidents in each pair share; what did they do to open the door to greatness for their successors?
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> Note further that by accounting for the pattern in this way, we place the leaders themselves in a different light. A search for the typical effects that presidential action has in differently structured political contexts takes us behind the familiar portraits of individual incompetence and mastery. If it turns out that the 'great' political leaders have all made the same kind of politics and if that politics is only made in a certain kind of situation, then our celebration of their extraordinary talents and skills will be seen to obscure more than it clarifies (Skowronek 1997: 8–9).

But while Skowronek could identify recurring patterns over more than 200 years and 40-odd presidents in the American context of uninterrupted institutional continuity, it is hard to see the intellectual benefits of a comparison among six presidents so varied in terms of style, substance and circumstances of rule in Indonesia over the tumultuous 70 years of

dramatic change since independence in 1945. How then can we think comparatively about presidential leadership in Indonesia in a way that helps to illuminate the Yudhoyono era?

Here, a comparative historical perspective on democratisation across Southeast Asia may prove more illuminating than a narrowly Indonesia-centric view. For much as Skowronek was struck by the recurring pairings of presidential losers and winners in American history, observers of political change across Southeast Asia since the 1970s are likely to have experienced a sense of *déjà vu* as they witnessed the ascendance and entrenchment of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in the early years of the twenty-first century. In particular, Yudhoyono's decade-long presidency (2004–14) recalls the eight-year prime-ministerial stint of Prem Tinsulanonda in Thailand (1980–88) and the six-year presidency of Fidel V. Ramos in the Philippines(1992–98). In all three countries that have experienced transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy in Southeast Asia, we find striking parallels in the profiles of national executives at similar stages of political transformation.

This chapter is offered as a complement and corrective to analyses of Yudhoyono's two-term presidency that focus on presidential leadership in narrowly individualistic terms. I argue that the style and substance of Yudhoyono's personal leadership and the long-term significance of his presidency can be further illuminated through a more comparative, historical and structural mode of analysis. By highlighting parallels between the Yudhoyono era and earlier periods in the recent histories of Thailand and the Philippines, this chapter suggests a new way of understanding the Yudhoyono years. Like his counterparts in Thailand and the Philippines, Yudhoyono should be understood as deeply implicated in conservative efforts to constrain the nature and extent of political change during the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. As with corresponding periods in recent Thai and Philippine history, the Yudhoyono era should be viewed as a period during which underlying structural problems and tensions in Indonesian society and politics were sublimated and suppressed, deferring and distorting tensions and conflicts that have already begun to emerge and escalate in the early post-Yudhoyono era.

In developing this argument, the chapter first provides an overview of the parallels between the Prem, Ramos and Yudhoyono periods, highlighting the similar political profiles of these three 'men on horseback' (Finer 2002) and the regimes over which they presided.[1] It then deals

1 First published in 1962, Finer's book has long served as a foundational text for academic study of the role of the military in modern politics. Hence the allusion in the title of this chapter.

with the 'droppings' they left behind: underlying social tensions, escalating political conflict and resurfacing challenges to the parameters of democracy. The chapter concludes by reconsidering the Prem, Ramos and Yudhoyono periods as preludes to significant political upheaval in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, much as the tumultuous late 1960s and early 1970s followed the 'Era of Good Feeling' under Eisenhower and a period of apparent political consensus under Kennedy and Johnson in the United States in the 1950s and early–mid 1960s.

THREE MEN ON HORSEBACK: PREM, RAMOS, YUDHOYONO

The parallels between Thailand's Prem in the 1980s, the Philippines' Ramos in the 1990s and Indonesia's Yudhoyono over the past decade are manifold. In all three cases, we find recently retired (or retiring) senior military officers serving out lengthy terms in office, having dominated national politics for the better part of a decade and enjoying continuing influence for years to come. In all three cases, we find that these former army generals enjoyed largely cooperative and consensual relations with national legislatures, fairly consistent popular appeal among the electorate at large and abiding support from powerful international audiences and institutions, their democratic credentials seemingly confirmed by both their conduct in office and their willingness to cede power to unanointed successors. In all three cases, these national executives were acknowledged and applauded not only as protectors of constitutional rule, but also as promoters of economic development and avowed supporters of initiatives broadly understood under the rubric of 'reform'. In all three cases, moreover, the rise to power of 'professional soldiers' was widely celebrated as a welcome relief from the more divisive and 'dirty' forms of politics that preceded their administrations, and in all three cases, their departures from power were met in many quarters with a measure of regret or disquiet.

Overall, then, looking at the three countries in Southeast Asia where transitions from authoritarianism to democracy have unfolded, it seems that there is invariably a phase of democratisation that involves a protracted period of rule by a consensus-oriented, avowedly reformist and internationally credible ex-general such as Prem, Ramos or Yudhoyono. Thus, we might conclude that if Burma were to continue along a trajectory of democratisation in the years ahead, we should expect a presidency along similar lines in due course. In the Indonesian case, therefore, the Yudhoyono presidency was not an idiosyncratic historical contingency. If Yudhoyono didn't exist, we would have had to invent him, or some other retired army general, to fit the structural niche that he occupied in Indonesia's ongoing political transformation between 2004 and 2014.

How can we explain this pattern, understand it historically and appreciate its meaning and significance? In all three cases, the broader historical context within which these professional soldiers or 'men on horseback' emerged, ascended and entrenched themselves was one of protracted authoritarian rule—a succession of military-led governments in Thailand from 1947 to 1973, Marcos's martial law regime in the Philippines from 1972 to 1986, and the Suharto dictatorship from 1966 to 1998. Under all of these authoritarian regimes, the armed forces occupied key positions in national and local politics, enjoying considerable insulation from civilian oversight and impunity with regard to the commission of large-scale human rights abuses. In all three cases, moreover, the *raison d'être* of the armed forces was not external defence, but rather internal security, defined in ways that helped to circumscribe opposition to authoritarian rule. Thus, crucially, in all three cases, transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy necessitated the emergence and activism—and the disaffection and defection—of senior military officers willing to engage with opposition forces, abstain from efforts to repress protests in the streets, and aid and abet in the forced removal of entrenched dictators and the often impromptu arrangements enabling transitions to democracy. Without General Krit Sivara's intervention in Bangkok in October 1973, without the coup attempt by the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) in Manila in February 1986 and, it is worth recalling, without Wiranto's quiet but effective role in Jakarta in May 1998, these transitions to democracy would not have unfolded—if not at all, then at least not in the remarkably orderly and peaceful manner in which they occurred (Lee 2014).

In all three cases, however, the seemingly progressive role of putative softliners in the military establishment during the fall of these dictatorships was soon complemented by the regressive role of assertive hardliners who worked to undermine if not overthrow early civilian-led transitional governments as they struggled to establish their authority. Avowedly concerned about security threats of various kinds and alarmed about the supposedly growing dangers of disorder and subversion that civilian rule and democracy allegedly enabled, senior military officers resisted efforts to reduce the insulation and impunity of the security forces, criticised civilian leaders for their policy failings and political leanings, and asserted their own prerogatives in terms of control over policy, personnel and political power. In all three cases, moreover, the early years following the fall of long-time authoritarian regimes witnessed forms of both violent and non-violent mobilisation that prompted armed interventions by the security forces, thus involving senior military officers in matters of internal security in ways that inevitably enhanced their public prominence and political authority. Finally, in all three cases these developments impelled vulnerable civilian leaders of transitional

governments (Kukrit and Seni Pramoj in Thailand, Corazon Aquino in the Philippines, Abdurrahman Wahid in Indonesia) to forge alliances with senior military officers whose influence in the armed forces could potentially offset that of the hardliners and thus provide much-needed protection from military foot-dragging, mischief and coup attempts (and from civilian opposition as well).

Beyond the narrow logic of military involvement in the demise of dictatorships and the stabilisation of provisional civilian-led governments under conditions of ongoing transitions to democracy, there are other, broader parallels in the political and ideological transformations that helped set the stage for the rise of Prem in the late 1970s in Thailand, Ramos in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the Philippines, and Yudhoyono at the turn of the twenty-first century in Indonesia. The final years of authoritarian rule in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia had seen the emergence of independent oppositional forces in civil and political society that claimed to articulate the broad aspirations and grievances of the Thai, Filipino and Indonesian people against the narrowly personalistic interests of long-time dictators, their families and their cronies. But with the shift to civilian rule, competitive elections and unfettered media coverage of politics, such notions of unified electorates, universal interests and unselfinterested politicians inexorably faded away, even as the fractiousness of democratic politics and the failings of elected political figures inevitably came into sharp focus. Against this backdrop, in all three cases, a palpable sense of disillusionment led to a growing sense of nostalgia and yearning for something and someone above politics, a resurrection of that ideological notion of an Archimedean point, a 'view from nowhere' from which the national interest and the popular will could be represented, much as preceding authoritarian regimes had claimed to do.

At the same time, the transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy had effected a reconfiguration of what political scientists often simple-mindedly call 'state–society relations', altering pre-existing boundaries between state and society, expanding opportunities for state capture by powerful interests and undermining established notions of the state *qua* state. In all three cases, this development had also provoked a counter-reaction, with efforts made to reassert not just state power but also notions of stateness. In this vein, the cause of reform was most effectively championed not by figures and forces emanating from society, but by elements within the state itself, as seen in the pronounced trend towards the judicialisation of politics over the years following the initial transition from authoritarian rule to democracy in all three countries (Dressel 2012). Thus, while the political exigencies of the transitions to democracy required the services of softliner senior military officers to secure the

ouster of entrenched dictators and counter the dangers posed by hard-liners in the military establishment, the deeper, underlying tectonic shifts accompanying political change following the end of authoritarian rule continued to support the rise of professional soldiers or 'men on horseback' over subsequent years as well (Bungbongkarn 1986; Hedman 2001; Mietzner 2009).

It was in this context that the ascendancy of men like Prem, Ramos and Yudhoyono was not only possible but arguably inevitable. Indeed, their individual personal histories and public profiles fit to a tee the available roles and job descriptions of professional soldiers or 'men on horseback' outlined above. All three men literally grew up in the shadow of the state: Prem's father was a senior civil servant; Ramos's father helped found the Philippine Foreign Service; Yudhoyono's father was a low-ranking army officer. All three embarked on their military careers during periods of expanding roles for the armed forces in public life: Prem in the 1940s on the eve of the 1947 coup that ushered in more than 25 years of uninterrupted army rule; Ramos in 1950 amidst the counterinsurgency campaign against the Huks and Philippine involvement in the Korean War; Yudhoyono in 1973 against the backdrop of the consolidation of the Suharto regime and on the eve of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. All three established their credentials in terms of combat and counter-insurgency operations: Prem in the northeast against the Communist Party of Thailand; Ramos in the campaign against the Huks and in the Korean War in the early 1950s, and as founder of the Special Forces in the early–mid 1960s; Yudhoyono with the Army Strategic Reserve Command (Komando Strategi Angkatan Darat, Kostrad) in East Timor.

But all three men were also drawn into roles that enhanced their contacts, prominence and presentational skills in arenas of civilian public life: Prem as a member of the legislature, aide-de-camp to King Bhumibol Adulyadej and deputy interior minister; Ramos as presidential assistant on military affairs and as vice chief-of-staff of the Philippine armed forces; Yudhoyono as a lecturer at the Army Staff and Command School, as personal assistant to armed forces commander-in-chief Edi Sudradjat and as chief-of-staff for social and political affairs. In the final years of authoritarian rule, all three found themselves in positions that enabled if not impelled them to mark some distance between themselves and the dictatorships they had long served: Prem was affiliated with General Krit Sivara rather than the entrenched duumvirate of Thanom Kittikachorn and Praphat Charusathian in 1973, and he was safely 'up-country' and thus not directly involved in the violence in Bangkok leading up to the coup of October 1976; Ramos served as vice chief-of-staff and then acting chief-of-staff in the early–mid 1980s, when real power rested with Marcos's cousin, Chief-of-Staff General Fabian Ver; and Yudhoyono's links to

Edi Sudradjat (who was sidelined in 1993) disqualified him from sensitive army command positions in Jakarta in the final years of Suharto's rule.[2]

Hence, all three men were well positioned and well suited to play crucial roles as softliners during the critical years of transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. They were all consummate insiders with seemingly impeccable credentials as professional soldiers within the military establishment, yet they also conveniently occupied 'safe' positions outside the line of command of coup-making colonels and generals. Prem had commanded the 2nd Army Division in the distant northeast rather than the coup-prone 1st Army Division in Bangkok; Ramos had long occupied an essentially ceremonial post; Yudhoyono's position as chief-of-staff for social and political affairs left him with oversight of the military's contingent in the legislature during the student demonstrations of February and March 1998, rather than command over boots on the ground. As paper-pushers, parliamentarians and pretty faces for the military establishment, these three men had more to gain from a gradually stage-managed disengagement of the armed forces from politics than from a full-blown *coup d'état*.

Consequently, all three men attracted the support of key civilian figures in national politics during the transitional periods when more assertive, aggressive and adventurous officers undertook or threatened efforts to seize power directly, or otherwise tried to consolidate effective power as military strongmen. Prem was recruited as prime minister as an effective palliative and alternative to the coup-prone 'Young Turks' and 'Democratic Soldiers' in the Thai military. Ramos, for his part, provided a bulwark of support for Corazon Aquino against a succession of coup attempts launched by Marcos loyalists and RAM officers backed by Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile. Yudhoyono was drawn into Wahid's cabinet in 1999 as a counterweight to the more conservative Wiranto, and was enlisted in Wahid's manoeuvres to dislodge Wiranto from his position of pre-eminence within the military establishment. As coordinating minister for political and security affairs under Megawati (2001–04), he counterbalanced the influence of ultraconservative army chief-of-staff Ryamizard Ryacudu in the conduct of military operations in Aceh and elsewhere. In all three cases, these men appeared to serve their patrons in an unselfinterested, inconspicuous and self-effacing manner, unless and until their patron stood in the way of their ascendancy to higher office. Therefore, Prem won strong backing from King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit throughout the 1980s; Ramos was grudgingly anointed by Aquino as her successor in 1992; and Yudhoyono eventually fell out with Mega-

2 For biographical details of these three leaders, see the hagiographical accounts by Warren (1997), Crisostomo (1997), Purwadi (2004) and Hisyam (2004).

wati only in the months leading up to the 2004 presidential election, in which he would beat her in a landslide.

In all three cases, these 'men on horseback' presented themselves as consensus candidates behind whom diverse business and political interests could unite, forging coalition governments and adopting a style of leadership variously celebrated as 'consultative' and derided as 'indecisive'. With prominent civilian figures disqualified, discredited or defined by overly narrow partisan interests, these professional soldiers presented themselves as honest brokers for diverse interests, who in turn deemed them safe bets in elections, bankrolled their campaigns and otherwise bandwagoned behind their ascendancy and entrenchment in office. Prem, Ramos and Yudhoyono reconciled former enemies and recruited into their administrations major representatives from business and finance, old military associates and machine politicians as key cabinet ministers, heads of state agencies and personal advisors. They pursued fairly conventional macroeconomic policies that enabled economic growth and won qualified praise from local business communities, international financial institutions, foreign investors and the bond markets. They pursued ceasefires, amnesties and peace deals to settle armed insurgencies within national borders while improving their countries' international profiles and strengthening relations with the sole remaining global superpower, the United States.

Living up to their reputations as softliners, Prem, Ramos and Yudhoyono paid lip-service to the cause of 'reform' without disrupting the status quo. In sharp contrast to the fragmentation and fractiousness, and the conflict and drama, of preceding prime ministers' and presidents' terms in office, these three 'men on horseback' represented re-equilibration, restabilisation, reconciliation and a measure of recentralisation of power under the veneer of a seemingly more professional and less political form of national leadership. In an era of globalisation and democratisation, these three former military officers thus appeared if not as knights in shining armour, then as officers and gentlemen who could combine the Feithian functions of both problem-solvers *and* solidarity-makers in ways that none of their predecessors had managed to do.[3]

DROPPINGS: THE LEGACIES OF THE MEN ON HORSEBACK

As the terms in office of these professional soldiers drew to a close, it quickly became apparent that the legacies of their years in power

3 For a careful chronicling of these manoeuvres in the ascent of Yudhoyono, see Mietzner (2009).

included deep-seated socio-political conflicts and problems that not only had remained essentially unresolved but had been exacerbated to the point of virtual crisis. In Thailand, Prem's eight years in office were followed by the short-lived, scandal-ridden premiership of Chatichai Choonhavan, who was overthrown in a coup in February 1991, only to be followed by a succession of similarly ephemeral governments that set the stage for the economic crisis of 1997–98 (Ockey 1994, 2001). In the Philippines, Ramos was succeeded as president in 1998 by Joseph 'Erap' Estrada, whose quasi-populist appeal failed to save him from corruption scandals, urban middle-class protests, impeachment proceedings and a 'People Power' rebellion that led to his ouster in January 2001 and the equally problematic nine-year presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (Hedman 2006). In Indonesia, the 2014 elections proved to be extremely divisive, narrowly averting a Prabowo presidency and portending more conflict in the years ahead, if post-Prem Thailand and the post-Ramos Philippines provide any hints as to Indonesia's post-Yudhoyono future.

How can we explain the seemingly sudden (re)irruption of conflict in the early aftermath of these placid periods of ostensibly stabilised, consensual politics under Southeast Asia's softline generals? In mid-2014, the temptation was to reach for the readily available language of idiosyncratic individual leadership and express relief that Indonesia's new president, Jokowi, would be neither as venal as Chatichai, nor as habitually inebriated as Estrada, nor as hot-tempered and violence-prone as Prabowo. But if personality, as F. Scott Fitzgerald famously quipped, is merely 'an unbroken series of successful gestures', then the success and sustainability of political personality and leadership rest on the broader contexts within which they are embedded.

We therefore need to step back and consider the shared contexts within which our 'men on horseback' emerged, ascended and entrenched themselves in power. As many scholars have argued, the polities that crystallised in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia in the Prem, Ramos and Yudhoyono eras were (and, with the exception of Thailand, still are) oligarchical democracies, in the sense that competitive elections are embedded within societies characterised by glaring social inequalities, exceptionally easy access for businesspeople and bankers to state power, and the endemic use of elective offices as bases for personal pecuniary advancement. Yet over the years, these oligarchical democracies have experienced significant change, with established modes of voter mobilisation and interest aggregation increasingly attenuated in the face of demographic trends, the expanding circuitries of the mass media and the rise of public opinion (Hedman 2010). The general trends in these polities seem clear: they have witnessed increasingly direct forms of popular and quasi-populist political appeals to the electorate—what some call

'political branding' (Pasotti 2010)—rather than narrowly machine-based forms of voter mobilisation; anti-corruption campaigns; and efforts to expand the provision of subsistence guarantees and improve access to public education and health care. In other words, in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, we have seen the crystallisation and (except, it seems, in Thailand) consolidation of democracies that are both oligarchical and contested (Quimpo 2008; Walker 2012; Ford and Pepinsky 2014). Invariably, the disjunctures haunting these democracies have given rise to contestation over the meanings and parameters of democratic citizenship—a trend also evident in the oligarchical, contested democracies of Latin America (Caldeira 2000; Holston 2008).

Accordingly, we might reconsider the prevailing contemporaneous and retrospective understandings of Prem, Ramos and Yudhoyono as simply occupying the moderate centre ground and embodying the natural 'new normal' of democratic politics in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, against which oddball outliers—Thaksin Shinawatra, Joseph Estrada, Subianto Prabowo—should be distinguished (and, indeed, defended). For the oligarchical foundations (and the terms of contestation) of democracy in these three Southeast Asian countries were secured through the effective, if artificial, disqualification or dislodging of left-wing movements and parties from the positions in society and roles in democracy that they had previously struggled to attain.

In Thailand, the gradual, fitful shift to parliamentary democracy that unfolded over the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s proceeded only once the left-wing forces that mobilised between 1973 and 1976 (and that were forced to join the Communist Party of Thailand after the violent military coup and crackdown of 1976) had been marginalised from political life (Haberkorn 2011; Lertchoosakul 2012). In the Philippines, the consolidation of democracy in the late 1980s and early 1990s transpired alongside the US-backed anti-communist vigilante campaign and counterinsurgency effort that drastically reduced the considerable strength of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), of its military wing, the New People's Army (NPA), and of the allied labour, peasant, urban poor and student organisations in the countryside and the cities (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights 1988; May 1992). In Indonesia, the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy unfolded after 1998 without official recrimination, or reversal, of the anti-communist pogroms of 1965–66 and the manifold restrictions on political activities associated, however tangentially, with the long-banned Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) (Heryanto 2006). Even the one party with residual traces of a left-wing mass-mobilisational repertoire in 1998–99—Megawati's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, PDIP)—was rendered suitably safe for Indonesian

democracy by the recruitment into its ranks of conservative machine politicians, businesspeople and retired army officers (Ziv 2001; Mietzner 2012). In all three countries, left-wing parties were, at best, effectively relegated to marginal positions in electoral politics, and leftist organisations and activists were confined to minor, supporting roles in public life. Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, it was clear, were only safe for democracy if and when communist parties and serious left-wing politics were—forcibly, violently—excluded from the realm of the politically possible.

In all three cases, our proverbial 'men on horseback' were profoundly implicated in the violent suppression and evisceration of left-wing movements, parties and politics. To begin with, Prem led counterinsurgency operations in the northeast as the deputy commander and then commander of the 2nd Army Division. He subsequently acquiesced in the right-wing military coup and violent crackdown of October 1976, and he incorporated into his administration military and civilian elements who had been prominently involved in atrocities against left-wing activists. Ramos, for his part, participated in the anti-Huk counterinsurgency campaign in the early 1950s, founded the Special Forces, acquiesced in Marcos's proclamation of martial law in 1972, and supervised the mobilisation of anti-communist vigilantes and the counterinsurgency campaign that decimated the CPP–NPA as well as its allied front organisations in the latter half of the 1980s. While Yudhoyono himself was not directly involved in military operations against the Indonesian left, his famous father-in-law, Lieutenant-General Sarwo Edhie Wibowo, had played a crucial role in the anti-communist pogroms of 1965–66. As commander of the precursor to the Special Forces, Sarwo Edhie had led anti-communist operations in the crucial PKI stronghold region of Central Java, where tens of thousands of PKI activists were butchered (Jenkins and Kammen 2012). In other words, all three of our 'men on horseback' were closely associated with the suppression of left-wing political movements and parties, and clearly endorsed the use of violence to effect the elimination of the left from the political field.

In this regard and more generally, these three 'men on horseback' were profoundly shaped by the Cold War and by the efforts of the US national security state to maintain American hegemony in Southeast Asia. Prem's military career in Thailand was dramatically enhanced by the scholarship he won to study at Fort Knox and by his subsequent years of service as an instructor in the US Military Assistance Program. As deputy commander and then commander of the 2nd Army Division in northeast Thailand, he was intimately involved in the implementation of American counterinsurgency doctrine against the Communist Party of Thailand and in US covert operations across the border in neighbouring

Laos. Similarly, Ramos's army career began after his graduation from the US Military Academy at West Point, with service in anti-Huk counter-insurgency operations in Central Luzon under the guidance of the legendary CIA officer Colonel Edward Lansdale and the Joint US Military Assistance Group. Moreover, he served in the Philippine contingents in the Korean War and the Vietnam War. In the early–mid 1980s, his close relations with the US Embassy earned him a widespread reputation as an 'Amboy', and in the late 1980s he closely coordinated with American intelligence and military agencies while overseeing counterinsurgency operations and the broader anti-communist campaign as armed forces chief-of-staff and secretary of national defence. Finally, Yudhoyono's career in the Indonesian armed forces was distinguished by early, extensive and recurring stints of training at various US military facilities, such as Fort Benning in the 1970s and Fort Leavenworth in the 1980s and early 1990s. Consequently, all three 'men on horseback' were deeply imbued with distinctly American, Cold War conceptions of what it meant to be a professional soldier.

In short, the era of the 'man on horseback' in Thailand in the 1980s, the Philippines in the 1990s and Indonesia in 2004–14 has in each and every case represented the ascendancy of US-trained anti-communist 'Cold Warriors'. The representation of these three professional soldiers as honest brokers, moderate centrists and consensus-builders has thus masked both their acquiescence and their active involvement in the violent elimination of left-wing movements and parties. Equally, it has camouflaged their historical roles in the construction, preservation and legitimation of narrowly construed, deeply conservative forms of democracy in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. In the 1970s and 1980s (and in various ways since that time), Prem worked to create a form of politics in Thailand in which parliamentary politics would be dominated by provincial businesspeople and Bangkok-based bankers, the economy would be opened to foreign investment and organised around export-oriented industrialisation and agro-business production, and the military, national security and foreign relations would continue to be insulated from civilian interference. In the late 1980s and 1990s, Ramos similarly strove to secure the reconstitution of oligarchical democracy and to promote economic liberalisation in the Philippines. At the same time, he actively supported suppression of the countervailing power and policy critiques articulated by the activists and organisations of the left. In the early twenty-first century, Yudhoyono likewise played a crucial role in the consolidation of an Indonesian democracy in which powerful banking, business, civilian and military interests from the Suharto era were successfully preserved and promoted under democratic auspices (Hadiz and Robison 2014). Pressures for reform, therefore, were largely

left unheeded and challenges from below kept at bay. In other words, all of these 'men on horseback' rode into power not simply as part of a natural process of selection, in which the failings and foibles of fickle, factionalised civilian politicians left power, willy-nilly and by default, in the hands of professional soldiers, but also as part of the active construction of artificial, undemocratic and in some measure American-style, externally imposed constraints on the very parameters of democracy itself.

Viewed from this perspective, we can make much more sense of the problematic legacies of the eras of the 'men on horseback' in Southeast Asia and the otherwise seemingly odd and inexplicable (re)lapse into open political conflict in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia as these three horsemen rode off into the proverbial sunset, in 1988, 1998 and 2014 respectively. After all, if in all of these democracies left-wing movements and parties, unions, peasant movements and urban poor groups have been effectively excluded or marginalised from the field of politics, then we should hardly be surprised when calls for a more equitable redistribution of the fruits of growth and counterhegemonic challenges to the established parties and entrenched interests of administrations such as those of Prem, Ramos and Yudhoyono inevitably surface in other, putatively populist forms. When the champions of such countervailing power are avaricious businesspeople, alcoholic action-film stars or psychotic ex-army officers, it is easy to demonise and deride their emergence and appeal as evidence of irrational pathologies among the population at large, in the face of the eminently reasonable likes of Prem, Ramos and Yudhoyono. But a proper aetiology of the problem suggests that it was the very construction of artificially constrained forms of democracy—by these 'men on horseback'—that explains the strange symptoms represented by a Thaksin, an Estrada or indeed a Prabowo in the first place. The pathology, then, lies in the very normality effected and embodied by the likes of Prem, Ramos and Yudhoyono, and in the political displacements and distortions this normality has produced. Prabowo may have lost the 2014 election, but Indonesia will remain haunted for years to come, if not by Prabowo then by what he represents—and for this Indonesians have the likes of Yudhoyono to thank and blame.

CONCLUSION

What can we conclude at this juncture with regard to the significance and legacy of the Yudhoyono era? Viewed in comparative perspective, Yudhoyono's substantive, structural achievements seem essentially nugatory. Prem, it must be noted, helped to oversee structural adjustment and a shift to export-oriented industrialisation amidst the global

recession of the early–mid 1980s (Doner and Laothamatas 1994). In a similar vein, Ramos successfully promoted banking and tax reform, and the partial opening of telecommunications and interisland shipping, in an era of global financial and trade liberalisation (Hutchcroft 1998: 206–31; Austria 2003; Salazar 2007). Yudhoyono, by contrast, oversaw stagnation in Indonesian manufacturing while banking heavily on a commodities boom (World Bank 2010; Rahardja and Winkler 2012). In political terms, he also defended the status quo rather than initiating structural reforms. Like observers speaking of China's years of rapid economic growth but political stagnation under Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao (Johnson 2012), we might speak today of a 'lost decade' in Indonesia under Yudhoyono.

But in years to come, we may view the Yudhoyono period in a somewhat different light—if not as the calm before the storm, then as a prelude to, or part of a process of, political change. Democratisation, after all, is a process in which conflict serves as catalyst, as seen in the repeatedly cyclical pattern of crisis, reform and re-equilibration in the Philippines in the nearly six decades since independence. Arguably, similar dynamics are still unfolding in Thailand, as reflected in a striking zig-zag pattern of expanding and contracting electoralisation of state power in the country. Thus, the era of apparent consensus under a 'man on horseback' represents if not an illusion then a sublimation and deferral of the inevitable return of the repressed. Democracy, it needs to be said, is not about consensus; it is about the management of conflict through electoral competition. The win–lose, zero-sum logic inherent in democratic politics inexorably produces not only regression towards the mean but also opportunistic outbidding as politicians and parties work to respond to and reinforce existing cleavages and tensions in society. As Rick Perlstein notes in the second of his epic, multi-volume study of the rise of the conservative movement in American politics:

> Politicians, always reading the cultural winds, make their life's work convincing 50 percent plus one of their constituency that they understand their fears and hopes, can honor and redeem them, can make them safe and lead them toward their dreams (Perlstein 2008: xi–xii).[4]

Perlstein chronicles the 'unmaking of consensus' and the 'fracturing of America' in the years following the 'Era of Good Feeling' under the two-term presidency of the professional soldier par excellence, Dwight D. Eisenhower (1952–60). He shows how deepening tensions and conflicts in American society and politics in the 1960s enabled the rise of

4 Perlstein's study begins by tracing the rise of Barry Goldwater in the 1950s and continues beyond Nixon (Perlstein 2001, 2008). His most recently published volume covers the rise of Ronald Reagan to national prominence over the course of the 1970s (Perlstein 2014).

that awkward oddball and perennial loser, Richard Nixon, to the presidency in 1968 after a succession of political defeats and humiliations. It was, Perlstein suggests, precisely Nixon's embitterment, sense of entitlement and outsider status that eventually enabled so many Americans to identify themselves with him amidst the controversies and cleavages opened up by the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War and the rise of the counterculture during the 1960s. Perlstein thus calls the America that Nixon inherited and oversaw during his presidency 'Nixonland':

> [I]t is the America where two separate and irreconcilable sets of apocalyptic fears coexist in the minds of two separate and irreconcilable groups of Americans. … 'Nixonland' is what happens when these two groups try to occupy a country together. By the end of the 1960s, Nixonland came to encompass the entire political culture of the United States. It would define it, in fact, for the next fifty years (Perlstein 2008: 46–7).

Leaving aside the implications of Thai, Philippine and American parallels and precedents for a moment, it might be tempting to view—in isolated, idiosyncratic terms—the election of Joko Widodo to the Indonesian presidency in July 2014 as a basis for unbridled optimism about the country's future. In sharp contrast to Prabowo, after all, Jokowi embodies many of the most promising features of development and democratisation in Indonesian society and politics: private, small-scale, productive entrepreneurship rather than monopoly capital and natural resource extraction; origins in local society and experience with decentralised governance; distance from the New Order era, the military establishment and the 'deep state', as well as the so-called party cartels of the post-Suharto period; an ecumenical approach to the role of religion in society and politics; and reliance on popular appeal rather than machine-based forms of voter mobilisation.

Thankfully, in historical terms, Jokowi in 2014 compares favourably to Chatichai in 1988 and Estrada in 1998, in being an eminently more worthy successor to Indonesia's 'man on horseback'. Indeed, Jokowi is a breath of fresh air in Indonesian politics akin to that ascribed to John F. Kennedy when he succeeded America's professional soldier par excellence Dwight D. Eisenhower to the presidency in January 1961, having narrowly defeated Richard Nixon at the preceding election. But we should consider the implications of both Perlstein's account of the post-Eisenhower years in America and the pattern of politics following the 'men on horseback' in nearby Thailand and the Philippines. Someday in the not-too-distant future, Indonesians may find themselves living in 'Prabowo-land'. If so, at least in part, they will have their 'man on horseback' to blame.

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