
WHY DOES THAILAND HAVE SO MANY COUPS?

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Thailand has been home to more military coup d'états in modern history than any other country.

New Mandala, an academic blog on Southeast Asian affairs, found that Thailand has had 13 successful and nine unsuccessful coups in just over a century. The most recent being in 2014.

Many have attributed the country's recent divisive politics to the rise of Thaksin Shinawatra. The telecommunications billionaire became prime minister in 2001 but was toppled by a military coup in 2006.

But some political scientists say the turmoil is about more than just Thaksin. The One Earth Foundation's CoupCast project details multiple factors that increase the risk of a military coup.

There are two key ones:

A history of coups

Research shows if countries have already experienced a coup, they're more vulnerable to having another one.

Thailand has developed what experts call a coup culture. That doesn't mean that Thai culture itself is prone to coups. What it does mean is that there has been a normalization of military coups. They are seen as an acceptable way to solve a political crisis, and often it's the public calling for the military to step in.

The country's form of government

Coup attempts rarely happen in countries that are fully dictatorial or fully democratic. But those with systems that include a bit of both, like Thailand, are more susceptible.

In 2014, Yingluck Shinawatra, the then Thai prime minister, and Thaksins sister suffered the same fate as her brother and was overthrown by the military. That coup was led by Gen. Prayuth Chan-ocha, who became the countrys prime minister.

However, in March this year Thailand held its first national election for five years. Even though Thaksin Shinawatra was still in exile, the third incarnation of his political party – now called the Pheu Thai Party – won the most seats. But it failed to get an overall majority and the partys attempts to form a coalition government were unsuccessful.

Instead, parliament elected Prayuth Chan-ocha to the top office, allowing him to continue to serve as prime minister, despite claims from opposition leaders that the vote was rigged.

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/20/why-does-thailand-have-so-many-coups.html>

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