THAI POLITICAL PARTIES
IN THE AGE OF REFORM

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List of Acronyms

AMLO	Anti-Money Laundering Office
BAAC	Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives
CDA	Constitutional Drafting Assembly
CDD	Committee for Developing Democracy
DP	Democrat Party
ECT	Election Commission of Thailand
MPs	Members of Parliament
NAP	New Aspiration Party
NPLs	Non-performing Loans
OTOP	One Tambon One Product
PR	Proportional Representation Electoral System
SAP	Social Action Party
SME	Small and Medium sized business
SML	Small, Medium, Large Policy
TNP	Thai Nation Party (Chart Thai)
TRT	Thai Rak Thai

Forward

Political parties in Thailand have not a long and easy path. Since their emergence in the early 1950's only one party has survived and established itself as a strong political force. Because of their discontinuity, there has been no major research or study on this subject. Siripan's research is the first systematic effort to analyze Thai political parties of their developments and challengers, especially under the 1997 Constitution. The study is timely because of the recent coup (September 19, 2006) after which all parties were banned, and two major parties are under investigation by the constitutional court. Siripan raises a very important issue concerning the relationship between political parties and business conglomerates. In this third stage of development, Thai politics has brought in a new factor which makes the state and society relations more complicated, and may lead to a highly unstable situations.

Chai-Anan Samudavanija
President of the Institute
of Public Policy Studies
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Forward

Thai Political Parties in the Age of Reform provides
a comprehensive evolution of Thai political parties in the
contemporary time. Siripan Nogsuan Sawasdee convincingly
argues that the 1997 constitution, party elites, election
campaign, and dictatorial power of the single-party govern-
ment had shaped the development of Thai political parties
into a business conglomerate control.

The unexpected military coup on September 19, 2006
may seem to contradict Siripan's hypothesis that political
parties are now insulated from the military power. However,
when we dwell upon her explanation of the political party
development process, she implicitly describes a sharp
cleavage between the supremacy of the Thaksin government
and the Thai military establishment. The widespread corrup-
tion of his majority government, the failure of the parliamen-
tary check and balance system, the tight control of mass
media, and the outcry discontent demonstration gave a solid
legitimacy for many Thais to support the military coup.
Therefore, Siripan's hypothesis implies that a military coup
could potentially result from the collision between the Thaksin
government and the longstanding bureaucratic system.

Siripan classifies the development of Thai political
parties into three stages. She carefully links those stages of
political parties into a perspective of the contemporary
political party history. This perspective reflects an imbalance
of the development, with a sophisticated management of
political parties and election campaign on one hand and a
poor mass of peasants and rural unemployed on the other.
The massive victory of the 2005 election leading to a single-
party government of Thai Rak Thai could not secure the
Thaksin government from the military coup. The defeat of

the Thaksin government evidently indicates that the 2005 election victory was not an electoral representation of the Thai people as claimed, particularly in the upcountry areas. As Siripan confirms, Thai political parties do not truly represent the interest of Thai people; the parties have not built a representative foundation to support their development. Therefore, they now have to find their balance of development that could sustain growth.

Thai Political Party in the Age of Reform is a book that students and political actors of Thai contemporary politics must read.

Kanok Wongtrangan
2006

PREFACE AND ACKNOLEDGEMENTS

This book has grown out of a research project of the same title, "Thai Political Parties in the Age of Reform," completed in December 2004. Since that time, I have conducted additional research in order to ensure the study's relevance to the current political situation in Thailand. My interest in the subject of political parties stems from the fact that although political parties have evolved enormously for the past three decades and have been significant players in Thai politics, we in Thai society hardly understand them. More importantly, the standard texts, both in Thai and English, on Thai political parties and the party system do not offer empirical and convincing explanations of what is happening and why. I am concerned to explain clearly what factors have contributed and continue to contribute to the changing elements of Thai political parties.

The 1997 Constitution has persisted as the focal unit of many debates even after it was abolished. Its fundamental impacts on change and adaptation of Thai political parties and the party system can be seen in the results of the 2001 and 2005 general elections. For six years, the threats raised by the domination of big business in the political sphere have occupied what political debate there has been in Thai society. There were outcries from intellectuals fearing parliamentary dictatorship, along with protests from NGOs against the misuse of natural resources and the monopoly by business tycoons-cum-leaders.

Three months before the publications of this book, the Royal Thai Army staged a bloodless coup against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's government on the evening of September 19, 2006. This was the first successful coup in fifteen years. The coup group, later calling themselves "the

Council for Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy" (CDRM), canceled the upcoming elections, suspended the Constitution and dissolved Parliament. The coup occurred after a nearly year-long political predicament involving Prime Minister Thaksin and the anti-government protest group, called the People's Alliance for Democracy, led by Sondhi Limthongkul, an outspoken journalist.

The 2006 coup d'etat has resulted in another significant incarnation of political parties as players in the Thai political arena. Although political parties were not abolished, their political activities have been strictly prohibited. This sadly shatters the hopes of many who want to uphold the spirit of Thai democracy. The 2006 coup conveys a message that in Thailand there will always be the threat of a military coup. Notwithstanding, this does not erase the general perception that competitive political parties are indispensable to the consolidation and growth of the democratic system in Thailand. Therefore, we cannot cease to examine and understand the roles of political parties even during the time of non-elected government.

INTRODUCTION

THAI POLITICAL PARTIES IN
THE AGE OF REFORM

It is very difficult to conceive of democracy without political parties, although it is not very difficult, however, to conceive of it without interest associations or social movements. However fragmented, weak, or undisciplined, however poorly rooted in society, however unstable and vociferous, parties are a very real and necessary part of the politics of new democracies. Democracy cannot be sustained without competing political parties.

(Peter Mair, A Conference on Political Parties and Democracy, The International Forum for Democratic Studies, November 1996, Washington D.C.)

The struggle for power within the Thai political domain has nearly always been settled by coups[1]. As a result, political parties have had an uncertain status. At times their existence depended on the whims of military generals, who could abolish or revive them at will. The political parties also contributed to their problems and poor image, partly a result of the cliental and factional politics brought on by the politicians themselves through their unethical pursuit of self-interest.

Despite the above mentioned hindrances the Thai political party system has continued to evolve, albeit intermittently. It is presently at a delicate stage of transition from its past status as an adjunct to the bureaucratic establishment to more substantial roles as a channel for popular representation and as a provider of top political executives[2]. A notable and significant change from the past status is the

entry of business people into electoral politics. Leaders of central-elitist, business-oriented political parties have begun to replace previous local networks. Additionally, the electoral process, especially the proportional representation system (PR or Party List system), with a 5% threshold, tends to favor big and well-funded parties. Therefore, even though since the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution we have witnessed a wave of party proliferation (as many as 60 of them registering and competing in the general election in 2001), only the most wealthy ones could manage to get their candidates on board. In addition, the hitherto unimaginable circumstance of one party receiving the majority of seats in parliament and setting up a one-party government has proven to be possible.

In Thai politics, party leaders and Members of Parliament alike are motivated not only by the desire to be re-elected (Downs 1957[3]; Katz 1980), but above all to join the majority government. And it is apparent that electoral viability is becoming even more dependent on the skills and resources possessed mostly by certain social groups and political parties. Therefore, many members of parliament have been willing to shift their political affiliations to join the healthier and wealthier parties if doing so will secure them seats. Evidence shows that even the leaders of a long-established party like Chart Pattana were willing to resign from a party that they once helped to establish and join a more viable party (Thai Rak Thai) to secure their chances of winning and getting cabinet posts. In other words, contrary to past circumstances, candidates are now in need of a party banner more than the parties need them. This condition poses a serious threat to the survival of small- and medium-sized parties (SMPs) which used to pride themselves on being crucial elements in the formation of coalition governments.

Two other critical changes in the Thai political environment are noteworthy. First is the institutional arrangement. The promulgation of the 1997 Constitution introduced new

regulations and electoral laws. The Organic Law on Political Parties 1998 (B.E. 2541) and the Organic Law on Elections established an independent Election Commission of Thailand (ECT) with oversight authority[4]. These laws strictly regulate party operations and accounting practices in order to enhance transparency and accountability within the party system. A key objective of the new legislation was to strengthen parties as ideological bodies and to broaden their membership bases, with the aim of reducing the prevalence of patronage and vote buying. The Constitution's drafters envisioned that enduring Thai political and social problems could be alleviated by encouraging more participation from ordinary citizens. Thus, the Constitution put great emphasis on developing institutionalized forms of political participation as an immediate goal. In other words, it was an attempt to balance representative democracy with participatory democracy.

Another environmental shift was the drastic transition from economic crisis to economic recovery. Some major conglomerates which survived the 1997 economic catastrophe joined together and established the Thai Rak Thai party in 1998 to contest the 2001 election. The group of politico-economic elite managed to combine wealth and political power while the accountability mechanism remained feeble. As a result, business tycoon-cum-leaders have been dominating the political system and succeeding in maintaining its edge over other clusters in Thai society. People seem to believe strongly in the magic of money, and harbor the conviction that transfer of capital and technology will rapidly transform parties. In effect, it seems that Thailand has been entering a new era of democracy, one that is submissive to the power of money and big business interests.

Several important questions arise from these changing conditions:

- ■ To what extent are the classic typologies of political parties that emerged from the West European experience relevant to the development and circumstances surrounding Thai political parties? If the dominant models of party in the West are insufficient for understanding Thai political parties, what type of political party model can be conceptualized from the Thai experience?

- ■ What are the relevant roles and functions of political parties in changing conditions?

- ■ What defines the relationships between political parties and significant stakeholders in the socio-economic realm of Thai society?

The main premises of this book are twofold.

First, the development of Thai political parties does not fit into the theories and models of political parties as defined in the established Western democracies. Neither are the studies and literature on Thai politics adequate in explaining the essence and changing characteristics of contemporary Thai political parties. This book, therefore, attempts to propose a model of the transformation of Thai political parties based in the Thai experience and divided into three stages. In the first stage, parties are under the domination of bureaucratic and military forces; the second stage comprises the era of rural network politicians; and, the third stage is characterized by control of business conglomerates and new capitalist groups over political parties. The third stage, which this study believes has arrived, suggests strongly that Thai political parties are presently under the domination of big business and national conglomerates.

The second premise is that the consequences of party transformation in each stage are present primarily in the adaptation and increase in political party performance in terms

of roles and functions. The roles and functions that this study views as strategically reflecting the essence of party transformation are 1) political recruitment, 2) the structuring and channeling of the vote, and 3) the formulation of policy.

Related to these two arguments, this book will suggest that the causes of the emergence of the business conglomerate model of party development include 1) the abolishment of 'provincial development budget' that led to the decline of rural network politicians; 2) the rules and regulations of the 1997 Constitution that give competitive advantage to big, well-funded parties; 3) the diminishing legitimacy of raditional bureaucrats and 'old style' politicians after the 1997 economic crisis; and 4) the increasing role of the media and information technology.

The Organization of This Book

Details of party characteristics in each stage of transformation will be outlined and discussed in Chapter 1 after an examination of the literature on Thai political parties, as well as theories and models of political parties in the West.

Chapter 2 posits that the 1997 Constitution is an intervening factor facilitating the emergence of the business conglomerate model of party transformation. This chapter assesses the effects of the rules and regulations under the 1997 Constitution, such as the structure of the relationship between the executive and the legislative body, and the qualification requirements for Members of Parliament. The impact of the new electoral system then will be closely scrutinized to determine the extent to which changes in institutional arrangements and rules governing political parties affect the structure and competition among individual parties and the party system.

Then the book turns to the analysis of party roles and functions. As proposed earlier, in each stage of transformation, party functions and activities change. Chapters 3, 4,

and 5 will scrutinize three major roles and functions of parties in the contemporary stage of party development; specifically, 1) political recruitment, 2) structuring and channeling the vote, and 3) forming the government.

The concluding chapter recapitulates the transformation of Thai political parties in the age of reform. The chapter analyzes the evolving relationship among political parties, state and civil society and points out the reasons for the setback of societal forces in Thailand's party politics.

NOTES

1   For the history of Thailand's coup in the past, see for example, Kenneth P. Landon, Thailand in Transition. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939) and Suchit Bunbongkarn, *The Military in Thai Politics: 1981-1986.* (Bangkok: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987).

2   Look in (www.krisdika.go.th/law/text/lawpub/e11102540/text.htm)

3   According to Anthony Down's theory, both professional politicians and voters are motivated by self-interest, and indeed largely by economic self-interest. The main objective of each politician is to be elected or reelected to office at the next election, whereas that of each voter is to elect a government whose policies will favor his or her own economic interests. See Anthony Down, *An Economic Theory of Democracy.* (New York: Addison Wesley, 1957).

4   Look in www.ect.go.th/english/national/mp/mp6.html).

CHAPTER I

THE CHANGING MODEL OF
THAI POLITICAL PARTIES

There are voluminous writings on Thai political parties. Some derive their frameworks and concepts from Western models of party and party system development. Others rely heavily on approaches based in Thai traditional values and patterns of relationships. These latter studies take a cultural deterministic approach to rationalize Thai political behavior, explain leadership styles, organization, and roles and functions of Thai political parties.

The first part of this chapter looks at the literature on Thai political parties in order to illuminate the fundamental characteristics of Thai political parties and their context. The second part proposes a model for Thai political parties based on the historical patterns of party transformations.

Literature Review: Thai Political Parties

One of the foremost works on the theory of modern Thai political parties is *"Toward a Political Party Theory in Thai Perspective"* (Kamol Tongdhamachart 1982). Kamol studies the origin and development of political parties in Thailand by tracing the emergence of a competitive party system since 1932. Like many other scholars in his generation, Kamol relies heavily on Samuel P. Huntington's theory of party development which states that a political party will have to pass through a four-phase development before it becomes a political institution[1]. The four phases are factionnalism, polarization, expansion and institutionalization (Huntington 1968). Kamol concludes that Thai political parties from 1932-1976 were merely political cliques or political factions because they

had built few extra-parliamentary organizations and commanded little popular following.

Several other selected works focus on the problems of Thai political parties. These include Tinnapan Nakata's *"Naew Nom Lae Panha Samkan Kong Rabob Karn Muang Karn Boriharn Thai Nai Totsawat 1980" (Trends and Problems of the Thai Political and Administrative System in the 1980s, 1981),* and Likhit Dhiravegin's Pak karn Muang Lae Karn Pattana Pak Karn Muang Thai, (The Thai Political Parties and Party Development, 1983). In these works, the common problems found inhibiting Thai political parties include 1) lack of ideology; 2) lack of party platforms and programs that would link them with the masses; 3) lack of discipline among party members; 4) cliques and factions; 5) instability, discontinuity and disruption; 6) lack of grassroots support and rural organization; 7) hostile attitudes from businesspersons and bureaucrats towards political parties; 8) too many parties; 9) lack of funding; and 10) misunderstanding among party leaders as well as citizens themselves of the role of political parties.

Despite their thorough investigations, all these books fail to discuss socio-economic background related to party formation and development in a systematic way. Specific variables are not identified as presumable causes of parties' problems.

The links between socio-economic status, educational levels and political participation can be found in Pornsak Pongpaew's works, *"Voting Behavior: A Case Study of the General Election of B.E. 2526 (1983), Khon Kaen Region 3," (1984); and "Political Information of the Thai People"* (1980). Pornsak's studies report that people who have high socio-economic status, high educational levels, and good access to political information tend to have a higher degree of political alienation than other groups of people. Furthermore, there appears to be little difference in attitudes toward elections

among voters with lower socio-economic status. Electoral participation by the masses is often ritualistic or mobilized participation rather than voluntary political action. Like many other works, these two volumes tend to rely heavily on patron-client relationship as the explanation for Thai political behavior, especially for those in lower societal strata. Moreover, they fail to mention the consequences of varying levels of political participation among groups.

The organizational and ideological weakness and relatively shallow social base of the Thai parties have long been the focus of many studies, such as Suchit Bunbongkarn's *"The Change of Military Leadership and Its Impact on Thai Politics", (1987);* Clark D. Neher's *"Modern Thai Politics: From Village to Nation"*, (1979); and Ross Prizzia's *"Thailand in Transition: The Role of Oppositional Forces," (1985).* Suchit's work states clearly that none of the parties in the past commanded widespread allegiance or drew on mobilized popular sectors. Prizzia studied the case of the Social Action Party during 1975-76 in its failure to draw support from popular sectors. During that time, no parties were rooted in the countryside. Clark D. Neher points out that Thai political party have had the most rudimentary organization, with almost no regard for programs or issues. Moreover, parties tend to flourish or decay depending on the ability of the party leader to command resources and to distribute these resources to his clientele.

The basic drawback of all the books in this group is that they view political parties as isolated entities and ignore the surrounding environment.

An important work with the goal to generalize about parties and the party system by looking at political parties in a multi-dimensional perspective is Kanok Wongtrangan's *"Pak Karn Muang Thai" (Thai Political Parties, 1993).* Kanok treats political parties as both independent variables, to scrutinize their characteristics, roles and functions, as well as

dependent variables to identify their impact.

This study covers a wide range of issues, namely, structure and organization, mission and function, human resources, leadership and membership, and political development. It also touches on the issues of party origin, rules and regulations concerning political parties and socio-economic conditions surrounding the parties and party system development. Yet, the book tends to suggest a variety of approaches to the study of political parties, rather than present a model or develop a theory for understanding Thai political parties.

Except for Kanok Wongtrangan's volume, most studies on Thai political parties mentioned so far focus on political parties' internal structure. With an awareness of the limitations of this approach, Chai-Anan Samudavanija contends that the broader problems facing political parties, beyond the internal characteristics of party organizations, must be analyzed (2002, 113). Chai-Anan elaborates that in Thailand political conflicts center around an activist bureaucratic state that competes with participant or non-bureaucratic actors, and this leads to greater bureaucratization, rather than democratization.

The importance of bureaucratic power in Thailand[2] can be understood through several major works on Thai politics. First, an influential work by David Wilson (Wilson 1962) indicated that the bureaucracy is the totality of politics, with an exclusive group of elite regulating the passive, apolitical and unorganized mass. Wilson's proposition was based mainly on cultural and psychological factors that viewed the majority of the Thai people as unconcerned subjects who were likely to organize loosely along patron-client relationship. In Wilson's eyes, politics is the competition between powerful circles of politicians and high-ranking bureaucrats who jockey for offices and privileges, while the masses are outside spectators (Wilson 1962, 278).

Later, Fred Riggs carved out a theoretical analysis on Thai politics by using the structural-functional approach (Riggs 1966). This renowned work has been a classic of Thai political science study for decades. Riggs, examining the degree of structural differentiation, stipulated that Thailand fell in between the traditional or fused society, where a single structure may serve many functions, and the modern or diffracted society, where various institutions and channels exist and accommodate an advanced mode of political development. In the Thai case, political struggle was limited to the bureaucracy, and extra-bureaucratic force had not been sufficiently established to be able to control the bureaucracy. Therefore, the bureaucracy was left free to act according to its will. Riggs described this phenomenon as bureaucratic polity (Riggs 1966, 11, 131, 197).

Contrary to Wilson and Riggs' positions, Anek Laothamatas's work on Thailand's business associations strongly argues that Thailand has ceased to be a bureaucratic polity at least in the realm of economic matters since the late 1970s[3]. Anek proposes that the exceptional economic boom during the 1980s from export-led industrialization originated the newfound political and social strength of business groups that have formed politically effective extra-bureaucratic forces so that the policy of government was no longer determined solely by the bureaucratic elite (Anek Laothamatas 1992, 14). Anek goes on to theorize that "The military domination of politics does not spring from the absence or weakness of social forces favorable to democratization. Rather, it is rooted in the conflicting expectations of elections, politicians, and democratic government itself of two major social forces—the urban, educated middle class and the rural farmers or peasants. And that in order for a government to survive in Thailand today, it must maintain the support of the middle class" (Anek Laothamatas 1996).

This study agrees with Anek that Thailand can no longer

be characterized as a bureaucratic polity, not only in the realm of economics, but also in the political arena. Unlike Anek, however, this study attempts to demonstrate that the support of the middle class alone is no longer sufficient for the government to survive. Parties have shown that they are now aware of the need to adjust their platforms to incorporate support from the vast majority of rural people by listening to and answering their needs and demands over the long term, not only during the time of elections.

The impact of changes in the electoral systems and new rules and regulations under the 1997 Constitution is still an under-studied area. A detailed research is Rangsan Thanaphonphan's Sate Tasart Rattatammanoon *(Constitutional Political Economy, 2002).* The author demonstrates that the 1997 Constitution displays distrust towards voters, politicians and political parties alike, which he posits will eventually lead to the destruction of civic virtue. Moreover, he maintains that the 1997 Constitution, emphasizing tight and strict controls without considering *"transactional cost"* in implementing those reins, is an over-regulation. One of the most significant points in this study is that the new electoral system, the mixed system between proportional representation and a plurality system in single-member districts, ultimately favors big parties, with an intention to create a bi-party system. The author argues that this bias does not correspond with the needs of an ideal political market of perfect competition.

On the issue of party system development, most studies in this area examine the rise and fall of individual parties. A research representing this type of study appears in a Ph.D. thesis at Ramkamhang University (Singtong Buachum 2003). To be more specific, they pay more attention to the birth, the survival and the death of individual parties, instead of trying to understand the party system *per se*. This is in a way contrary to the studies of comparative political parties in

the West, which have long emphasized the stabilization and continued existence of major political parties; i.e., the Conservative and the Labor in the Britain, the Republican and the Democratic in the United States, or the Christian Democratic and the Social Democratic in Germany. Undeniably, such parties' endurance is considered the source of the system's stability and in turn, immobilization. The phenomena have made 'the law of the freezing of party system' the focal point in the field of comparative political party studies. (See a primary study by Lipset and Rokkan 1967; and a detailed theory validation by Peter Mair 1977).

At the opposite extreme, within the Thai party system that began roughly in 1946[4], the extinction rather than the survival of political parties has been the norm. Among today's active political parties, the Democrat and the Thai Nation are the only two parties that have gone through more than five elections in over 70 years of constitutional rule. The influx of newly formed parties, hence the portrayal of new faces on the electoral stage every time general elections were held, has made the multi-party model the hallmark of the Thai party system. However, since the Thai Rak Thai Party came on the political scene in the 2001 election there has been a new development in the party system, specifically, the challenge to policy competition, party performance, party finance and a possibility of the two-party system in the Thai political landscape. If this is the case, it means that the emergence of a new party like Thai Rak Thai can lead to a change of the entire party system.

The fact that a new player can have a ground-shaking impact on the party system while full franchise was granted to the electorate more than seven decades ago suggests that the rules of the game have not been yet firmly established and the system is still unstable. To illuminate this point, it is worth quoting Peter Mair's manifestation that "Once the cast of characters was more or less complete [however], and once

the rules of the game had been established, equilibrium could be achieved and a party system could become consolidated" (Mair 1997, 8).

An important question comes from all this: Will the new developments in the Thai political party system prove to be durable and lead to fundamental changes in the long run? This study examines the context and conditions supporting change along with results that have come about amidst the current circumstances, and hypothesizes about their effects on the future.

Critique of Studies on Thai Political Parties

There are three serious problems with the studies of Thai political parties.

First, they tend to look to the Western political party system as the most viable model and try to suggest that the Thai parties should follow and resemble those of Western democracies (Kamol Tongdhamachart 1982; Neher 1987; Prizzia 1985; Tinnapan Nakata 1981; Likhit Dhiravegin 1983; and especially articles appear in the *Journal of Political Party Relations* published by the Election Commission of Thailand). The conventional criteria by which political party systems are usually measured are the number of parties, the level of party membership, the degree of ideological polarization, and the level of party institutionalization.

Second, most studies on Thai political parties focus almost exclusively on the patron-client and factionnal framework (Wilson 1963; Hanks 1979; Girling 1981; Neher 1979; Ockey 1993, 1996; LoGerfo 1996). The patron-client and faction framework posits that Thai political parties and politicians revolve around interpersonal relationships, cliques, and factions composed of personal alliances. In fact, such a framework is very influential in every aspect of Thai politics.

But, the patron-client framework is used so repeatedly to explain nearly every phenomenon of Thai political life that it has almost become Thai politics itself, rather than being a useful tool for making sense of and understanding Thai politics. This study does not ignore the effects of the patron-client framework, but expands its usefulness as a tool to comprehend the social bases of influential groups and inter-action among various sectors in society.

Third, the once-established notion about the stronghold of bureaucracy over political parties is no longer accurate for an analysis of Thai political parties. In present day Thai politics, major power resides in the economic and political domains. Other institutions are sidelined and sometimes even seem submissive. We have witnessed the ability of parties to penetrate beyond the electoral arena to control bureaucratic appointments, the composition of the independent organiza-tions, and so on. In this light, it is imperative to investigate the influence of economic power and economic class over the development of political parties and evaluate the directions in which this upcoming force will lead.

The studies that rely on the three approaches outlined above often leave out and obscure a great deal about the landscape and motives of Thai political parties. They dismiss the nature and bases of political organization and coopera-tion except those of a personal, patron-client basis. More importantly, they also overlook the ever-changing interplay between power holders in the political realm. Since frictions, conflicts, and ideas among various groups and actors are not systematically examined, and especially the influence of eco-nomic power over the development of political parties is not closely scrutinized, Thai political parties and the party system are too often portrayed in an overly simplistic manner.

More importantly, what is sorely absent in the studies is a conceptual model that enables a comprehensive under-

standing of Thai political parties and the party system. Attempts at party development classification can be seen in Pornsak Pongpaew (2001) and Somchai Pakapasvivat (2003). Pornsak Pongpaew classifies the development of Thai political parties into five phases based on the interval between party existence and extinction. The five phases are; 1) 1946-1951; 2) 1955-1958; 3) 1968-1971; 4) 1974-1976; and 5) 1981-1996. The absent years were those years when political parties were not allowed to function legally.

Somchai Pakapasvivat undertakes a more elaborate classification by employing such changes in political culture as denotation, though he does not provide clarification of the meaning and effects of political culture. The five groupings of political party development as proposed by Somchai are as follows: 1) the period of no political parties between the origin of Constitutional monarchy in 1932 to 1947; 2) the political parties during extensive military coups and military party domination from 1947 to 1957; 3) the political parties during continued military dictatorship between 1957 to 1973; 4) the political parties after the student uprising in 1973 which led to a brief period of democratic atmosphere (1973-1976) to the military coup in 1991; and 5) the political parties from post 1991 military coup to the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution.

Because the two studies focus mainly on the relationship between political parties and the military, while quite interesting, they do not help much to provide a theory of political party typologies and development. Moreover, the two studies stop at the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution, without giving an analysis of the new political structure and environmental impact at the present crucial stage of party development and transformation.

A noteworthy work is Duncan McCargo's "Thailand's political parties: real, authentic and actual" (McCargo 1997).

McCargo argues convincingly that the emerging mode of Thai political parties is the "electoral professional" parties in which the leadership seeks to establish a direct connection with voters through the media and through a variety of marketing techniques.

Concerning the new political context encroaching on the development of the party system, so far no study has properly mapped the new structure of the electoral system and analyzed the impact of recent changes. Neither has there been any systematic study of the political party system in Thailand and its relationship to various groups in Thai society. A study of parties' strategies, managerial skills and adjustment ability that account for parties' strengths and weaknesses is also lacking. Some studies have accepted the importance of origin and history of political parties, but do not adequately link it to the prevailing trends in contemporary society.

Therefore, new and controversial issues have to be raised concerning the nature of Thai political parties; i.e., the role of traditional power, the effect of modern informational systems, a party's management and capacity to adjustment, and the relationships between party leaders and members. Also, serious doubt must be raised about the ability of the party system to ensure the process of democratization and a balanced economic expansion. All these have a bearing on what is meant by party development and how the model of party development can be understood.

Before venturing to develop a model of Thai political parties, first we should review the theories recounting the typologies and models of political parties in the Western world and demonstrate that Thai political parties share only some characteristics with each of the Western models. In fact, no comprehensive understanding of party development in Thailand can be based on Western theories alone.

Models of Political Parties in Western Democracies

The model of a political party in Western democracies has been a point of interest since the beginning of the 20th century when Max Weber distinguished two types of political parties, namely the party of elites and the party of masses (Weber 1946). A pioneer systemization of typology of political parties is the work of Maurice Duverger (1954). Duverger, using membership relations and organizational structures as criteria, classifies political parties as the cadre (caucus) parties and the mass (branch) parties. Duverger argues that the elite or the cadre parties will eventually give way to the mass parties due to their disadvantage in having weakly linked organizations, weak member relationships, and lack of common ideologies[5].

On the other hand, Otto Kirchheimer contends that Western European political parties after the Second World War have adopted pragmatic rather than ideological characteristics. Therefore, Kirchheimer proposes a 'catch-all' party model, in which parties seek out support from larger and more various groups in a complex society, not only from a narrow, well-defined group of members with local organizations (Kirchheimer 1966, 177-200). Then Richard Katz and Peter Mair asserted that politicians have more and more considered politics an occupation rather than a vocation. Accordingly, the major parties are trying to harmonize their interests and exclude the smaller, newly established parties from the electoral competition. Consequently, the parties are nationalized; their organizations become parts of the states and politicians become state agents. At the same time, parties gain privileged access to state-regulated media and public broadcasting. Such characteristics are the essence of the 'cartel' party model. Katz and Mair also maintain that the competition of the cartel parties is based on managerial skills and efficiency; therefore, the level of financial support is more important than of membership (Katz and Mair 1995, 5-26; 1997, 109-116).

To summarize, the models of party in Western democracies can be basically categorized in order of development as the elite parties, the mass parties, the catch-all parties and the cartel parties (Katz and Mair 1997, 110-111). Despite different approaches in each model, one can say that a common principle among them is that they all analyze the relationship between political parties and civil society, or between political parties and the state, or between political parties and both the state and civil society. More importantly, the development of political parties in the Western models should be viewed, as Katz and Mair point out, not as a straight-line development where the new model wipes out the old one, but as reflective of a dialectical process in which each new party type generates a reaction which stimulates further development, thus leading to another type of party, and to another set of reactions, and so on (Katz and Mair 1997, 94-95). In effect, in each particular model, other kinds of parties co-exist simultaneously, but the prevailing ones are those which the model is named after.

Similarly, this study insists that there is no straight line in the development of Thai political parties. This means that in each period of party development, the old type of parties can exist together with the new type; they can even share some characteristics. The significance is in the party competition, and the parties of the new type usually come out as winners or superior parties.

Despite this similarity, the origin of Thai political party development differs greatly from the Western democracies. Thai political parties do simulate some characteristics and follow some strategies possessed by the Western party models, especially the strategies of the pragmatic catch-all model; i.e., the ability to acquire vast support from larger and more complex groups of electorates. However, although some scholars and many politicians have drawn on the mass party model as the standard, Thai political parties did not follow

through stages of the elite (cadre) party, the mass party, the catch-all party and the cartel party model. The main discrepancy is that only strategies and tactics are imitated, not the essence of party nature. Specifically, Thai political parties have not, from the beginning, manifested ideologies, membership, social representation, and linkage with civil society, all of which are at the core of party development models in the West.

This is hardly to say that a country with a long history and ostensible legacy of authoritarian regimes such as Thailand cannot be reconciled with the theories and principles of the established Western democracies, but we need to take a closer look at the formative historical realities intrinsic to Thai society. In effect, we need to improve the link between theory and practice in party development. It is hoped that this study will serve as a new body of knowledge enabling a better understanding of the trajectory of the future development of Thai political parties and society.

The Three Stages of Thai Political Party Development

Political parties are seen in this study as both *dependent* and *independent* variables. As dependent variables, they exist as parts of the political system and its environment[6]. As such, they are much more acted upon than *acting upon*. The environment in which they move impinges on them in many more ways than they intrude upon that environment. In other words, everything of interest about a political party — its organization, its leaders, its policies, its capacity to attract votes and its ability for adaptation — is affected by the structure of political opportunities within a given state.

Concurrently, parties not only are shaped by, but through their own distinctive properties help to shape the external environment. In Giovanni Sartori's words, parties and party systems are not simply objects, but also subjects. It is they who ultimately set the agenda, and it is they who

ultimately determine the terms of reference through which we, as voters and as citizens, understand and interpret the political world (Sartori 1969; quoted in Mair 1997, 9). Aware of those areas where attributes of the parties impinge on polity, this study also emphasizes the way parties transfer and form social composition and political arrangement. As such, parties are also treated as independent variables. In addition, the changing institutional structure under the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution in Thailand is taken in this study as an intervening variable.

The point of view of this study, that the development of the party system depends on the way parties originated combined with the specific nature and extent of the democratization process, is not unique. This study maintains that all variables used in evaluating the past and current institutional situation in Thailand form a replicable process that can happen in another place at another time. Therefore, the study will not attempt to create a model nor establish a typology of parties that only identifies "our" kind of parties. Rather, it is hoped that this study will encourage comparison of parties across systems in similar contexts.

Political party development in Thailand can be divided into three stages of transformation, namely 1) the military and bureaucratic control over political parties; 2) the rise of rural network politicians[7]; and 3) the domination of the national business conglomerates. Thai political parties are now moving into the third stage of party transformation. In the past, the weakness of Thai political parties was linked with the perpetual conflict between military and bureaucratic power. The disseminated clusters of political actors had never been able to establish the parameters of bureaucratic force. The pinnacle of this period lasted from the late 1950s to approximately the 1980s, or until the end of Prime Minister Prem Tinnasulanon's term, during which state power was

mainly held by the military, civilian bureaucrats, and techno-cratic experts.

When the military and bureaucratic power were weak-ened, due partly to the growing resistance from civil society and the self-destruction of the centralized bureaucratic system, the rural network politicians rose to power and posed challenges to the old power holders. Capitalists formed alliances with cliques in the military and civilian bureaucracy to pursue their economic interests. This period is widely known as 'Money Politics': rural and national capitalists were buying influence and taking control over political parties. This period is largely defined by mass vote buying, widespread 'under the table' corruption, and pork barrel politics. The rise of rural capitalists and network politicians started roughly towards the end of Prime Minister Prem Tinnasulanon's administra-tion and peaked from 1988 to 2001.

The contemporary situation is marked by the entry of big business, which formerly acted behind the scene, but now is trying to take control of state power. The contemporary situation reflects both the struggles and alliances among major actors. What we are now witnessing is a new dynamic interaction between the bureaucratic elite, the rural network politicians and the national capitalist class, with the latter increasingly gaining political power through parliamentary and cabinet channels.

Parties in real life have an unpleasant way of not fitting the model, or of not continuing to fit models over time. In each stage of transformation, as stated earlier, there are always some overlapping characteristics—representing transitory periods from one stage to another. Therefore, characteristics exhibited in each category of party transformation are not necessarily exclusive to that stage; some might appear on other stages of party development as well. The difference is they appear as intermediary or short-lived characteristics, not as

principal determinants. For example, during the military-bu-
reaucratic domination stage there was a brief democratic at-
mosphere during the period of "revolution-restoration"[8] from
1973 to 1976 when numerous political parties competed in
the general elections. However, it was hard to deny that twelve
years after the 1973 'democratic revolution', the military still
had an upper hand over political parties. Likewise, the rise to
power of rural network politicians was stained by the 1991
military coup during the General Chartchai government. Even
more remarkable, the ad hoc formation of a military-controlled
party to support General Suchinda Kraprayoon as prime min-
ister in the name of Samakhi Dharm Party can be considered
as the legacy of the first stage of party development. Never-
theless, the contention is that the sign of military resistance
from the general public was unmistakable and the Chartchai
coalition government marked the first elected administration
in which major parties and member parties of coalitions played
central roles in the subsequent stage of party development.

Curious readers might argue that because the Thai
Rak Thai party has only appeared recently and its survival is
seriously in question, it is too soon to consider Thailand as
having entered the new stage of big business domination of
party transformation. This study, however, maintains that the
Thai Rak Thai Party has already started a fundamentally new
stage in party development. The way Thai Rak Thai organizes
and operates party activities and functions forces other
parties to readjust their political methodologies. Characteris-
tics particular to the domination of the business conglomer-
ate model of party development include: 1) a clear policy
direction; 2) the attempt to represent various social groups;
3) effectiveness in mass communication; and 4) the ability to
build up the image of the party and party leaders. All these
need a well-funded and stable source of party financial
resources.

The major consequence of the transformation of political parties lies in the adaptation and changes of roles and functions performed by political parties from past to present. In other words, with the same functions, the roles performed by political party vary with its own characteristics in each stage of development. Therefore, in order to measure the transformation of political parties over time, it is necessary to identify major functions and activities that reflect characteristics of political parties across time and space in the polity. Scholars in political party studies have categorized several roles and functions of political parties. In this study, with a concern to party transformation and development, the classification of roles and functions of political parties are as follows: 1) political recruitment; 2) structuring and channeling the vote; and 3) formulating policy. The issues of party roles and functions and the structure that hinder or facilitate the performance of these functions will be examined in detail in the subsequent chapters.

The following section illustrates the elements, and especially the weaknesses, of each stage of party development that lead to contestation, the end of one stage, and the transition to the next stage. Special attention is paid to the present-day development of the threat and challenges posed by national conglomerate business over the rural network politicians.

Stage I: Military and Bureaucratic Control over Political Parties

The process of party development in Thailand over the past sixty years was often interrupted following the military coups that prevented political parties from sustaining continuous performance and showing their capacity to the electorate. Also, in the past whenever the ruling bureaucratic elite was forced to accept political parties as participants in

the political system, it would form its own party – usually an intra-parliamentary party— to protect its interests and impose legal obstacles on the formation and performance of other political parties, making it difficult for them to sustain natural growth. The elements of political parties, their leaders and membership under the control of military and bureaucracy can be summarized into four groups.

First, among major functions of political parties, political recruitment is deemed to be the most important function. This particular function distinguishes political parties from other kinds of associations; i.e., labor unions or trade associations. During the domination of military and bureaucratic force in Thailand, however, political parties were not the main providers of political elites in society. In a former authoritarian-pluralist model,[9] semi-democratic[10] regime like Thailand, strong leadership emerged not from political parties, but from the military. During this stage, there were competitive elections, but forming a government required a three- to five-party coalition. Coalition parties, however, could never decide who would be the country's leader. They inevitably turned to military generals to take the premiership and also other key ministerial portfolios such as Defense, Interior, and Finance (Anek Laothamatas 1988; Chai-Anan Samudavanija 1985). To illustrate the point, during General Prem Tinasulanon's premiership, at least three party leaders (Chartchai Choonhavan, leader of the largest party in the coalition; Sith Savetasila, leader of the second largest; and Narong Wongwan the leader of the former Ruam Thai Party) openly announced that they did not want to become prime minister. Accordingly, this stage of party development is characterized by the existence of the non-elected body in the government; the appointed Senate and the premier himself did not have to run for office and a number of cabinet members were drawn from those who had not been involved in the election process. Table 1.1 shows that most premiers in Thailand before 1992 came from

the military rank and file. The names appear in the sequence that each prime minister took office. Numbers in the first column indicate the order, based on the first tenure that they become prime minister.

Table 1.1: List of Thailand's Prime Ministers in Each Stage of Party Development

Order	Prime Minister Names	Year of administration	Duration year/month/day
-----	--------NO PARTY POLITICS--------	--------------	------------
1	Praya Manoprakornnititada	1932-1932	0/5/11
1	Praya Manoprakornnititada	1932-1933	0/3/22
1	Praya Manoprakornnititada	1932-1933	0/2/20
2	Colonel Praya Pahonpolpayuhasena	1933-1933	0/4/24
2	Colonel Praya Pahonpolpayuhasena	1933-1934	0/9/6
2	Colonel Praya Pahonpolpayuhasena	1934-1937	2/11/16
2	Colonel Praya Pahonpolpayuhasena	1937-1937	0/3/29
2	Colonel Praya Pahonpolpayuhasena	1937-1938	0/11/5
3	Colonel Luang Pibulsongkram	1938-1942	3/2/21
3	Field Marshal Po. Pibulsongkram	1942-1944	2/11/7
4	Major Kuang Apaywong	1944-1945	1/1/0
5	Mr. Tawi Bunyaket	1945-1945	0/0/17
6	Royalty Seni Pramot	1945-1946	0/4/17
4	Major Kuang Apaywong	146-1946	0/1/24
7	Mr. Pridi Phanomyong	1946-1946	0/2/13
7	Mr. Pridi Phanomyong	1946-1946	0/0/1
-----	---------------- STAGE 1 -----------------	--------------	------------
7	Mr. Pridi Phanomyong	1946-1946	0/1/25
8	Rear Admiral Thawan Tamrongnawasawat	1946-1947	0/9/5
8	Rear Admiral Thawan Tamrongnawasawat	1946-1947	0/5/7
4	Major Kuang Apaywong	1947-1948	0/3/0
4	Major Kuang Apaywong	1948-1948	0/1/15
3	Field Marshal Po. Pibulsongkram	1948-1949	1/2/17
3	Field Marshal Po. Pibulsongkram	1949-1951	2/5/2
3	Field Marshal Po. Pibulsongkram	1951-1951	0/0/6
3	Field Marshal Po. Pibulsongkram	1951-1952	0/3/0
3	Field Marshal Po. Pibulsongkram	1952-1957	4/11/26
9	Mr. Pot Sarasin	1957-1958	0/10/10

Order	Prime Minister Names	Year of administration	Duration year/month/day
10	Lieutenant General Tanom Kittikhachorn	1958-1958	0/9/20
11	Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat	1959-1963	4/9/28
10	General Tanom Kittikhachorn	1963-1969	5/2/28
10	Field Marshal Tanom Kittikhachorn	1969-1971	2/8/10
10	Field Marshal Tanom Kittikhachorn	1972-1973	0/9/27
12	Mr. Sanya Thammasak	1973-1974	0/7/0
12	Mr. Sanya Thammasak	1974-1975	0/9/19
6	Royalty Seni Pramot	1975-1975	0/0/27
13	Royalty Kukrit Pramot	1975-1976	1/0/7
6	Royalty Seni Pramot	1976-1976	0/5/5
6	Royalty Seni Pramot	1976-1976	0/0/11
14	Mr.Thanin Kraivichien	1976-1977	1/0/16
15	General Kraingsak Chamanan	1977-1979	1/6/0
15	General Kraingsak Chamanan	1978-1980	0/9/22
16	General Prem Tinsulanond	1980-1983	2/2/28
16	General Prem Tinsulanond	1983-1986	3/3/5
16	General Prem Tinsulanond	1986-1988	2/1/0
-----	---------------- STAGE II ----------------	--------------	------------
17	General Chatchai Choonhavan	1988-1990	2/5/5
17	General Chatchai Choonhavan	1990-1991	0/2/25
18	Mr.Anand Panyarachun	1991-1992	1/1/5
19	General Sujinda Kraprayoon	1992-1992	0/1/18
18	Mr. Anand Panyarachun	1992-1992	0/2/12
20	Mr. Chuan Leekpai	1992-1995	2/9/9
21	Mr. BanharnSilapa-archa	1995-1996	1/4/12
22	(retired) General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh	1996-1997	0/11/14
20	Mr. Chuan Leekpai	1997-2000	2/8/21
-----	---------------- STAGE III ----------------	--------------	------------
23	Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra	2001-2005	4/0/0
23	Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra	2005-2006	1/5/6

Second, in terms of policy formulation, it is logically possible to organize government and do nothing to formulate policy. Policy, after all, is made by various individuals and groups, and in various situations may have little to do with organizing government. This is the case of policy formation in Thailand during the first stage of party development, when policy was basically the arena of bureaucrats and techno-crats under the military government. During this stage, policies were largely ineffective as instruments to enhance the parties' popular support and distribution of collective incentives and displayed a lack of coordinated program implementation in the fragmented multi-party system.[11]

Third, the ability of parties to structure and channel votes to build a stable electoral base was minimal. Each party was aware of the possible military coup or dissolution of the House, thereby necessitating another election at almost any moment. With this view in mind, parties focused on building their own immediate popularity. They sponsored special projects in the ministries under their control. By the same token, MPs tried to raise constituency service in order to solidify and expand their patronage network.

Fourth, the unethical pursuit of self-interest and the lack of party loyalty among MPs caused party destabilization as much as intervention from the military. On this issue, former Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj, the leader of Social Action Party, boldly stated that "Politicians in Thailand are not easy to befriend, or to make contact with, or to please… What they want is position and money. Don't think that these have been eliminated. They still exist. As the leader of a party, I know best. My flesh was sliced every time there was a party meeting. When I asked them to raise their hands to support the government, I always met with a threat. Where is my power to deal with the threat? I always used Lord Buddha's way. When I was attacked by these Maras (devils), I always gave; sometimes twenty thousand, sometimes, fifty thousand,

sometimes, a hundred thousand...What else could I do, if I did not give?"[12]

The last point concerns the intervening factor of the constitution. The many constitutions during this stage of party development had been exploited as tools for military control; for example, the 1978 Constitution prevented a majority of the elected MPs in the House from forming a government by requiring a majority of the entire Parliament, including the appointed Senate. It was said during this period that the premier must be someone who had the support of three elements in the society – he or she must have the blessing of the monarchical institution; he or she must receive approval from the military organization; and he or she must be acceptable to a coalition of political parties.

The domination of the military and bureaucracy over political parties ran through the 1980s when technocrats from the bureaucracy and party politicians made up the cabinets in coalition governments. In the late 1980s, there was also a tremendous growth in businessmen entering the parties through elections and by financial support; they became Members of the House of Representatives and the cabinets. But their political power was still subordinate to those from the bureaucratic division.

Stage II: The Era of Rural Capitalists and Network Politicians

The rise of rural network politicians was fundamentally a result of the inability of centralized state power to provide basic services to the rural people who form the majority of the Thai electorate. While national businesspersons were still uncertain about political party status and fear of military intervention, rural network politicians were successful in establishing a link with provincial officials in civil service, the police, and the army who offered access to new business and political opportunities (Robertson 1996, 925).

The essence of political parties during the era of rural capitalists and network politicians is significantly different from that of the first stage. Yet, as previously stated, since there is no straight line in the development of Thai political parties, the transformation of party development sometimes reflects the struggle of the former power holders against the challenge of the new power claimants. Accordingly, some elements from the first stage of party development are still noticeable in stage II.

The most remarkable dissimilarity in party temperament between stage I and stage II is the propensity of political parties to provide political elites, especially the position of the premiership. Party leaders in this stage show eagerness and capacity to organize the government instead of resorting to military organization. Chartchai Choonhavan was the first among elected representatives to proclaim that he wanted to be the prime minister. Later, the New Aspiration Party's leader, Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, vowed not to take any cabinet seat other than that of prime minister. (Far Eastern Economic Review, October 1, 1992).

However, because the parties in government receive their main support from rural capitalist MPs and network politicians who are not well-equipped with managerial skills and administrative knowledge, they have to seek help from outsiders, or non-elected MPs, in running the government. Thus, the coalition parties have to maneuver politics of compromise by nominating a strong team of respected technocrats and businesspersons to the cabinet. These persons, for example, have included banker Tarrin Nimmanhaeminda, Supachai Panichapakdi, and telecommunications mogul Thaksin Shinawatra. Such nominations define the trend of more active and direct involvement by national businesspersons in political parties.

In the stage of rural network politicians, the ability to structure the vote is underlined by the bureaucracy's failure

to provide adequate services in rural areas. As a result, rural electorates usually want their MPs to fix immediate, everyday problems rather than deal with far-flung national issues. The Thai electorate mostly resides in rural areas, making it easy for rural network politicians to emerge. Local patronage networks were facilitated by the 'provincial development budget'[13] or "the MPs' budget" which allocated the government budget to individual MPs, bypassing bureaucratic organizations, to be used as a development fund in his or her own constituency. This inevitably led to pork barrel politics and a surge of provincial politicians who wanted a part of the government's large budget. Among them was Banharn Silapa-archa, an MP from Suphanburi Province who effectively used "pork barrel" money in developing his own constituency. Indeed, schools, libraries and other public places in his province were named after him and his wife.

This practice of government budget allocation ended in the Chuan government's second administration in 1999 when Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai stated that the budget should be authorized by the executive branch alone; it should not be the concern of the legislative body. The termination of the development budget significantly hindered the web of patronage between rural politicians and the rural voters since it destroyed the secure source of money an individual MP would receive each year.

The bulk of patronage given out by MPs consisted of jobs and services for constituents. Thus, the balance of patronage benefits, whether real or imaginary, material or honorific, ensued that the poorer people would approach their politicians to act as intermediaries with the state, in turn ensuring the politicians a loyal electorate[14].

The function of local politicians in providing benefits for their constituencies in exchange for votes also resembles that of the old American urban political machine. Party politics during the years of growth of the American cities and

immigration flow has been known as "bosses and machines." The term signified the way in which the political support of the poor and immigrant populations were 'purchased' through political machine services and patronage linkages. Politicians thought of party organizations as a type of welfare state. George Washington Plunkitt, a long-time State Senator from New York's Fifteenth Assembly District, describes how he used party organizations to cultivate the favor of voters on a face-to-face basis in traditional urban politics around 1900 as follows:

> What holds your grip on your district is to get right down among the poor families and help them in the different ways they need help. I've got a regular system for this. If there's a fire in Ninth, Tenth or Eleventh Avenue, for example, any hour of the day or night, I'm usually there with some of my election district captains as soon as the fire engines. If a family is burned out I don't ask whether they are Republicans or Democrats,....I just get quarters for them, buy clothes for them if their clothes were burned up, and fix them up til they get things runnin' again. It's philanthropy, but it's politics, too - mighty good politics. Who can tell how many votes one of these fires bring me? The poor are the most grateful people in the world, and let me tell you, they have more friends in their neighborhoods than the rich have in theirs.[15]

In the case of Thailand, however, the tradition of political patronage is more customarily and extensively employed in the rural setting rather than urban locales. More to the point is that political parties in the era of rural network politicians, or during stage II of development, unlike their Irish and American counterparts, were unable to strengthen their

organizations and institutionalize the common practice of patronage into reliable political machines. On the contrary, many politicians fell back on local influential mafia and ty-coons *(chao pho)* to obtain their resource base, and influence and thereby mobilize the electorates behind such leaders. This reflects party organization structured around the indi-vidualistic influence and distribution of goods and services, not local units and organizations that can command a viable electoral base.

As for party platform, its existence can be reduced to a platform-making ritual with no compelling significance in electoral outcome and legal status on political party or its candidates. The problem of integrated policy and effective program implementation caused by multi-party coalition government during stage I also prevailed in stage II of party development.

In sum, political parties during the era of network politicians were shrouded by conflicts, factions, corruption and lack of established organization, stable finances and policy direction. The discontent and frustration of the old-style political parties in the view of the public-at-large lead to the quickly earned popularity of the newly established business conglomerate party.

Stage III: Business Conglomerate Control over Political Parties

At first businesspeople were reluctant to participate directly in politics. The May 1992 bloodshed[16] was prime evidence of the retreat of the army, giving more confidence to the public at that time that the era of military intervention and disruption was over. As indicated in the above section, politics had become more locally focused and based on patron-client groups. Rural network politicians had the ability to provide service to the electorates, earning them gratitude from the rural population. Now they were challenged

by national businesspersons more willing and prepared to take control over politics. The following statement of Prime Minister and Thai Rak Thai Party's leader Thaksin Shinawatra well reflects the attitude and ambition of business conglomerates in participating in politics:

> "…Politics and business are inseparable. We have to accept this fact. However, politics is like the sun while business is the world; if they get too close it is going to be hot, if they are too far away it is going to be cold. Hence, they are inseparable. We have to admit that political parties need money, all activities need money. Not every party runs business. Some political parties are like private companies, some are public companies. This is the fact. I can say no more. In short, it is ordinary for business and politics around the world"[17].

The causes of the emergence of the business conglomerate model of party transformation can be identified as follows:

1) The abolishment of 'provincial development budget' or 'the MPs' budget' led to the decline of rural network politicians and forced individual MPs to depend more on political parties and party elites.

2) Some rules and regulations of the 1997 Constitution, i.e., the candidates' qualification requirement and the new electoral system, gave advantage to big, well-funded parties by demanding a 5% threshold in one big constituency of the proportional representation system.

3) The 1997 economic crisis proved to many that bureaucratic expertise and rural network politicians were incapable of solving national problems, thus paving the way for businesspersons to reshape the

political structure as well as economic arrangements.

4) The increasing role of the media and informational technology made possible for political parties to communicate directly to the electorates. Thus, parties can have their own channel to contact and connect to voters, sidestepping the patronage webs of rural network politicians.

It is not a coincidence that Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his family owned several telecommunication corporations (SHIN Corp), a group of real estate companies, and a television channel (ITV)[18] (Atiwat Sappaiboon 2003). Pracha Maleenon and Adisai Bhodaramik, former members of the cabinet also operated channel 3 television and control the second largest telecommunication company in Thailand, respectively.

The business conglomerate model of party development is intensified by growing materialism in general. A materialistic, consumer-oriented society opens the way to opportunistic battles among parties trying to maximize vote gains through political advertising, stressing qualities of party leaders by using marketing tactics, business research and development strategies. In this sense, any policies and plans proposed by parties are treated like commercial products. They have to be checked for ratings before being presented in the market. This can happen most easily in a society where ideology has never been a motive for voting behavior. Accordingly, parties operate generally as electoral agencies, bidding for votes to win the elections. Consequently, the style and mode of political competition are transformed.

In general, political parties in Thailand are now seeking to become more reliable and distinct political entities. They have given the impression that they are no longer dispensable for the consolidation of democracy. This phenomenon is accompanied by a lack of systematic increase in the roles of

other forms of citizen representation, as the political reform and the 1997 Constitution tried to promote.[19] Amidst a collective adjustment to the new conditions of democratic governance, one political party grabs an opportunity to rise by employing policy as the factor in two important and related political domains. First, policy is used in the political competitive arena as concrete strategy in creating alternatives for voters. In other words, policy as never before is now used as a vote-getting tool for political parties. Second, policy is utilized in acquiring, maintaining and enhancing party and government legitimacy. For that reason, this study argues that the contesting area in politics is going to change due to the shift in political party transformation from the old type of rural network party to the contemporary type of business conglomerate party.

The escalating significance of policy factors and mass communication, along with the mounting importance of leadership (notwithstanding its vulnerability) in the changing environment are shown in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: System, Leadership and Policy Factors in the Big Business Model of Party Development

System factor	Leadership factor	Policy factor
Constitution favors one dominant party.	PM style and behavior is akin to chief executive.	Policy becomes more concrete and must be materialized.
Increased executive power. Checks and balances from legislative branch will become less effective.	Decreased policy initiation and decision-making from the Parliament.	Policy and strategy play important role in acquiring, maintaining, and enhancing government legitimacy.
Checks and balances will depend more on media and independent agencies.	Intra-party and inter-party conflicts will intensify and may lead to periodic destruction of factions.	Political competition will create more Policy alternatives for voters. Policy will be a votegetting tool for parties.
The government is trying to represent all interests, including big business, local firms, the peasantry and the working class.	Ministerial and bureaucratic leadership will be put to the test and evaluated regularly by party leader.	Implementing dual track Policy, encouraging competitive business groups while providing welfare for the disadvantaged.
Political movements and conflicts are diversified and scattered across the regions. Local issues will be more diversified.	Political stability depends on PM's ability to allocate interests for supporting groups while designing strategy to suppress pressure from disadvantaged and marginal sectors.	Contesting area in politics will emphasize more on concrete and doable policy choices for voters.

It should be pointed out that the concentration of party transformation in Thailand is not in party membership as it was in the cadre, mass, and catch-all models. On the contrary, the transformation of political parties proposed in this study accentuates those who 'control,' or 'own' the parties, in other words, the party elite. This is because the members and general voters alike are still subordinate to the political party elites. A minor change, however, converts voters from being mere clients in patron-client networks to customers and/or cheerleaders for the party elites, and the subordination of

members and voters to party elites in Thai political party is not uncommon. In theory, Michel's iron law of oligarchy suggests that strong parties are inclined to represent political elites, not the population at large (Michels 1962).

Table 1.3 below depicts the essence and characteristics of party development and transformation in Thailand, namely 1) the military and bureaucratic control over political parties; 2) the rise of rural capitalist and network politicians; and 3) the domination of the business conglomerate model.

Table 1.3: Characteristics of Thai Political Parties in Each Stage of Transformation

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTIES	MILITARY AND BUREAUCRATIC DOMINANTION	RURAL NETWORK POLITICIANS	BUSINESS CONGLOMERATE DOMINATION
TIME PERIOD:	1946 - 1988	1988-2001	2001-Present
DEGREE OF SOCIAL-POLITICAL INCLUSION:	Mass suffrage, general public is passive, only academics are politically alert	Mass suffrage, Sign of democratic orientation in middle class	Mass suffrage, Multi-faceted society makes diverse demands, mostly economic orientation
ELECTORAL CYCLE:	The four-year electoral cycle is marred by several military coups	The four-year electoral cycle is marred by government instability and parliamentary dissolutions	Inclined to four-year electoral cycle
LEVEL OF DISTRIBUTION OF POLITICALLY RELEVANT RESOURCES:	Highly restricted, political power is contested among factions within bureaucratic polity	Relatively restricted, compromises between bureaucrats and politicians	Concentrated in business conglomerates
PRINCIPAL GOALS OF POLITICS:	Distribution of privilege, wealth and power (among military and bureaucrats	Distribution of privilege, wealth and power (among bureaucrats and politicians)	Distribution of privilege, wealth and power through economic development (among profesional politicians and business)
NATURE OF PARTY FORMATION:	Intra-parliamentary, ad hoc collaboration mainly to support particular leaders; localized	Merger and affiliation oriented,[20] no ideology, no grassroots organization	Merger/acquisition, big money spending
PERSONALITY OF PARTY:	Parties are simple labels or umbrellas under which politicians gather	Fragmented, weak and undisciplined; run primarily by faction leaders within party organization.	Entrepreneur leaders with power of capitalists and support from 'plutocracy' or rich candidates

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTIES	MILITARY AND BUREAUCRATIC DOMINANTION	RURAL NETWORK POLITICIANS	BUSINESS CONGLOMERATE DOMINATION
TIME PERIOD:	1946 - 1988	1988-2001	2001-Present
NATURE OF PARTY ACTIVITIES:	Bureaucracy plays major roles; Tactical parties, aiming at controlling government; short-term concentration rather than long-term stability	Weak organization build up, aiming at being part of government coalition, thus small and medium sized parties are the keys	Beyond electoral arena; parties are trying to represent various groups and setting ideological principles through media and party communication channels
PARTY STRUCTURE:	No real membership, no party Branches, no built-up structure	Memberships by numbers, some party Branches; party structures are similar	Membership and party branches are of interest; party structures have distinctiveness
BASIS OF PARTY COMPETITION:	Contained, mobilization	Exclusively electoral - oriented	Policy attractiveness (not effectiveness); vote-getting policy based on research & development ability rather than ideologically oriented Policy
RELATION BETWEEN CANDIDATE AND PARTY:	Independent candidates, parties are searching for candidates	Parties are searching for candidates; incumbent candidates with patronage networks are attractive	Parties banners are more important than candidate personality
NATURE OF PARTY WORK AT ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNING:	Massive electoral fraud	Excessive use of canvasser, cash handout, electoral fraud; individual candidate personality	Capital-intensive, professional political marketing, patronage and populist policy, strategic partners and networking
PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF PARTY'S RESOURCES AND FINANCE:	Elite and personal connections, family contacts	Contributions from leaders having a ministry position; control over government contracts; local financiers	Contributions from Business groups, party leaders, state funding

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTIES	MILITARY AND BUREAUCRATIC DOMINANTION	RURAL NETWORK POLITICIANS	BUSINESS CONGLOMERATE DOMINATION
TIME PERIOD:	1946 - 1988	1988-2001	2001-Present
		(interest groups are barred from giving financial support)	
CHARACTER OF MEMBERSHIP AND RELATIONS BETWEEN ORDINARY MEMBERS AND PARTY ELITE:	Few full-time workers, only leaders within oligarchic clique, no real membership	Mobilized memberships, members are by name only, not permanent, moving from one party to another, considered as subordinates	Top-down, members are considered as both client and customer; no dues paying
PARTY CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION:	Interpersonal; party-in-government connections	Interpersonal networks; party leaders own national newspaper	Modern information; parties, especially in government, gain privilege access to channels of communication; party leaders establish own commercial media network, i.e., newspaper, TV, and radio
POSITION OF PARTY BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND STATE:	Civil society is extremely weak; party is fundamentally regulated by the state and is a tool of the state power holder; roles and functions of party are not well understood	Civil society is in adolescent stage; parties are considered indispensable but not to be trusted	Organized business is strong enough to break the monopoly of the bureaucrats; keen civil society activists rise up; parties are moving out of the sphere of state into the sphere of society
REPRESENTATIVE STYLE:	Benevolent, regulator, despostism	Patronage, pork barrel agent	Entrepreneurial patronage, chief executive, potential manager of government and the state
INTERVENING FACTOR: CONSTITUTIONAL STIPULATION	Independent candidates allowed until the promulgation of 1974 Constitution	Prime Minister from non-elected MP allowed	Prime Minister must be elected MP

NOTES

1   On this subject, it should be remembered that the four properties that Huntington holds to be characteristic of the institutionalization process are adaptability of organizations and political procedures, complexity, autonomy, and coherence. See Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 9.

2   Unlike the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes of Latin America, the Thai bureaucratic polity operated among docile, politically inert social groups or classes, leaving decision-making authority in the hands of a small elite of bureaucrats. See Anek Laothamatas, "Business and Politics in Thailand: New Patterns of Influence" in *Asian Survey* 28 (4): 451.

3   Readers should refer to the analytical discussion about various viewpoints on Thailand as a bureaucratic polity. Anek has done an excellent job of summarizing diverse positions of scholars in the book's chapter 1. See Anek Laothamatas, *Business Associations and the New Political Economy of Thailand: From Bureaucratic Polity to Liberal Corporatism.* (Singapore: Westview Press, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992), chapter 1.

4   Although the installation of the democratic constitutional monarchy began in June 1932, it was not until the promulgation of the1946 Constitution that the first party, the Progressive Party, led by M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, was formed. However, it was not formally registered since there was no law on political parties at that time.

5   See also Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

6   Many political scientists consider political parties as highly adaptable phenomena, the result of important political functions at several levels. The conditions of a particular system at a particular time in history shape parties and party systems in characteristic ways. The organizational characteristics of the party depend on history; i.e., on how an organization originated and how it was consolidated. This group of political scientists includes Stein Rokkan, Otto Kirchheimer, Hans Daalder, and Panebianco.

7   Philip S. Roberton defines rural network politicians as 'elected Members of Parliament who have built influence in a provincial district through distribution of money and business concessions…Over the years they gained wealth and gradually outstripped these bureaucrats, who in a case of role reversal now are their clients.' See Philip S. Robertson, The rise of the rural network politicians: will Thailand's new elite

endure? In *Asian Survey*, September 1996, 36 (9): 924-942.

8   The 'revolution-restoration' (or "passive revolution") is Antonio Gramsci's
    concept in describing Italy's culmination in fascism, used by John Girling
    to compare Thailand with Italian society. See John Girling's "Thailand in
    Gramscian Perspective" in *Pacific Affairs*, 1984-1985, vol. 57, 385-403.

    The 'revolution' was the period of democratic reform and social struggle
    after 1973; it was a result of complex interaction of three social forces,
    namely the bureaucracy and military, modern capitalists, and progres-
    sive intellectuals and students. The 'restoration' was the 1976 coup that
    led to the bureaucratic-parliamentary compromise under Prime Minister
    General Kriangsak and Prime Minister General Prem, 1979-1988.

9   Thailand from 1957-1973 is described by Muthiah Alagappa as the
    authoritarian-pluralist model in which "the party or other governing
    group retains a monopoly on political power but is willing to grant a
    measure of political and cultural freedom at the individual, group, and
    regional levels. Moreover, some development of civil society is tolerated,
    particularly in the professional arena. Economic development is governed
    by market principles." See Muthiah Alagappa, "The Asian Spectrum" in
    Journal of Democracy, 1995, 6 (1): 29-36; and Robert A. Scalapino. "Tale
    of Three Systems" in *Journal of Democracy*, 1997, 8 (3): 150-155.

10 For 'semi-democracy,' 'demi-democracy,' or 'halfway democracy' see
    Likhit Dhiravegin, *Demi-Democracy: The Evolution of the Thai Political
    System.* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1992).

11 During the tenure of Prime Minister Prem Tinnasulanon, there was the
    practice of assigning members from different parties to the same minis-
    tries to prevent corruption by a system of party checks and balances
    within a ministry.

12 MR Kukrit Pramoj, "Key Note Speech at the Seminar on the Direction of
    Thai Political Science" in *Thidthang Ratasat Thai* (The Direction of Thai
    Political Science), edited by Pornsak Phongphew, (Bangkok: Faculty of
    Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 1985), 8.

13 The development fund in Thailand was first seen during Prime Minister
    Kukrit Pramoj in 1975 by the name of the 'Tambon (sub-district) Devel-
    opment Program,' or in its Thai version of 'Ngun Phan.' The program was
    designed to return funds to the rural areas. This was to create jobs for
    villagers, for building damns, constructing bridges, paving roads and so
    on. See Surin Maisrikrod, *Thailand's Two General Elections in 1992:
    Democracy Sustained,* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies,
    Research Notes and Discussions Paper No. 75, 1992), 19.

14 It is interesting to bring up Irish politics for the benefit of comparison
    here. The rural Irish have also considered the local politicians a clearing

house for all manner of problems and a major link between countryman and civil servant. These local parties developed citizen dependencies in such a way to stabilize their organizational environment. The most successful of these local parties developed stable majorities and an integrated power structure. In other words, they have become political machines, also known as "Donegal Mafia." Paul M. Sack, *The Donegal Mafia: An Irish Political Machine.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 75-77.[0]

15 See William L. Riordon, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall.* (New York: New York, 1963), 27-28.

16 The 1992 incident arose from the attempt by the military leadership to recuperate and substantiate its power through the March 1992 election. This led to popular resistance and violent political conflict between the military and the new social forces. The military withdrawal at the end was followed by an elected coalition government after the September 1992 elections. The elected body of representatives has continued to form governments until the present, thus mitigating the former conviction that the military is a formidable political force in Thai society.

17 Siam Rat Weekly, Jan 24-30, 2003, 49 (35): 16.[0]

18 The premier and his family sold their shares in SHIN Corp to Singapore's Temasek Holdings worth Bt73 billion (US$1.8 billion), citing their desire to end potential conflict of interest. The deal backfired as the Shinawatra family were publicly criticized for tax avoidance. This incident provoked an uneasy sentiment around the country and finally led to the 2006 coup d'etat.

19 This study does not totally agree with Thawilwadee Bureekul and Stithorn Thananithichot's evaluation that the 1997 Constitution "resulted in the creation of a new political culture, indicated by a higher level of political participation and political efficacy, and greater public awareness and satisfaction of the way democracy works in Thailand." See Thawilwadee Bureekul and Stithorn Thananithichot, *The Thai Constitution of 1997: Evidence of Democratization.* Paper presented at an International Conference on 'Governance in Asia: Culture, Ethics, Institutional Reform and Policy Change.' December 5-7, 2002 at City University of Hong Kong, (Hong Kong: China).

20 Fred W. Riggs refers to the "affiliation-oriented" party as the party that individuals can join without any extensive prior screening and they need not pay dues to remain in good standing. These people, at times, are defectors from other parties. The operation of party depends on influential persons and financiers. See Fred W. Riggs, "Comparative Politics and the Study of Political Parties: A Structural Approach" in *Approaches to the Study of Party Organizations,* edited by William J. Crotty, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1968), 45-105.

CHAPTER II

THAI POLITICAL PARTIES
IN THE WAKE OF ELECTORAL REFORMS

It has already been argued that the 1997 Constitution favored big, well-funded political parties. In fact, the rules and regulations concerning political parties and the electoral system found in the 1997 Constitution made it the main intervening factor facilitating the emergence of the business conglomerate stage of party development.

The movement for the 1997 political and electoral reforms in Thailand stemmed from the bloodshed of the May 1992 Democracy Movement. At first, the movement was an attempt to prevent repetition of the causes of such a tragedy and put an end to military domination by ensuring that the prime minister must be an elected MP and that the Senate must comprise members chosen in popular elections. In the end, the Constitution clearly made an effort at fundamental reforms[1]. Such measures lifted the hopes and expectations of many Thais that under reformed politics, profound problems in Thai society would be handled in effective ways, including wide-ranging problems concerning political parties. Examining this reformed governing environment can help determine whether the revised framework, rules, and regula-tions outlining political parties effectively induced political parties to adapt and respond to new political structures and contexts.

In brief, the pattern of adaptation has not been very positive.

First, the newly introduced proportional representation electoral system, along with newly implemented rules, favored big, well-funded political parties instead of correcting the

effects of major party over-representation inherited from the plurality system. Second, the single-ballot, single-member constituency plurality system, compared to the former multi-member constituency plurality system, provided stronger incentives for parties to merge in order to be more competitive. Third, the structure of the relationship between the executive and the legislative branches hindered the performance of political parties in the opposition. And fourth, parts of the rule established under the 1997 Constitution led to a 'barrier to entry' to the political market. Such a barrier had a greater impact on the masses living in semi-subsistence and subsistence economies than on the middle class and the societal elite. In this light, the 1997 Constitution had become an intervening factor facilitating stage III of political development under the influence of the national conglomerate business.

Constitutional Engineering

The main purpose of a constitution is to act as a plan or an arrangement of government. Giovanni Sartori makes it clear that "a constitution whose core and centerpiece is not a frame of government is not a constitution" (Sartori 1997, 196). The intriguing element of a constitution usually found at the heart of every country's problem as described by Madison (The Federalist, no. 51), is that: "In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men… you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place obliged it to control itself." (quoted by Sartori 1997, 196). Sartori goes on to say that "So, constitutions are, first and above all, instruments of government which limit, restrain and allow for the control of the exercise of political power."

The 1997 Thai Constitution was full of contradictions not unlike those Madison pondered. Nidhi Aeusrivongse, a retired Thammasart University professor and a renowned

social critic, thought that "the new constitution on the one hand enhances mechanisms to provide peaceful participation from the people's sector, but on the other hand, it contains more mechanisms that corrupt politicians and businessmen can employ to further their own personal interests" (quoted in Matichon Daily, January 9, 2001).

Before exploring the details of the 1997 Constitution's features and its impact on political parties and party development, let us take a brief look at how it came about.

The 1997 Constitution is usually referred to as the 'people's constitution,' generally because of the astounding attempt to bring the people into the constitutional drafting process. First was the work of the Committee for Developing Democracy (CDD), led by CDD leader Prawase Wasi, ex-MP Uthai Pimchaichon, and the well-respected ex-prime minister Anand Panyarachun to ensure that various groups from diverse backgrounds were represented and had a voice in the course of constitutional drafting. Later, when the Parliament passed a Constitution Amendment Bill in May 1996, it provided for the formation of a Constitutional Drafting Assembly (CDA) made up of 99 members. Seventy-six members were drawn from the provinces, one from each. The others were experts in public law, political science and public administration[2]. This formula seemed to satisfy all sides of public forces — conservative bureaucrats, liberal business, and the people's factions (see Connors 1999, 202-206; and Klein 2001). The 240 days of drafting, a process involving Thai people from all geographic regions, resulted in a 12-chapter, 17-part, 336-section constitution.

The 1997 Constitution aimed for fundamental reform. It recognized more rights, freedoms, and civil liberties than any previous constitution (chapter 3, section 26-65). It was also committed to good governance, as written in the Directive Principles of Fundamental State Policies (chapter 5,

section 71-90), which intended to make elected politicians and public officials more accountable, limited the size of the cabinet, and provided greater transparency in the political process. The most outstanding measure in the constitution was the effort to promote more direct citizen participation in the political process. This was provided for in a number of provisions, i.e., 50,000 electors could submit a piece of legislation to Parliament or asked the Senate to remove high officials in government if they should appear "unusually wealthy" (chapter 10, part 3, section 303-307).

All these marked a new context, new environment, new opportunities and new constraint for political participation, as well as political competition. However, as we shall see, the improved aims on paper didn't always translate into improved implementation in practice. This chapter will focus on issues and subjects that directly concern the electoral system, electoral law, and political parties.

Electoral Engineering

Electoral systems can be treated as both dependent and independent variables. If we treat electoral systems as dependent variables, then we must try to evaluate the following questions: How do electoral systems come about? Why do they change? And who will benefit from the change of the electoral system?

As independent variables, electoral systems have a major impact not only on the number of parties (in other words, they help construct party systems) but also on the ways in which parties compete within that party system. In this light, electoral systems are devices that structure the competition within the system. Moreover, indirectly through those party systems, electoral systems help shape executive-legislative relations (Sartori 1994; 1997, chapter 1, 3, and 4).

In theory, electoral systems have two goals. One is

representative justice, i.e., fair and equal representation. The other is governing capability. According to Duverger's law, proportional representation systems tend to maximize representation, while majoritarian ones maximize governability (Duverger 1951; 1954; Lijphart 1986). To be more specific, Duverger (1951) and Kircheimer (1966) have argued that "first-past-the-post" single-member constituency systems promote two convergent political parties and hence are conducive to one-party government. The two major parties will be separated by small margins of voters, usually concentrated in a handful of swing seats.

Ideally, electoral laws and systems should offer a fair chance of representation to all political groups, majority as well as minority. They should also offer a fair range of choices to the voters in order to produce a reasonable representation of different preferences and opinions. There is also the practical need to secure a degree of stability in the government. This is normally achieved by weighing parliamentary representation in favor of the large parties, hence reducing the prospect of fragmentation and unstable conditions.

While there have been many attempts in Thailand and abroad (Turkey, Germany, Japan, Australia, and Russia, to name a few examples[3]), to reconcile the two mutually conflicting objectives stated above, this study realizes that there is no 'best' electoral system. And more importantly, the electoral system is not the sole factor contributing to the success of democratic systems. On this issue, Maurice Duverger (1951) states nicely that:

> The factors which condition a country's political life are…fundamentally interdependent. A study of the effects of just one of them, considered in isolation, necessary implies a great deal of artificiality…In other words, one cannot say that a certain electoral system determines that political

life will take this or that form, but simply that it
tends to have this or that effect, that is to say that
it reinforces elements pushing in a direction and
weakens those pushing in the opposite direction.

Over the past two decades, there have been various
legal and administrative proposals that have attempted to
dictate how the Thai political parties and party system should
develop. In other words, laws have become tools to safeguard
as well as control the political system. The influence of law on
political parties is readily apparent. As Katz points out, the
rational strategies of politicians are determined in part by the
electoral system and the electoral law because the electoral
law constitutes the rules of the electoral game. As a result,
electoral law, along with party structure, bears a heavy influ-
ence on the behavior of politicians (Katz 1980).

In the Thai case, law is extremely important. It governs
and decides the birth and death of political parties and their
activities. Thai political parties can be considered as, to bor-
row Fred W. Riggs' terminology, "constitutional parties," i.e.,
parties that are willing to accept prevailing constitutional
rules, as distinct from parties that are hostile to the constitu-
tion or unwilling to accept its legitimate authority (Riggs 1968,
58-69). The emergence and existence of Thai political parties
have always been governed by law, and, without the provi-
sion of law, parties do not exist. Politicians simply accept
either the constitution or the Political Party Act as the norms
for allowing or prohibiting political activities. The best illus-
tration of the "legal creature" status of Thai political parties
was apparent during the period between 1979 and 1981 when
there was no Political Party Act. The politicians who gathered
for the 1979 election were categorized into "groups" instead
of "parties." Not until after the Political Party Act was enacted
in 1981 did "parties" spring up again.

In the 74 years from the transformation from absolute

monarchy to democracy (1932-2006), there have been approximately 230 political parties under the seven Political Party Acts[4] of 1955, 1968, 1974, 1981, 1992 (amendment of the 1981 Act), 1995 (amendment of the 1981 and 1992 Acts), and the 1998 Act. Besides the Political Party Act and the laws that govern the Thai electoral and party system, other determining factors include related variables such as electoral formulas, district magnitudes, and electoral thresholds.

The Electoral System under the 1997 Constitution and Its Consequences

The electoral system for the House of Representatives was basically known as the 'mixed electoral system' (Prudhisan Jumbala 1998; Rangsan Thanaphonphan 2002). Of 500 Members of Parliament, 100 are elected nationwide from a party list basis (or proportional representation [PR] system) and the other 400 are chosen from a single-member constituency plurality system (section 98-100). To be specific, the PR system used in Thailand should be called a combination electoral system (Blais and Massicotte 1996, 65-6), similar to the Japanese electoral system after the 1994 reforms (Christensen 1998)[5]. It is unlike the 'mixed system' used in Germany or New Zealand (Denemark 1996) because votes from the constituency basis and the national party list system are counted separately.

The Proportional Representation (PR) System

The basic principle of proportional representation is that seats are won in proportion to the votes received by parties or individuals. PR systems are based on multi-member electorates, whereas most plurality ("first past the post") systems are based on single-member electorates. The reason is simple -- a single member cannot be proportionally divided. Election under a PR system is not a matter of winning a plurality or a

majority of the total votes of the electorate as a whole but a matter of achieving a proportion of the votes.

The Thai proportional representation system with the largest remainder formula required each political party to prepare an open list of candidates comprising not more than 100 persons. The lists were to be submitted to the Election Commission on the date of application for candidacy in the election. The names must not be repeated on the lists of candidates of other parties or the list of constituency candidates. Any party receiving less than 5 percent of the total votes would not have its candidates elected and its votes would be eliminated. The remaining votes were divided by 100 to determine the number of votes needed for each candidate. The number of party-list representatives that each party may appoint was calculated by dividing the votes each party obtained by the number of votes needed for one party-list candidate (that was, remaining votes divided by 100). If the number or representatives appointed by this method came to less than 100 persons, the parties having the most remaining votes would share the remaining seats.[6]

The party list system in Thailand aimed at preventing vote-buying by making constituencies too large for anyone or any party to buy votes outright. Additionally, the proportional representation system gave a party leader more control over the party's candidates and their positioning at the beginning of the list, thus strengthening the party and party system. More importantly, it also provided an opportunity for a party leader to choose candidates for their knowledge and quality rather than their 'electability'.[7] Recruiting personalities who were well known nationwide helped raise the profile of the party. Party list members who became ministers were replaced by the next name on the list. This prevented by-elections as in the case of ministers appointed from a constituency basis. Therefore, the candidates at the head of the party list were either potential or shadow cabinet members. This allowed

voters to feel they were indirectly choosing the executives while directly choosing the legislature.

There are two related points worth examining here. First is the threshold or 5 percent minimum requirement. Second is the magnitude of the electoral district.

The first point to be made is that while in general the proportional representation system tends to be inclusive by offering more chances for minor parties than the plurality system, under Thailand's proportional representation system very small parties suffered from the 5 percent threshold.[8] Small parties, some even with representation in the constituency basis, were eliminated (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2 below). In the 2001 election, the five big parties that won seats from the PR system collected altogether only 85.69 percent of the national popular vote. That means as many as 14.3 percent of votes, or approximately 4,095,686 eligible votes, were wasted. In effect, this causes under-representation of small parties.

Such an effect depends fundamentally on the way proportional seats are allocated. In the Thai case, as in Japan and Russia, proportional seats are allocated separately from single-member district seats and not to compensate for disproportionality at the constituency level as in Germany, New Zealand, or Mexico (Blais and Massicotte 1996, 65-67). Therefore, the results are likely to be far less proportional (Sartori 1994, 19-74). In Russia, for example, using a 5 percent threshold, the unrepresented vote was as high as 51 percent in the 1995 elections (Blais and Massicotte 1996, 62). In Japan, by contrast, without a threshold, a party with as little as 3 percent of proportional votes can win a seat (Christensen 1998, 88).

Table 2.1: Number of Seats and Percentage of Votes, 2001 Election

Political Parties	Number of Seats			Percentage of Votes
	Constituencies	Proportional	Total	
Thai Rak Thai (TRT)	200	48	248	40.64%
Democrat Party (DP)	97	31	128	26.58%
Thai Nation *(Chart Thai)*	35	6	41	5.32%
New Aspiration Party (NAP)	28	8	36	7.02%
Chart Pattana (National Development Party)	22	7	29	6.13%
Seridham (Liberal Democratic Party)	14	0	14	2.82%
Rassadorn (Citizens' Party)	2	0	2	1.25%
Thin Thai (Thai Motherland)	1	0	1	2.11%
Social Action Party (SAP)	1	0	1	0.20%
TOTAL	400	100	500	85.89%

Source: Author's calculation based on data from Election Commission of Thailand

Table 2.2 indicates the consequence of the electoral threshold. Had the minimum requirement been lowered to 1 percent, there would have been nine parties with candidates in the House of Representatives instead of five. Wasted votes would have been reduced to only 6.94 percent nationwide. It was obvious that the 5 percent Threshold was intended to deter the fragmentation of parties and to create majorities capable of governing.

Table 2.2: Party List Votes and Percentage of Votes, 2001 Election

Political Party	Party List Votes	% of Votes
Thai Rak Thai (TRT)	11,634,485	40.64
Democrat Party (DP)	7,610,789	26.58
Thai Nation *(Chart Thai)*	1,523,807	5.32
New Aspiration Party (NAP)	2,008,498	7.02
Chart Pattana	1,755,476	6.13
Total 5 Big Parties	**24,533,515**	**85.69**
Seridham	807,902	2.82
Thin Thai	604,029	2.11
Rassadorn	356,831	1.25
Thai Citizen	339,462	1.19
Total 9 Parties	**26,641,739**	**93.06**
Other 28 Parties	**1,987,463**	**6.94**
Grand Total	**28,629,202**	**100.00**

Source: Author's calculation based on data from Election Commission of Thailand

For those five parties that have their candidates represented in the proportional representation system, all obtained a higher percentage of seats compared to the percentage of the popular vote they received nationwide (see Table 2.3) because the small parties that could not meet the 5 percent threshold. Thai Rak Thai benefited most from the Proportional Representation system, getting 7.4 percent more of its candidates elected than its actual vote share. The Democrats came in second in gaining a larger share of seats than their share of the popular vote. Evidently, big political parties in Thailand were benefiting more from the PR system than the smaller ones.

Table 2.3: Percentage of Votes as Compared to Percentage of Seats in the PR System, 2001 Election.

Political Parties	% of votes	% of seats	Difference
Thai Rak Thai	40.6	48.00	+7.4
Democrat	26.7	31.00	+3.3
New Aspiration	7.0	8.00	+1.0
Chart Pattana	6.1	7.00	+.9
Thai Nation	5.3	6.0	+.7

This phenomenon may be explained by the fact that the parties contesting the 2001 election varied greatly in size and resources, reflected in their readiness and ability to put candidates on their party lists and their accessible resources (human and capital) in funding the electoral campaign. It might also be partly due to the fact that major parties had more constituency-based candidates who campaigned for the party and gained some party votes even where they themselves lost.

Table 2.4: Party Memberships, Number of Candidates Competing in Single-Member Constituencies and Party Lists, Number of Elected MPs, Party List Votes: 2001 election.

Political Parties	No. of Membership	No. of Candidates		No. of Elected MPs		Party list Votes
	As of Year 2001	Constituency	Party List	Constituency	Party List	
Democrat	3,729,633	397	100	97	31	7,610,789
Thai Nation	1,590,606	257	100	35	6	1,523,807
New Aspiration	3,081,449	311	100	28	8	2,008,948
Chart Pattana	3,581,142	320	100	22	7	1,755,476
Thai Rak Thai	6,249,777	400	100	200	48	11,634,495
Seridham	604,936	192	78	14	-	807,902
Social Action	103,081	20	3	1	-	44,926
Thin Thai	-	189	36	1	-	604,029
Thai Citizen	198,122	232	80	-	-	339,462
Eakkapap	25,752	2	-	-	-	-
Palang Dham	87,823	7	22	-	-	68,392
Thai	51,365	3	5	-	-	57,584
Thaiprachatipprat	38,505	1	4	-	-	198,853
Chatprachatippra	32,882	1	7	-	-	197,391
Rassadorn	356,831	200	45	2	-	356,831
Raumsiam	7,748	-	-	-	-	-
Prachachon	7,377	-	-	-	-	-
Kawna	43,477	3	5	-	-	31,467
Santipap	14,416	2	5	-	-	29,508
Satthaprachachon	15,455	32	29	-	-	25,754
Rangnganthai	11,964	3	5	-	-	29,048
Palangprachachn	7,599	1	1	-	-	63,822
Kasetseri	8,792	-	-	-	-	-
Kasetmahachon	413,766	95	35	-	-	73,269
Chatprachathai	5,358	-	-	-	-	-
Pracharat	-	-	-	-	-	-
Palangmahachon	9,749	-	-	-	-	-
Amnatprachachon	26,852	4	3	-	-	148,046
Serithai	8,392	2	-	-	-	-
Kasikonthai	8,781	1	1	-	-	55,457
Withithai	7,090	1	2	-	-	11,847
Thidhammatippat	7,078	1	-	-	-	-
Sangkomma	10,294	5	2	-	-	73,105
Seriprachatippati	6,860	2	2	-	-	109,784
Sangkomthai	6,253	-	-	-	-	-
Thaimankong	8,497	1	-	-	-	-
Chaothai	12,837	3	2	-	-	45,739
Chiwitthidikwa	9,203	-	1	-	-	46,207
Thaichoythai	6,550	-	1	-	-	129,419
Siam	9,243	2	1	-	-	71,480
Kasetkawna	18,933	1	-	-	-	-
Sahakorn	20,903	-	-	-	-	-
Sangkomprachatipa	4,049	1	3	-	-	32,250
Kasettakon	6,246	-	-	-	-	-
Panlangmai	8,322	-	-	-	-	-
Pitakthai	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pawthai	-	1	1	-	-	19,727
Chaonapattanapate	-	12	15	-	-	45,061
Neoromkasettakon	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nitimahacho	-	-	4	-	-	121,313
Raksamakki	-	3	6	-	-	119,414
Pattanapratet	-	-	1	-	-	49,034
Thaimaharat	13,948	64	30	-	-	31,427
Palangkasettakon	-	5	5	-	-	58,246
Chaonachaori	-	1	-	-	-	-

Source: Election Commission of Thailand

The second point relevant to the proportional represen-
tation system is that the district magnitude for Thailand's
electoral system was very large; that is, the whole kingdom
was one constituency[9]. Accordingly, parties were propelled to
appeal to nationwide electorates and campaigned everywhere
across the country. This measure essentially favored big,
well-funded parties (See Rae 1971). Table 2.4 indicates that
only the five largest parties were able to put the optimal 100
candidates on their party lists, while locally concentrated
parties and the smaller ones could not manage to do so. Many
parties could only name one or two candidates on the list.
If these parties' leaders had done the mathematics before-
hand, they would have realized that at least five names that
appeared on the list would be elected once they passed the
5 percent threshold. Therefore, failing to name all five names
was not a rational strategy, unless the parties ran for other
reasons besides winning.

In effect, threshold and district magnitude strongly
reduced the degree of proportionality in the PR system in
Thailand. Consequently, the smaller parties continued to
obtain representation well below that of their electoral sup-
port. The upshots of threshold and district magnitude together
with factors of size and resources were even more pronounced
in the 2005 general election. In the 2005 election, Thai Rak
Thai was the only party that fielded candidates in all 400
constituencies and presented the list of 100 names for the
proportional representation system. Three other major po-
litical parties, namely Democrat, Thai Nation, and Mahachon,
although presenting the optimal 100 names for the party list,
could not match Thai Rak Thai in fielding candidates in all
electoral districts. Overall there were 2,289 candidates from
25 political parties participating in the 2005 election, and
several unfamiliar parties nominated only one candidate in
the constituency race. The electoral results are shown in Table
2.5 below.

Table 2.5: Number of Seats and Percentage of Votes, 2005 Election

Political Parties	Number of Seats			Percentage of Votes
	Constituencies	Proportional	Total	
Thai Rak Thai (TRT)	310	67	377	61.17%
Democrat Party (DP)	70	26	96	23.22%
Thai Nation (Chart Thai)	18	7	a25	6.63%
Mahachon	2	0	2	4.33%
Total	400	100	500	95.35%

Source: Author's calculation based on data from Election Commission of Thailand

Remarkably, the essence of electoral appeals under this proportional representation system that revolved around the need to maximize party list votes across the country was left to competition among major parties only.

The Mahachon Party, albeit founded through a merger between the Democrat Party defectors and the former Rassadorn Party and thus composed of incumbent MPs and well-known personnel, still lacked the credibility and linkage between the party's representatives and constituents. Consequently, the party could manage only 4.33 per cent (1,345,631 party list votes); hence, its party leader and prominent party figures who contested on the party list were not elected.

In terms of the electoral system and its ability to represent the electorates, it should be noted that the PR system might well produce voter frustration. Under the PR system, legislative seats were allocated from party lists according to each party's proportion of the total national vote. Thus, individual MPs did not necessarily identify with, nor could they be held accountable to, the electorates in a specific geographic constituency. The consequence was a lack of linkage between representatives and constituents.[10]

And such a consequence tended to affect small parties more. Given a lack of specific profile and direct contact with

local interests and priorities, political parties needed to show the voters their tangible qualities and proved that they were credible parliamentary forces. This put small parties in a challenging position to pursue a viable electoral strategy. In short, small parties needed to contest races that they almost had no chance to win.

The Single-Member Constituencies, Plurality System

Thailand's electoral system before the 1997 Constitution was a plurality system version of a multi-member constituency. Members of the House of Representatives were elected from the whole nation every four years. The number of MPs from each province was calculated from the number of eligible voters, which was divided into multi-member constituencies each of which represented 150,000 voters. Each constituency could have between one to three MPs, and the voters would have as many votes as there were MPs in that constituency. The top vote getters in each constituency were elected[11]. In a three-member constituency, for example, the three candidates who polled the highest voters were declared winners. The crucial point of this process was that candidates could be elected individually. Accordingly, three candidates from three different political parties could be elected from the same district. Large districts in which voters are allowed to express preferences among candidates within the same party usually weaken party attachments (Katz 1980; 1986, chapter 4) since candidates from the same party have to campaign and compete against each other. Therefore, rivals from other parties could still hope to be elected. Moreover, there was the "carry-over" tradition in which a party's strong candidate was teamed up with lesser-known figures in the hope the strong candidate's popularity would help the other candidate get elected as well. Nevertheless, the claim that this electoral system contributed to intra-party conflict

was not always be true since candidates from the same party were not necessarily competing against each other. In a constituency, there were enough seats for all candidates from the same party. Moreover, in Thailand's former multi-member constituency system, voters had more selective options since the system offered representation to a wider spectrum of community opinion. This, in turn, could be interpreted as giving the electorate more bargaining power, meaning that people can depend on one MP for constitutional services and rely on the others for community representation or other important responsibilities.[12] Technically, a plurality system in Thailand's multi-member constituencies created incentives for the continued existence of small parties because it enabled one constituency to elect candidates from different political parties, both big and small, at the same time.

With financial restrictions and rational calculations, parties tended to run candidates only in districts where they had strong bases and more chances to win. As it happened, party strengths varied from region to region. Therefore no political parties in Thailand, except Thai Rak Thai in the 2001 and 2005 elections, have attempted to field candidates in all 400 constituencies across the country (see Table 2.4 above). Coupled with the effect of the multi-member constituency plurality system, this meant that most Thai political parties in the past were medium-sized parties (for example, three parties accounted for about 50 percent of MPs) and small parties were the second largest group (see Table 2.6 below). And since no political party ever won the majority of the MPs, these small and medium-sized parties had great bargaining power and high potential to be in the coalition government.

The single ballot, single-member constituency system was seen as fairer than the old multi-member constituency method because each voter in every constituency had one equal vote. This is the simplest system for voters, candidates, parties, and those involved in transforming votes into seats.

The candidate who obtains the highest number of votes wins the seat in that constituency.

The smaller constituency in Thailand was a definite factor that could bring Members of Parliament closer to their constituents. In the constitutional drafters' opinion, the single-member constituency system would favor small parties since they could win parliamentary seats if they concentrated their support in certain areas. Besides, a candidate could manage to win the seat with less than 50 percent of the votes. Put another way, a candidate could win a seat despite the fact that more than half of the voters did not want him or her to be their representative.

Table 2.6: Three Political Parties that Won the Most Seats in Each General Election from 1975-2005

Election Year / Total Seats	Parties with the most seats (%)	Parties with the second most seats (%)	Parties with the second most seats (%)	Numbers of Parties with less than 20 seats
January 26, 75	Democrat	Social Justice	Thai Nation	
269 seats	72 seats	45 seats	28 seats	19
	26.76%	16.72%	10.4%	
April 4, 76	Democrat	Thai Nation	Social Action	
279 seats	114 seats	56 seats	45 seats	15
	40.8%	20.07%	16.12%	
April 22, 79	Social Action	Thai Nation	Democrat	
301 seats	83 seats	38 seats	32 seats	7+63
	27.57%	12.62%	10.63%	Independents
April 18, 83	Social Action	Thai Nation	Democrat	
324 seats	92 seats	73 seats	56 seats	6
	28.39%	22.53%	17.28%	
July 27, 86	Democrat	Thai Nation	Social Action	
347 seats	100 seats	63 seats	51 seats	10
	28.81%	18.15%	14.69%	
July 24, 88	Thai Nation	Social Action	Democrat	
357 seats	87 seats	54 seats	48 seats	9
	24.37%	15.12%	13.44%	
March 22, 92	Samakhi Dham	Thai Nation	New Aspiration	
360 seats	79 seats	74 seats	72 seats	5
	21.94%	20.55%	20%	
Sep 13, 92	Democratic	Thai Nation	Chart Pattana	
360 seats	79 seats	77 seats	60 seats	5
	21.94%	21.38%	16.66%	
July 2, 95	Thai Nation	Democrat	New Aspiration	
391 seats	92 seats	86 seats	57 seats	5
	23.53%	21.99%	14.57%	
Nov 17, 96	New Aspiration	Democrat	Chart Pattana	
393 seats	125 seats	123 seats	52 seats	6
	31.80%	31.29%	13.23%	
January 6, 01	Thai Rak Thai	Democrat	Thai Nation	
500 seats	248 seats	128 seats	41 seats	4
	49.60%	25.60%	8.20%	
February 6, 05	Thai Rak Thai	Democrat	Thai Nation	
500 seats	377 seats	96 seats	25 seats	1
	75.4%	19.2%	5.0%	

Source: Author's calculation on data from the Secretariat of the National Assembly and the Election Commission of Thailand

The Electoral Systems and Their Consequences

In Thailand many of the consequences of actual practices and operation of the political system have exceeded initial intentions and expectations. This study finds that by using single-seat constituencies, the intensity of competition in constituency races among all major and minor political parties was accelerated. The geographical boundaries were increased as minor parties were unable to succeed on the proportional representation basis. In fielding candidates for the constituency system, small parties needed to concentrate on target areas of especially high concentrations of their support base, while ignoring other low-appeal areas to reduce expenditures on campaign activities, canvassing, leafleting and billboards.

Accordingly, there were strong incentives for small parties to merge in order to create a party large enough to effectively contest the PR system and the single-member constituencies. In addition, strong individual candidates were drawn to big political parties in hopes of riding on their popularity. This contrasted with the effect of a multi-member constituency system, where small parties and locally well-liked candidates were able to win seats and thereby enjoy strong incentives for their continued existence. Consequently, small parties began to face more difficulties. This is not to say that there was no place for small-sized parties in the Thai political arena. Rather, it is to suggest that to be viable participants in the new political environment, these parties needed to strategically calculate their strengths and assess their weaknesses, then adjust and adapt to the changing circumstances.

At the same time, electoral appeals under a proportional representation system that revolved around the need to maximize party list votes across the country were left to the major parties due to the fact that small parties were drained of resources and thus had a poor chance of national-level

victory. On this issue, it is worth examining the 1994 election in New Zealand (Denemark 1996). After the adoption of mixed-member proportional representation system with 65 members to be elected from single-member district and 55 on a proportional representation basis, several small-party strategists focused on winning the party list votes and reducing the importance of constituency races. There were two possible explanations. First, New Zealand, similar to Germany, utilizes the mixed-electoral systems that tallies party list vote to determine each party's proportionate level of support, not only in the list votes, but also in the entire elected parliament. Second, even with the same 5 percent threshold as in Thailand, the number of MPs elected on party list in New Zealand is about the same as those elected on district basis. To fight for party list votes, therefore, was presumably strategically appropriate.

The 2001 and 2005 electoral results in Thailand seemed very much to indicate that small parties were in decline, facing difficulties to survive. One might argue that the reason small parties were in decline and decay was not a consequence of the electoral system, but because they had never acted as the real representatives of the electorate. In any case, the decline of small parties was an indicator that the effect of the new electoral system was leaning towards generating governing capability rather than improved representation.

Regarding the number of parties, it is hard to decide how many parties would be enough to allow for meaningful competition and satisfactory representation, but it should not be so many that government formation and decision making become problematic. For the sake of argument, it is worth reconsidering Duverger's law (1951; 1954), mentioned earlier, that a change from a plurality formula to a proportional representation system can transform the electoral system from a two-party to a multiparty system. However, two contradictory observations are in order.

First of all, the former electoral system used in Thailand -- the multi-member plurality system -- tended to promote an electoral result similar to that of proportional representation. Viewed in this light, a change from a multi-member constituency system to the mixed electoral system with 400 out of 500 MPs elected on a single-member, single-ballot basis, might have an impact comparable to a change from a proportional representation to a simple majority system. In effect, the built-in tendency of such a system is to over-represent the major parties and to under-represent the smaller ones.

The second observation is based on Sartori's remark that "... no electoral system can reduce the number of relevant parties to two at the national level, unless the same two parties happen to be the relevant contestants in all the con-stituencies" (Sartori 1986, 55). However, Thai political parties are hardly equal contestants in all regions, let alone in all constituencies. Table 2.4 shows that Thai political parties fluctuate in size, electoral strength, and the number of avail-able candidates. In fact, the number of small parties in the Parliament has been decreasing significantly since the July 1988 election. In four consecutive elections before the 2001 election, there have been only 5 to 6 parties with fewer than 20 MPs (see Table 2.6 above). Therefore, the decline of small parties might not be a direct product of the new electoral system, but more likely of interdependent factors, such as their limited resources and ineffective electoral strategies.

Candidates' Qualification Requirements

Section 107 of the 1997 Constitution stipulated the qualifications for a candidate in an election of members of the House of Representative as follows: 1) being of Thai national-ity by birth; 2) being not less than 25 years of age on the election day; 3) having graduated with not lower than a

bachelor's degree or its equivalent except for the case of having been a member of the House of Representatives or a senator before; 4) being a member of any and only one political party for a consecutive period of not less than ninety days, up to the date of applying for candidacy in an election. Additionally, the constitution specified that membership in the House of Representatives shall be terminated upon an MP's resignation from membership of his or her political party or his or her political party passing a resolution to that effect (section 118).

This means, first of all, that independent candidates were prohibited from contesting the elections. The obligation for a candidate to run under a party banner had historical reasons. In the past, independent candidates, once they were elected, used to swing from one party to another, asking for money or positions in return for their support in the Parliament. Fred W. Riggs' comment on this subject is concise and accurate (Riggs 1968, 169):

> Independents are candidates who basically act on their own, relying on their own resources and the help of friends and relatives to seek the votes of the electorate. A very substantial number of candidates in the Thai elections between 1932 and 1975 professed no party affiliation, and for others who did the connection was purely nominal. Most of the time, party membership became something that acquired its main significance *after*, not *before*, an election.

There is no doubt that the constitutional drafters viewed independent candidates as negative indicators of the institutionalization of the party system.[13] For the advocates of a strong party system, independents lack the coherence of political procedures and bases of support. They do not constitute a complex and autonomous political organization (Huntington

1968, chapter 1). Furthermore, a high proportion of votes garnered by independent candidates would indicate the incapacity of the party system to articulate and/or aggregate interests.

The 1997 Constitution was not the first Thai constitution that required a candidate to run under a political party's banner. All former constitutions, except the constitutional law of June 1932, the 1949, and the 1968 Constitutions, prohibited independent candidates from contesting the elections. And although the 1932, the 1946, the 1947, and the 1952 Constitutions did not directly stipulate that a candidate for the House of Representatives must be affiliated with a political party, such a prerequisite appeared in the election laws under the Constitutions.[14] The 1997 Constitution was notable as the first to make the condition that a candidate must be a member of any and only one political party for a consecutive period of not less than 90 days.

A major impact of the requirement that an MP be a party member for at least 90 days was that an ex-MP had to remain with his/her old party even if the House of Representatives was dissolved. In case of a full-term election, an MP who wanted to change affiliation could do so only by resigning from the old party and becoming a member of the new one 90 days before election day. Such defections were not easy, however, because big parties did not easily accept new faces whose strongholds might overlap their existing members, unless there was some gain to the party.

Thus, the measure allowed a party more control over its candidates and prevented horse trading among parties. At first glance, it thus seemed that the 1997 Constitution set up impediments to prevent MPs from switching parties. In practice, however, there had been prevalent party switching both before and after the elections. The numbers of MPs switching party affiliation is shown in Table 2.7 below, and the subject will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Table 2.7: Changing Party Affiliations, Before 2001 General Election

Political Parties	No. of Candidates from other parties	Elected	Not Elected	No. of Party's Incumbents (from 1996 election)	Elected	Not Elected
Thai Rak Thai	117	87	30	-	-	-
New Aspiration	2	1	1	42	17	25
Democrat	3	1	2	97	69	28
Chart Pattana	14	1	13	22	10	12
Thai Nation	12	4	8	25	17	8
Seridham	12	5	7	4	2	2
Rassadorn	6	0	6	0	0	0
Kaset Mahachon	1	0	1	0	0	0
Total	**167**	**99**	**68**	**192**	**116**	**76**

Source: Author's computation on data from Election Commission of Thailand and various sources

Barrier to Entry

The degree of political inclusion of various elements of the social composition is one among several criteria for measuring genuinely democratic systems (Dahl 1956; Dalton et al. 2004). In reality, many countries in the world continue to exclude a large proportion of their citizens, either by class, gender or age bias (Norris 1996, 184-215). In Thailand, the legal barrier was set up to exclude the majority of people, i.e., those who did not have a bachelor's degree.

The 1997 Constitution stipulated that a candidate for the National Assembly must possess not lower than a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. This was meant to "encourage better-known and more respectable personalities to enter politics" (Sombat Chantornvong 2002, 203). Such a requirement, nonetheless, reflected educational bias; only 5 percent of the Thai adult population has graduated from a university and most of them reside or work in Bangkok[15]. Under this rule, half of former candidates were disqualified and excluded (See Table 2.8). In effect, MPs were drawn from the higher social strata.

**Table 2.8: Percentage of Non-Bachelor Degree Elected MPs
from Previous Elections.**

1992		1995		1996	
Contested (%)	Elected (%)	Contested (%)	Elected (%)	Contested (%)	Elected (%)
53.3	31.0	42.1	27.4	50.8	26.5

Source: From Prof. Yoshifumi Tamada's presentation at Chulalongkorn University, September 5, 2001.

Intentionally or not, the 1997 political reform was breeding a new class of politicians who were not "connected" to the majority of society. With the constitution's requirement of compulsory voting, in essence, most people got the discouraging message that "As a Thai citizen, it is your duty to vote. But you cannot compete in the elections." Rangsan Thanaphonphan called the measures that required candidates to have a party affiliation and a bachelor degree a "barrier to entry." And this in effect led to an imperfection of competition in the political market (Rangsan Thanaphonphan 2002, 158). Politics and elections thus became "business" for a certain group of people while barring significant and meaningful participation from the people at the grassroots and lower social strata.

Inventing Incentives for Party Building

As has been stated earlier, the 1997 Constitution was full of contradictions, the best examples of which were perhaps its stipulations on party formation, operation, and distinction.

The 1997 Constitution, not only introduced new electoral laws and a new electoral system, but also a new Political Party Act and political party finance rules. It seemed at first that the 1997 Constitution had made it easier for political parties to emerge. Only 15 members could set up a political

party (section 328). And unlike before, a party was not automatically dissolved if none of its candidates got elected.[16] Yet, there were also several articles in the Act that made it difficult for small parties to survive or be successful in contesting the elections. This could be seen in the Organic Law on Political Parties and the Organic Law on Elections, which empowered an independent Election Commission of Thailand (ECT) with oversight authority for applying stringent regulations for the operations of political parties.

One key objective of the Organic Law on Political Parties was to strengthen parties by forcing them to broaden their membership base. It specified that to be able to participate in an election, a party must have a minimum of 5,000 members spread around the country's four regions. In each region, at least five provinces must have 50 members. Furthermore, each party must have at least one party branch in each of the four regions (section 29 of Political Party Act). This membership requirement was designed to nurture the development of mass-based parties. The fact, however, indicated that from the establishment of the Election Commission in 1998 to oversee the operation of political parties, 51 parties were terminated through 2004. The reason most frequently cited for party termination was that parties were unable to record 5,000 members and four branches within 180 days after registering with the Election Commission (Journal of Political Party Relations, 8 vol. 6, 2003, 7).

In reality, political party local units and membership rarely exist in Thailand. This is not a unique characteristic of Thai political parties. Political parties' increasing detachment from society is a topic of concern in the study of political parties around the world, including in the United States, Western Europe and Asia. Declines in party membership worldwide have been documented since the early 1980s (Mair and van Biezen 2001). In Thailand, although political parties in large cities do have some party branches, their

organizational activity is confined to practical purposes of electoral campaigning. More significantly, the notion of membership remains extremely vague. All the parties claim a certain number of registered members since it is required by law, but concede that they do not maintain membership records and that the annual payment of dues is an exception rather than the rule. Thai political parties in actual practice are essentially what Riggs refers to as "affiliation-oriented"; individuals can join parties without any extensive prior screening and they need not pay dues to remain in good standing (Riggs 1968, 45-105). At the end, the operation of a party depends on influential persons (whose name, prestige, and connections can provide a backing for candidates and secure them votes), canvassers and experts (who know how to handle the electors and how to organize a campaign), and financiers (who can provide financial resources for the campaign) to strengthen its party activities. These people, at times, are defectors from other parties.

Table 2.9 illustrates partisan volatility in Thai political parties. Party membership does not necessary translate into party votes. For example, Chart Pattana Party commanded more than 3 million members but could only muster 1.7 million votes, or about half of its alleged party members. The same hold true for the Thai Nation and New Aspiration, two long-established parties that got fewer votes than their listed number of party members. Even worse, many new-formed parties came out with empty hands, getting zero votes, even though they claimed to have a certain number of party members. On the other hand, there were several parties that won votes more than their shares of party members, i.e., Thai Rak Thai and Democrat.

Table 2.9: Public Subsidies for Party Institution Building, 2001

Political Parties	No. of Elected MPs	No. of Party list votes	Membership (as of 2001)	No. of branches (2000)	Subsidy for elected MPs (35%)	Subsidy for party list votes (30%)	Subsidy for memberships (20%)	Subsidy for Branches (15%)	Total subsidies received
Democrat	128	17,610,789	3,753,911	170	17,669,565.2	16,422,354.93	5,909,437.14	3,477,272.73	43,478,600
Thai Nation	41	1,523,807	1,781,300	10	5,565,217.39	3,288,029.59	2,804,136.90	204,545.45	11,861,900
New Aspiration	36	2,008,945	3,619,064	193	5,008,695.65	4,334,847.26	5,697,159.89	3,974,727.27	18,988,400
Chart Pattana	29	1,755,476	3,614,254	33	3,895,652.17	3,787,918.70	5,689,587.95	675,000.00	14,048,200
Seridham	14	807,902	604,936	9	2,433,970.00	2,086,260.00	1,390,840.00	1,043,130.00	6,954,200
Rassadorn	2	356,831	429,133	40	417,391.30	769,960.29	675,544.65	818,181.82	2,681,100
Thai Rak Thai	248	11,634,495	6,705,004	4	34,504,347.83	25,104,599.06	15,277,695.99	81,818.18	74,968,500
Thai Citizen	0	339,462	198,739	9	-	732,481.93	312,856.55	184,090.91	1,229,400
Social Action	1	44,926	107,590	48	139,130.43	96,940.11	169,369.05	911,818.18	1,387,300
Palang Dham	0	68,614	88,147	5	-	148,053.44	138,761.72	102,272.73	389,100
Thai	0	57,534	59,087	15	-	124,145.31	93,015.23	306,818.18	524,000
Thaiprachatipprat	0	198,853	59,000	48	-	429,079.63	92,878.28	981,818.18	1,503,800
Chatprachatiprati	0	197,391	40,846	224	-	425,924.97	64,300.10	4,581,818.18	5,072,100
Kawna	-	31,466	50,000	23	-	67,896.48	78,710.41	470,454.55	617,100
Santipap	0	29,508	17,517	5	-	63,671.57	27,575.40	102,272.73	193,500
Rangngänthai	0	29,048	15,000	5	-	62,678.99	23,613.12	102,272.73	188,600
Palangpachachon	0	63,823	7,609	12	-	177,715.55	11,978.15	245454.55	395,100
Kasetmahachon	0	73,269	502,515	184	-	158,097.87	791,063.19	3,763,636.36	4,712,800
Chatprachathai	0	0	5,386	4	-	0.00	8,478.68	81,818.18	90,300
Amnatpachachon	0	148,046	25,000	29	-	319,449.6	39,355.20	593,181.82	952,000
Serithai	0	0	8,504	6	-	0.00	13,387.07	122,727.27	136,100
Kasikonthai	0	555,454	10,555	12	-	119,657.14	16,615.77	245,454.55	381,700
Withinthai	0	11,847	11,280	4	-	25,563.14	17,757.07	81,818.18	125,100
Thidhamatippati	0	0	8,000	5	-	0.00	12,593.66	102,272.73	114,900
Seriprachatippati	0	109,784	9,050	27	-	236,888.95	14,246.58	552,272.73	803,400
Thaimankong	0	0	0	7	-	0.00	13,853.03	143,181.82	157,000
Chaothai	0	45,739	27,000	14	-	98,694.38	42,503.62	286,363.64	427,600
Chiwitthidikwa	0	46,205	11,752	16	-	99,702.06	18,500.09	327,272.73	445,500
Thaichoythai	0	129,419	91,119	54	-	279,256.82	143,440.27	1,104,545.45	1,527,200
Siam	0	71,480	10,500	5	-	154,237.61	16,529.19	102,272.73	273,000
Kasetkawna	0	0	34,981	60	-	0.00	55,067.37	1,227,272.73	1,282,300
Plafadin	0	0	20,995	10	-	0.00	33,050.50	204,545.45	237,600
Sangkomprachatipati	0	32,250	8,351	7	-	69,588.18	13,146.21	143,181.82	225,900
Kasettakon	0	0	34,437	70	-	0.00	54,211.00	1,431,818.18	1,486,000
Panlangmai	0	0	10,919	31	-	0.00	17,188.78	634,090.91	651,300
Pawthai	0	19,727	7,872	19	-	42,566.39	12,392.17	388686.36	443,600
Total	**500**	**28,629,202**	**21,392,917**	**1,417**	**67,200,000**	**57,600,000**	**38,400,000**	**28,800,000**	**252,000,000**

This unparalleled pattern of political involvement and party membership attested to the organizational weakness and relatively shallow social base of the parties; none of the parties commanded widespread loyal and meaningful allegiance. For some political parties, the importance of membership lay in the fact that the more members and the more branches a party had, the more public subsidies it received.

In addition, the incentives for party building also had negative effects on small parties. Parties with a small number of MPs were faced with obstacles in introducing a bill. The 1997 Constitution mandated that a member of the House of Representatives may introduce a bill or an organic law bill only if the political party of which he or she was a member had passed a resolution approving the introduction thereof and the bill was endorsed by not less than 20 members of the House of Representatives (Section 169). Therefore, small parties, sometimes, could only circumvent these restrictions imposed by law and the constitutions by merging with a larger party.

To sum up, an important consequence of the electoral systems in Thailand can be seen through political parties and politicians' adaptation to comply with and compete within the rules. Although the viable and 'electable' political parties continued to diminish in number, newly established political parties emerge every time elections take place. Thus, before the next general election, there will be the changing of party banner by MPs, and alliance formation of cliques among various parties. In other words, the merger and acquisition of existing parties and MPs will be evident.

Strengthening the Prime Minister's Power in the Parliamentary System

Perhaps the most striking feature of the 1997 Constitution concerned the relationship between the prime minister,

the executive branch and the legislative branch.

The nature of the parliamentary system calls for power-sharing, not a clear-cut separation of power as in the presidential system (Fabbrini 1995; Rose 1988). Sartoti (1994, 102) proposes that parliamentary systems can be roughly characterized into three formulas by distinguishing the way in which a chief executive or a prime minister relates to the members of his or her government. The scales of power-sharing arrangements are:

1. A first above unequals
2. A first among unequals
3. A first among equals.

A *primus* (first) above unequals is a chief executive (the party leader) who can almost never be unseated by a vote of his MPs and can control his or her ministers by choosing and firing them. A first among unequals is also expected to remain in office even when there is a change of the cabinet. Therefore, he or she cannot easily be unseated by a mere no-confidence vote. A *primus* among unequals may or may not be an official party leader.

In most parliamentary systems, the prime minister is a *primus inter pares*, or a first among equals. Such a prime minister has little control over the players in the parliament and can be easily unseated by members of parliament by a no-confidence vote (Sartori 1997, 103). This was especially true in the Thai case before the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution, when a democratically elected prime minister did not have a free hand in choosing and firing his or her own cabinet members but had to listen to faction leaders from various political parties within a coalition government.

The previous constitutions allowed a minister to retain a seat in the House and take a ministerial position as well. This was considered to weaken the role of the prime minister since he did not have much control over the Council of

Ministers, because ministers were exercising their legislative power and executive power at the same time. The overlap between the executive and legislative powers exercised by the Council of Ministers, who were concurrently Members of the House of Representatives, was amended in the 1997 Constitution.

To strengthen the prime minister's power, the 1997 Constitution was inclined to the separation of executive and legislative functions. It prohibited the MPs from retaining their seats in the Parliament while becoming members of the Council of Ministers. The reasoning was that ministers would adhere to the conventions of individual ministerial responsibility and collective cabinet responsibility, for they would become ordinary citizens if sacked (Prudhisan Jumbala 1998). This gave an upper hand to the prime minister in controlling his cabinet members.

Moreover, the 1997 Constitution also made it more difficult for Members of Parliament to inspect and scrutinize the executive power. Members of the House of Representatives numbering not less than two-fifths of the total number of the existing members of the House had the right to submit a motion for a general debate for the purpose of passing a vote of no-confidence on the prime minister (Section 185). Such a motion must also nominate a suitable next prime minister.

Passing a vote of no-confidence on an individual minister required not less than one-fifth of the total number of the existing members of the House of Representatives (Section 185). This meant if the opposition parties did not at least have 100 votes in the House of Representatives, the Thai parliamentary system would not have an effective safeguard against the prime minister's decision or the government's performance.

The vote of no-confidence must be passed by more than one-half of the total number of the existing members of the

House of Representatives. In the case where a vote of no-confidence was passed by not more than one-half of the total number of the existing members of the House of Representatives, the members of the House of Representatives who submitted the motion for the general debate shall no longer have the right to submit another motion for a general debate for the purpose of passing a vote of no-confidence on the prime minister throughout the session.

The difficulties and ineffectiveness of the Parliament in checking and balancing the executive power under the Thaksin administration led to the fear of "parliamentary dictatorship." And this is frightening because the executive power in the parliamentary system is endowed with more power than the chief executive in the presidential system; it administers the country and is responsible for adoption of laws to govern at the same time.

Anti-Vote Buying Provisions and the Roles of Election Commission

Under the 1997 Constitution, compulsory voting was introduced for the first time in Thailand. This guarantees a high turn-out which hopefully will alleviate vote-buying because it would require too much cash to be feasible. At the same time, an independent Election Commission has been created to administer and oversee elections. This Election Commission of Thailand (ECT) has been equipped with wide-ranging investigative and prosecutorial powers. All party officials, including branch chairpersons, must declare their assets and liabilities to the ECT, regardless of whether or not they hold public office. The laws mandated annual party audits and financial reports that detailed all expenditures and the amounts and sources of all contributions, and these reports must be made available to the public. A spending limitation of 1 million baht for individual candidates was also

placed on parties during the campaign period. Notwithstanding, the role of the Election Commission of Thailand in preventing vote-buying is usually employed only during election time, whereas non-outright vote-buying or gift-giving are common practices all year round.

The ECT is responsible for managing and enforcing the political party regulations and has demonstrated its authority in many ways. It has sent party dissolution requests to the Constitutional Court because those parties failed to abide by the regulations. During elections, the ECT is empowered to disqualify candidates, bar them from standing and call for re-elections in particular seats by giving yellow and red cards to candidates involved in vote-buying or rigging. Methods of vote-buying and vote-rigging include ghost voters going to polls in place of eligible voters; certain candidate numbers being already marked on the ballots handed to voters; the person authorized to read out the number of the chosen candidate intentionally giving another name; and ballot boxes being replaced or opened and some ballots being removed on the way from the polling unit to the vote-counting center.

Although by all accounts the ECT serves as a model of enforcement, it would be naive to conclude that the ECT can solve all problems concerning vote-buying. On the contrary, it is apparent that many violations continue to take place.

Conclusion: Party Adjustment in the Wake of Electoral Reforms

The 1997 Constitution, not unlike several constitutions in the past, reflected the legislative attempts by the state to alleviate the weaknesses of political parties. In light of Duncan McCargo's analysis, the legislative approach to create the 'realness' parties has resulted in far more stringent legal requirements controlling parties than the usually accepted models of the West (McCargo 1997, 116). More specifically,

the attempts that emphasized external reform by utilizing laws and regulations had difficulty in succeeding. Political parties were ready to roll away from rules.

The challenge for democratic reform in Thailand is to ensure the opportunities for citizens to meaningfully participate in the political process. However, institutional inequalities have led to a significant inequity in people's abilities to participate in various organizations, or to participate as equals.

Moreover, some rules and regulations under the 1997 Constitution have led to contradictory results and unpredictable circumstances, i.e., the number, the functions and the roles of political parties. The electoral system and the structures of the relationship between the executive and the legislative body have placed the executive branch over the legislative. The system seems to emphasize external growth through mergers and acquisitions rather than the internal growth of political parties.

Political parties, though gaining force in the political arena, have yet to show signs of acting as competent interest articulation and aggregation agents. While the political reform and 1997 Constitutional rules pushed political parties to establish their 'mass base' members, evidence shows that there is still a huge vacuum between political parties and the extent of people's participation.

All the rearranging of the structure of competition makes it easier for big money from big business to take control of political parties. The importance of money can be seen in the ability to expand party activities, form party images, and direct party policies, all of which have significant impact on electoral results. Hence, all parties have put much more effort into gathering money.

The political power of money, along with other crucial electoral issues, will be discussed in the next chapter.

NOTES

1   Look in www.thailawforum.com/articles/constburns2.html

2   Look in http://www.thailawforum.com/articles/constburns2.html

3   See for example, William Hale, The Role of the Electoral System in Turkish Politics, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1980, Vol. 11, 401-417; and Andre Blais and Louis Massicotte, "Electoral System" in *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective*, edited by Lawrence LeDuc et al., (London: Sage Publication, 1996), 49-81.

4   Information from Department of Political Party Registration, *Thai Political Parties in Five Century*, (Bangkok: Ministry of Interior, 1995); and from The Election Commission of Thailand.

5   The mixed electoral system of Japan comprises 300 representatives elected from the 300 single-seat districts and 200 representatives from a proportional representation system, set in 11 regional constituencies. The size of districts varies from seven to 33 seats. See Ray Christensen, "The Effect of Electoral Reforms on Campaign Practices in Japan: Putting New Wine into Old Bottles" in *Asian Survey*, October 1998, XXXVIIII (10): 986-1004. Note that the Thai party list is set in one constituency with a size of 100 seats.

6   For detail see www.ect.go.th

7   The electability (the prospect for electoral success) in the Thai connotation is best explained by Rangsan Thanaphonphan. Rangsan describes that the incumbent politicians possess 'brand name capital' from being in the political realm longer. Thus, they have made their names memorable by 'pork barrel' politics. Because of this, it is difficult for the new faces to break through 'brand loyalty' and be elected. See Rangsan Thanaphonphan, *Sate tasart Rattatammanoon*, (Bangkok: The Thailand Research Fund, 2002), 193.

8   Note that several countries using the PR system also apply thresholds to eliminate very small parties before the quota is set. For example, Argentina, Greece and Spain use a 3 percent threshold; Czech Republic, Mozambique and Russia use 5 percent; while Poland sets up its threshold as high as 7 percent. See Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi and Pippa Norris, *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective,* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 13-15.

9   Most countries, i.e., Spain, Japan, and Italy opt to proportional formulae with smaller district magnitude by dividing the country into several small constituencies.

10 It has been argued that this lack of linkage between representatives and

constituents reduces the prospects for the consolidation of democratic rule, especially in agrarian societies where representation is based on face-to-face contact in the countryside. See Joel D. Barkan, "Elections in Agrarian Societies" in Journal of Democracy, 1995, 6 (4): 106-116.

11 Note that the plurality system, multi-member constituency used in Thailand prior to the 1997 Constitution differed from the Japanese single non-transferable vote system (SNTV). The Japanese election law, before the reformation in 1994, divided the country into 123 election districts which elected the 486 members of the Lower House. Each of these districts elected from three to five members, *with each voter voting for only one candidate.* See Gerald L. Curtis, *Election Campaign Japanese Style,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971). In effect, this is usually regarded as a special case of limited vote (LV). See Arend Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies 1954-1990,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 39-46.

12 Interview with Anek Laothamatas, June 13, 2004.

13 It should be noted that senatorial candidates are independent of partisan politics. This means only independent candidates are accepted to stand in a senatorial election. Political parties are also forbidden from supporting a senatorial candidate. The intention is to separate the House and the Senate and because the Senate has the role of selecting members of the organs under the Constitution, namely the Election Commission, the Ombudsmen, the National Human Rights Commission, the Constitution Courts, and the Administrative Court.

14 See Constitutions of Thailand 1932-1997.

15 Information provided by Office of the Commission for Higher Education, Ministry of Education indicates that in 2002, there were the total of 168,105 people, aged 25-74 in Thailand receiving a Bachelor degree and its equivalent, a Master degree and a Ph.D.

16 The former Political Party Act of 1981 contained several articles that would cripple small parties. Specifically, a party must be dissolved if it failed to send candidates to contest at least half of all seats in the House, or was unsuccessful in getting their candidates elected. Thus, small parties usually found it difficult to have enough financial backup to meet these requirements. This article implied that a political party must be a national and not just a regional party.

CHAPTER III

PARTY ELITES

At the outset of this book, it was argued that the transition of political parties in Thailand is now at stage III, under the domination of business conglomerates. The previous chapter has described how the 1997 Constitution and changes in institutional structures facilitated and nurtured the current business conglomerate mode.

Among the major concerns of this chapter are: 1) the emergence of political party elites in the era of rural network politicians and the business conglomerate party; 2) the interplay between the old and new types of politicians; 3) the sources of party finances; and 4) the pattern of party switching. This chapter will also analyze whether parties draft leaders or leaders use parties as mechanisms to pursue other goals.

The following section highlights the consequence of economic adjustment in relation to the emergence of various types of political elites.

Explaining the Rise of Rural Network Politicians

In discussing present-day Thai politics it is inevitable to refer to the nexus of politics and business relationships (see Pasuk and Baker 2004). In fact, businesspeople have participated indirectly in the political atmosphere since the 1950s. Nor is direct participation of businesspersons in Thai politics a recent phenomenon. National economic elites have increasingly and more directly participated in parliamentary politics since the 1975 general elections. Their active participation in politics exploded during the brief period of a more

democratic atmosphere from the October 1973 'revolution'
until the military 'restoration' coup in October 1976[1].
Another surge of potent involvement from business groups
occurred again towards the end of the bureaucratic-parlia-
mentary compromise, or semi-democratic regime, under Prime
Minister (General) Prem Tinnasulanon from 1980 to 1988.

The business classes came to directly participate in
politics by forming their own political parties or becoming
committee members of party executive boards. These groups
of business entrepreneurs were mainly banking and
industrial capitalists, including two ex-generals, Pramarn
Adireksarn and Chartchai Choonhawan (textile and glass
industry), as well as Boontrong Srifuengfung (manufactur-
ing, finance, engineering), and Tana Liewburin of the Thai
Nation Party; Pong Sarasin (trading, vehicle parts and assem-
bly, soft drinks—Coca Cola Thailand), Surat Osathankhro
(pharmaceutical business—Osothsapha Tek Heng Yu Ltd.,
finance) of the Social Action Party; Pichai Rattakul (manufac-
turing), Sasima and Chalermpan Srivigorn (real estate and
finance), Chavalit and Porntep Tejapaibool (Bank of Asia,
Bangkok Metropolitan Bank, Mekhong Thai whisky) of the
Democrat Party (Visut Thamaviriyawong 1984; Hewison
1989).

However, the past pattern of business involvement is
significantly different from the present business conglomer-
ate model of party development. Most obviously, many of these
business entrepreneurs played a part in the politics of the
parliamentary system as party executive committee members
and sometimes as cabinet members without having to
contest an election until 1986 (Anek Laothamatas 1988, 453;
Senee Comsook 1995, 486). This included, for example, Pairoj
Chaiyaporn and especially Pong Sarasin who at the begin-
ning of his political career never once had to go through an
electoral process but was always granted a seat in the cabinet
in return for his financial support to the Social Action Party.

Two important characteristics of business-politicians during the transition from the period of military-bureaucratic domination to the era of rural network politicians are evident. First is the process of Bangkok capitalists entering the Parliament through provincial elections, and, second is the pattern of financial and electoral support by provincial businesspersons and local godfathers (Chao pho) in national politics.

Among Bangkok capitalists who became provincial MPs were General Kriangsak Chamanan (Roi-et Province[2]); Surat Osathanukhro (Khon Kaen Province); and Porntep Tejapaiboon; Nipon Prompana; and Prajuab Chaiyasarn.

The Community Action Party illustrates the second point. The party was founded in 1984 by Boonchu Rojanasathien, a former executive of Bangkok Bank and a Social Action Party member. Boonchu funded his party from money out of his own pocket and with the help of the Northeast tycoon, Charoen Pattanadamrongkit, or Sia[3] Lang, of Khon Kaen Province. Charoen, whose enterprises ran from sawmills, exports, hotels, and schools, to gambling businesses, once said in an interview (Somrudee Nicro 1993, 177) that:

> "At the beginning, Boonchu was the only person who substantially financed the Community Action Party. Since I joined him it was only Boonchu and I who cared to invest in the party voluminously. Other party supporters gave only a few million baht."

However, the relationship between Boonchu and Charoen proved impermanent. As Charoen later said, "I don't know what political parties mean; I understand only associates...and I'd rather keep them" (Phuchatkan, vol.5, no.49, October 1987: 155). The cause of the shattered relationship came when Charoen ordered five MPs under his

sponsorship to withdraw from supporting a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Prem's government in 1987. This was after Lieutenant General Sunthon Kongsompong (then the army chief of staff) took a helicopter to see Charoen in Khon Kaen (Somrudee Nicro 1993, 177-178). This gesture indicated the significance of local businesspersons in national politics, but beyond that the final power lay with the military.

In addition to Charoen of Khon Kaen, there were several godfathers who apparently sponsored the establishment and activities of political parties. Among the most well-known were: So Thanavisuth, who had long been an adviser and business partner of Pramarn Adireksarn of the Thai Nation Party, and Somchai Khunpluem[4] (Kamnan[5] Poh) of Chonburi[6] Province who had close connections with Kukrit Pramoj and Sitthi Savetsila of the Social Action Party. Not only did many Chao pho finance Members of Parliament towards the end of the military domination, they also began to take a more direct hand in politics. Piya Ankhinand, a godfather of Petchburi Province, was one such figure who described himself as a protector and provider for the people in his hometown (Tasker 1991, 26).

As previously stated, the election of Bangkokians as provincial MPs, combined with the emergence of provincial entrepreneurs in national politics, became evident at the transition from the last gasp of military domination to the dawn of the rural network politician era. The election of Prime Minister Chartchai Choonhavan in the July 1988 election marked the more assertive and vital role of political parties as well as a more mature party system.[7]

The era of rural network politicians marked a significant stage in Thai political party development because people saw a closer linkage between the electoral process and the choice of a prime minister. In other words, electors experienced a greater meaning in their votes. Before the 1980s, a

prime minister was pre-picked by the military; other civilians and even political parties with the largest number of MPs had no chance (Surin Maisrikrod 1992, 44). Having a leader of the largest party hold the premiership has now become the norm in Thai politics. And now, the leaders of major political parties campaign on this issue, projecting themselves as the future prime ministers of the country. The mass media also makes it a point to focus on the capability of party leaders as premiers. The long period of stable democratic institutions during stage II of party development encouraged more involvement in politics from a wider variety of forces in society. The result is that political parties are more serious in selecting their leaders.

There are two principal reasons associated with the rise of rural network politicians and godfathers. First, the rise of rural network politicians and local influence parallels the evolution of Thai politics. Godfathers and mafia were kept under control during the long period of military power. More specifically, the military never needed rural politicians or godfathers to support their legitimacy in maintaining their political power. The commencement of civilian-dominated government in 1988 denoted a new source of power---intermingling among Bangkok-based political parties, provincial politicians, and locally influential.

Undoubtedly, Bangkok businesspeople had plenty of money, but what they lacked were patronage ties with the majority of voters across country. Thus Bangkok-based political parties and politicians had to depend on rural support, namely the local leaders and the influence peddlars, for vote mobilization, and in a mutually-beneficial arrangement, the result was that wealthy Bangkokians were elected MPs in the provinces. These politicians appeared in provincial constituencies only during election times and spent huge sums of money buying votes and hiring canvassers to get

themselves elected. They were dubbed "lost dog politicians," who had their bases outside their elected constituencies. They got their votes in rural areas, but honed their business and political activities in Bangkok. This phenomenon put power within the reach and influence of rising provincial businesspeople who had exactly what political parties thought they needed to become quickly competitive: local networks and influence. This alliance provided political parties with an influential constituency and individual candidates with a ready-made public mobilization system (Robertson 1996, 926), and, of course, provided the local businesspeople an influx of money.

The second prominent cause of the rise of rural network politicians and godfathers was that the nature of economic development in Thailand in the past made possible the growth of regional tycoons and entrepreneurs who accumulated their wealth through their control of local markets. The imposing role of rural network politicians reflected the incompleteness of Thai society, part of which was prosperous and thriving, while the far larger part, especially the agricultural sector, was poverty-stricken and stagnant. An underlying aspect of economic development in Thailand is that business and bureaucratic interests are focused in urban areas, whereas the majority of the people live in rural areas and have little access to wealth and economic expansion. The disparity of economic development, combined with the incoherence and contradictions of society, resulted in the widespread use of money politics and strengthened the role of rural network politicians and local godfathers.

The essence of the relationship between politicians and the local influence peddlars has to be explored carefully. Not only do the local influence holders act as brokers between the politicians and the electorates, they sometimes provide patronage to the politicians as well (Anusorn Limmanee 1998, 429-432). To be more specific, local influence brokers supplied

money to homegrown and provincial politicians who needed funds for their campaigns. They also organized efficient means of distribution of that money, such as vote-buying, to deliver their districts to politicians (Handley 1991, 28). And that is one of the reasons they are dubbed 'godfathers' or *Chao Pho.*[8] In this sense, local influentials in Thailand must be viewed differently from 'community leaders' who play important roles in electoral politics in societies such as Korea and Japan.

Network politicians, who for the most part consist of rural capitalists, are mainly businesspersons who own rice mills, sawmills, mining businesses, liquor brew houses and distribution licenses, and especially those who run construction businesses. The nature of these business operations requires close relationships with civil servants and government officials to yield advantages in getting permission, contracts, and deals. Thus the pattern of capital accumulation in the rural and provincial milieu unavoidably depends on patron-client relationships and personal connections. This, in a way, restricts the context and periphery of the capital gains of provincial entrepreneurs. Consequently, as the cost of political campaigns has risen sharply during the past decade with rapid economic growth and higher expectations of the electorates, a few financial backers and traditional party patrons can no longer afford to absorb the costs. Therefore, major national capitalist groups which control large stable sources of money have been challenging and threatening political parties under the control of network politicians.

Before exploring the rise of political parties under the influence of large scale conglomerate businesses, the role that Thai law has played as an intervening factor contributing to the endurance of network politicians should be noted. Before the promulgation of the 1997 Constitution, Thai law prohibited interest groups and associations from financing any party or candidate for election. This hindered the emergence of alliances between parties and specific classes or social groups.

Therefore, the pattern of election financing was from business people as individuals to candidates as individuals (Anek Laothamatas 1988, 455-456). As could be expected, owners of big business-funded parties which stood the best chance of forming a coalition government, expected benefits from their "investments." Specifically, businesspersons quietly funded potential ruling parties in order to assure smooth passage for their business operations[9]. And most business people, Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra before he became prime minister included, financed political parties across the broad spectrum to make sure that no matter what parties came to power, they would have connections.[10] Accordingly, the support of parties was left to the narrow interests of the business groups and executives that financed them, not to the majority social forces at large.

The consequence of not having established sources of political funds was that fund raising was done solely through the connections of party leaders. Because of these financial arrangements, party stability was uncertain, dependent on a small numbers of leaders and key financial contributors. A change of party leaders and/or party financiers always brought about a new internal party structure. In other words, party executives and factions were rearranged according to new key personalities who controlled resources. The fact that Thai political parties did not have a system of fund raising made it easier for business conglomerates to take control over political parties.

Explaining the Rise of National Capitalist and Business Conglomerate Control over Political Parties

The previous section depicted the alliance between provincial businesspersons and non-local, business-oriented political parties. The following section will demonstrate the challenge posed to the rural network politicians by business

conglomerate persons turned politicians.

The pattern of political involvement from various forces in Thai society has developed in accordance with the pattern of economic development, which in Thailand has followed the forms of agricultural export and import-substitution industrialization in the past and export-oriented industrialization in the present (Pasuk and Baker 1995). The long period of economic growth was basically operated under a close relationship between big business and the bureaucracy, which favored a market-oriented economy. In the earlier phase of economic expansion during the 1980s,[11] banking and industrial capital were the dominant factions and driving forces of the Thai economy (Hewison 1989).[12]

Since World War II, the big banks had composed the predominant capitalist faction. However, during the long period of economic growth, all factions of capital expanded substantially. The significant change was that not only the capitalist class became larger but also far more diverse. The old banking capitalists were challenged by upstart business groups in media, communications, electronics, and retailing (Pasuk and Baker 1998; Girling 1996).

The strength and continued economic development under a stable democratic regime during the 1990s resulted in more diverse business groups, i.e., finance, tourism, real estate, telecommunications, electronics, manufacturing, and retailing business capital (Pasuk and Baker 1998, chapter 3). The capitalist class, therefore, became larger and more versatile, and business established its economic and political importance both in Bangkok and provinces. As the economy expanded, politics and economics become more and more entwined as the business community gained substantial influence in every political party. In other words, the business community successfully penetrated the political system and even more directly began to dominate political parties. Table 3.1 shows the percentage of the executive board

committee members with business backgrounds in six major political parties before the 2001 general election. These data indicate that the Thai Rak Thai Party had the highest percentage of executive committee members with business backgrounds. Seridham and New Aspiration Parties, with the smallest percentages of party executive committee members associated with business, were disbanded and merged with Thai Rak Thai after the 2001 general election (details below).

Table 3.1: Percentage of Major Political Party Executive Board Committee Members with Business Backgrounds (2001)

Political Parties	% of Political Party Executive Committee with Business Background*
Thai Rak Thai	38. 38
Thai Nation	17.85
Chart Pattana	15.55
Democrat	10.41
New Aspiration	6.38
Seridham	4.08

Source: Author's calculation on data from Political Parties' web sites.

*Note: There are several party executive committee members who are career politicians and at the same time are owners of business companies. In this case, they are categorized as politicians.

The Overlapping of Politics and Business: Party Capital Mobilization

Whereas political parties in stage III are principally funded as well as operated by groups of business people, the

new model of party development does not necessarily super-
sede the former model, but fundamentally alters it. In other
words, business politicians do not displace rural network
politicians, but do change and shift the spheres of influence.

The dissimilarities between stage II and stage III of Thai
party development are twofold; first, in terms of methods of
capital mobilization for party funding, and second, in the
relationships among various groups of political elites. Exam-
ining these issues will reflect the level of party discipline and
especially patterns of party growth in the system.

To elaborate the first point, Thai political parties in the
new era mobilize capital through the Security Exchange of
Thailand (SET). They see the SET as an unlimited source of
funds. The SET index has actually become a barometer of
government performance.

This is not so different from other systems. For example,
by examining firms in 47 countries around the world, Maria
Faccio's study shows a widespread overlap of controlling share-
holders and top officers who are connected with national par-
liaments or governments. For example, Italy's former Prime
Minister Silvio Berlusconi is the largest shareholder of four
Italian listed firms, namely Arnoldo Mondadori Editore,
Mediaset, Mediolanum, and Standa. Another example is
Giovanni Agnelli, who had a life term as senator; his family
has direct and indirect control in 18 Italian firms listed on
the stock market.

In her study, Faccio cited the Berlusconi family of Italy
and Shinawatra family of Thailand as examples of the stron-
gest connections between senior government officials and
direct financial ownership (Faccio 2004, 3). The following data
support Faccio's argument in the Thai case: from 279 firms
with available data, there are 46 firms politically connected
either with a minister or MP, or which have a close relation-
ship with cabinet members.[13] Among the 46 companies, 37
(80.4%) are owned by politically connected persons, and nine

(19.6%) have directors with political connections. These politically connected firms have 41.62% of market capitalization, second to only Russia with 86.75% of market capitalization.

Thaksin Shinawatra, a retired police lieutenant colonel, had combined patron-client ties in the Thai bureaucracy with foreign technology to build his business empire since the mid-1980s, when he set up Shinawatra Co. (now known as Shin Corp.) to supply computer components to various Thai state agencies. One can say that Thaksin flourished under military rule through the granting of monopolies and preferential deals. Thaksin's business empire, operating and exchanging on the stock market, before selling to Temasek Holdings of Singapore in 2006, included Advanced Info Service Plc. (AIS), Shin Satellite (SATTEL), ITV television channel (ITV), and Thai Military Bank (TMB) (For details see Pasuk and Baker 2004; McCargo and Ukrist Pathamanand 2005).

It has been reported[14] that from 2003-2004, the Shinawatra family were Thailand's largest stockholders, with holdings of Bt31.54 billion (about US$ 85 million) in the stock market. This was a more than 70 per cent increase from their stock shares in the previous year. Deputy Minister of Interior and Thai Rak Thai Party's executive board member, Mr. Pracha Maleenon and his family were second behind the Shinawatras in riches, with combined stock holdings of Bt20.58 billion. The Damaphong family, PM Thaksin's in-laws, came third with Bt15.26 billion. Other large stock holders with close connections with the cabinet members and opposition parties included Panida Thepkarnjana, the wife of former Justice Minister Phongthep Thepkarnjana; Anuthin Charnveerakul, former Deputy Minister of Commerce and his wife Sanongnuj; Pichaya Bhodaramik, son of the former Minister of Education; and Phothiphong Lamsam, a deputy head of the Democrat Party, who was ranked 260th with Bt194.2 million.

The stock market has thus become the new means for

accumulating party financial funding, replacing the official contracts typical in the past during stage II of network politicians. It is a cleaner and more sophisticated way; after all, it is legal and can mobilize a large sum of money quickly. Companies listed on the stock market with close political connections proved to have higher leverage, lower taxes, stronger market power, and poorer accounting performance comparing to those without connections. This does not mean, however, that taking commissions is absolutely obsolete and has totally disappeared.

Where does the Money for Political Party Come From?

Thaksin once bluntly answered in a personal interview that:

> "In the case of Thai Rak Thai's donation, most of it comes from my own pocket. I consider it the surplus of life, it won't trouble my family. We started with our own money, not owing a favor to anyone."[15]

Based on Election Commission of Thailand's data, from 2000 to 2003 the biggest contributor to Thai Rak Thai was none other than Kunying Pojamarn Shinawatra, Thaksin's wife, who donated eight times for a total amount of 366.4 million baht (about US$ 9 million). Other big donors have been Sirikorn Maneerin, Pracha Kunakasame, Pongthep Thepkarnjana, and Panlert Baiyok, all Thai Rak Thai party ministers or MPs. The nature of party funding and donation in Thailand is that the party elite, especially MPs and ministers from party quotas, are major and regular party donors. The common practice has been that all ministers donate the same amount of money each month. Korn Tapparagsi and Suwat Lippatapanlop, while heading the Chart Pattana Party, usually recorded 10,000 baht (about US$ 250) deductions

from their salaries to the party each month. The Democrats are somewhat different from other parties in their more frequent donations from the pool of key party members, ordinary members, and the general public. But this is not to suggest that the Democrats are following a mass party model which directly controls its financial resources through membership. In the 60 years since its second establishment in 1946, the party still has not succeeded in assembling stable grassroots bases of financial and electoral support around the country.

In Thailand, fund raising organizations do not exist; there has never been a practice where candidates publicly spend time raising money or seeking contributors. In contrast, candidates do not hesitate to make known that they use their own money to fund their campaigns. The lack of a fund raising system for individual candidates has fostered greater elite dominance and increased the influence of "big money." If anything, it spurred business to become more politically involved and created conditions that enhanced the political influence of party elites who are wealthy or receiving big lump contributions. Private wealth, hence, is an important resource in the political system. More importantly, there is no law to mitigate the importance or influence of wealthy individuals as contributors to political parties. Therefore, multimillionaires can donate as much money as they desire, as many times as they want, to any parties.

Evidence shows that the number of contributions to all political parties recorded by the Election Commission of Thailand (ECT) are modest compared with the size of the donations. This means political parties have not been able to greatly expand their contributor base and tap large numbers of people. In other words, small contributors are not the main source of party campaign funding. The frequency and amount of contributions to political parties between 1998 until the general election in 2001 are displayed in Table 3.2. Not sur-

prisingly, the amount of money each party received paralleled the number of seats they gained in the 2001 election. Keep in mind, still, that the total amount of donations recorded by the ECT did not reflect actual contributions, which in reality were far greater than those reported to the ECT. This was because many contributors did not want to reveal their real identities and their connections with a particular party, and there are no contribution disclosure laws in Thailand.

Table 3.2: Donation to Political Parties, 1998 - December 2001

Political Parties	Frequency of Donations	Total Contribution (Thai Baht)
Thai Rak Thai	92	417,619,687
Democrat	127	208,370,006
Thai Nation	61	157,681,600
Chart Pattana	50	139,528,000
New Aspiration	55	93,270,940
Seridham	40	74,258,840
Rassadorn	13	53,780,000

Source: Adapted from data provided by the Election Commission of Thailand http://www.ect.go.th/thai/party/give/41-44.htm

How a party is financed is considered here as an indicator of a party's level of autonomy. The level of autonomy is employed by Panebianco as one of two scales for measuring an organization's level of institutionalization. The second parameter is the organization's degree of systemness, i.e., the degree of interdependence of its different internal sectors (Panebianco 1988). Concerning the position of autonomy, Panebianco (1988, 55) explicitly says that:

> "The autonomy/dependence dimension refers to the organization's relation with the external environment. An organization is necessarily involved in exchange relations with its environment: it must procure the resources (human and material) which are indispensable to its functioning."

Viewed in this light, Thai Rak Thai increased its autonomy vis-à-vis its environment by securing financial resources in the hands of its party leader in order to safeguard the party from external control. Instead of allowing individual party candidates and MPs to be sponsored by outside funding (and thus subject to interference from the external environment), the Thai Rak Thai leader provided campaign financing to each of the party's candidates out of his own pocket. MPs were like the Shinawatra company's employees, receiving a monthly salary (besides their legislator salary) and campaign finance from the party. Private wealth thus becomes a critical, if not the most critical resource in the Thai political system.

The high level of Thai Rak Thai autonomy, based on its independence in commanding resources, could have reached the point where the political party became a party leader's personal political entity. It should be cautioned that although Panebianco states clearly that organizational autonomy is reached when it can directly control its indispensable resources, he also points out that the more highly institutionalized the organization, the more probable that it has at its disposal a revenue system based on a regular flow of contributions from a plurality of sources (Panebianco 1988, 58-59). In other words, the more financial sources are diversified, the more power is diffused. If the financial source is monopolized within a small group of elite, it is easier to dictate. In this case, organization is ironically perceived as weak institutionalization.

With party finances basically controlled by party lead-ers and the business community, political parties primarily work in a vacuum isolated from other social forces in civil society. Infiltrated by businessmen, a political party will not be able to achieve true autonomy or carve out an important niche of its own. Naturally, power actually rests in the hands of those who, within the organization, are responsible for money and funding. Politics is thus made by a small number of persons. Consequently, competition among participants in Thai parliamentary politics does not amount to democracy because there is a 'power elite,' a coherent and more or less unified network of powerful people.

The propensity toward party donations from party elites and financiers from the business community inevitably creates a gulf between parties and other forces in civil soci-ety. It is hard for a political party to be strong and united if it has to rely on the influence and financial means of only a few individual members. In addition, the party suffers when these financiers leave to join another party and the party needs to attract new sources of income. Such a situation leads to an-other interesting point mentioned by Panebianco: the ability of a party to exercise control over its environment, in addition to generating resources for its own functioning, depends on its ability to choose leaders from within its own organization and involve a minimum of external entities (Panebianco 1988, 56). This precisely concerns the relationship between party elites, political parties, and civil society.

Party Elites Interplay

Examination of the relationships among various groups of political elites addresses the role played by party elite and ordinary legislators. On the one hand, it focuses on legislators' motivations in running under a party's banner. On the other hand, it reveals party incentives operating on politicians.

In most modern democracies, a representative electoral process is limited by prior selection on the part of the parties. The necessity of prior selection, however, need not obscure the relative influence of the voters or the rank and file of party members in choosing a candidate. The United States is still the only country in which primary elections play an important role in the selection process. The primary system opens up candidate selection to the widest competition within a party. Even primaries, of course, will not rule out considerable preprimary selection efforts by party agencies.

In Thailand, it would be even more accurate to say that many legislative candidates recruit parties, not the other way around. When asked what sources were the most important in their decisions to run, the Thai MPs typically responded that they were self-starters or were urged to do so by a small group of nonparty friends and associations.[16] In the absence of strong and viable party organizations, a premium is placed upon the personalities of leaders. Personal, informal, and close relations with these leaders have often played a critical role in determining ambitious party members' decisions, chances, and channels to participate in the political process. This is witnessed by the heavy flow of MPs across party lines during every election.

Party Switching in the Thai House of Representatives

It is said that switching allegiance is more common in countries with weak institutionalized party systems. In other words, the level of switching may be used as one criterion for measuring the conditions of a party system (Mainwaring 1998). However, this study does not focus on quantifying the level of party institutionalization. Instead, it investigates patterns of party switching and identifies the effects they have on the nature of party development. The principal questions include: What constitutes the causes of switching? Does switching

affect the prospect for electoral and legislative career success? Is switching an individual or group phenomenon?

Throughout the development of Thai political parties, changing allegiance by MPs has been a common practice. Hence, the critical and crucial process of electoral politics in Thailand [the buying of politicians and veteran MPs] starts before the elections take place. It can be unmistakably predicted whether parties will win or lose before the votes are cast by judging the ability of parties to attract MPs with strong networks (canvassers and patronage linkages). Within this context, a wealthy party secretary-general is the key to electoral success: party buying of electoral candidates, buying support from influential figures to support their electorates, and even directly buying voters from electorate (McCargo and Ukrist Pathamanand 2005, 72). Table 3.3 shows the numbers of MPs who defected from one party to another during three consecutive general elections. Together with Table 3.4, one can see the correspondence between parties' effectiveness in drawing Incumbent MPs and their success in becoming the ruling party in the coalition government.

Table 3.3: Number of MPs Switching Major Political Parties in Three Consecutive General Elections, 1995-2001

Party's Name	Thai Rak Thai		Democrat		New Aspiration		Thai Nation		Chart Pattana		Others	
	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out
2 July 1995	-	-	8	3	2	11	23	2	3	16	18	22
17 Nov 1996	-	-	13	4	51	2	3	47	6	5	19	39
6 Jan 2001	117	-	3	13	2	70	12	13	14	28	19	43

Source: Author's computations based on data from Election Bureau, Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior (1995 and 1996 elections); and the Election Commission of Thailand (2001 election).

Table 3.4: Political Parties in Coalition Governments During 1992-2001

Head of Government	Government Duration	Political Parties in Coalition Governments
Mr. Banharn Silapa-archa	group 51 13 Jul 95 -24 Nov.96	**Thai Nation**, New Aspiration, Palang Dham, Thai Citizen, Nam Thai, Social Action, Mass.
General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh	group 52 25 Nov. 96 -8 Nov.97	**New Aspiration**, Chart Pattana, Social Action, Thai Citizen, Seridham, Mass.
Mr. Chuan Leekpai	group 53 14 Nov. 97 -9 Nov.00	**Democrat**, Thai Citizen (cobra group) Thai Nation, Palang Dham, Solidarity, Thai, Social Action, Seridham, Chart Pattana
Police Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra	group 54 17 Feb.01 –6 Feb.05	**Thai Rak Thai** (with Seridham and New Aspiration), Thai Nation, Chart Pattana (later merged with Thai Rak Thai

In 1995, Thai Nation was the most successful party in attracting former MPs from their original parties, while 16 of Chart Pattana's incumbents defected to others. The electoral result was that Thai Nation Party managed to get six MPs more than the Democrats, and Thai Nation became the ruling party in the coalition government. The drop in Chart Pattana votes was a consequence of its members' defections.

However, Thai Nation met a similar fate before the 1996 general election, when its secretary-general, Sanoh Tientong, defected to the New Aspiration Party (NAP) along with a group of MPs under his control. Sanoh's defection helped the NAP win the 1996 election and party leader Chavalit Yongchaiyudh became prime minister. The Thai Nation Party dropped to fourth place in that election.

In the 2001 election, history came back to haunt the NAP, and Sanoh was again at the center of controversy. Removed as secretary-general of the NAP, Sanoh and his Wang Nam Yen faction left for the Thai Rak Thai Party before the general election. NAP's breakup was due largely to its "unnatural growth" prior to the 1996 election. Although the party

came first with 125 elected MPs, many of them were Sanoh's loyalists and party newcomers who were brought in merely to give Chavalit enough votes to gain the premiership. They did not share the same ideology or policy. Not surprisingly, the Chavalit-led coalition government did not last long. Its internal strife, coupled with ineffectiveness in solving the economic crisis at the end of 1997, led to the collapse of the New Aspiration-led coalition government, opening the way for the second largest party, the Democrats, to form a new one.

Even with the familiar practice of party swapping by Thai MPs, never before had any party been able to gather as many former MPs as Thai Rak Thai did in the 2001 general election. As shown in Table 3.5, the newly established Thai Rak Thai Party brought together a coalition of various groups of legislators into its support. The party was formed by gathering seasoned politicians who defected either individually or as a bloc from other parties along with a younger generation of new politicians. As a result, it was able to secure 248 seats in the House of Representatives. Details of MPs swapping parties in 2001 election are presented in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5: Number of 1996 MPs Swapping Party Affiliation in the General Election 2001.

From \ To	Thai Rak Thai			New Aspiration			Democrat			Chart Pattana			Thai Nation			Seridham			Rassadorn			Kaset Mahachon			Total
	√	×	=	√	×	=	√	×	=	√	×	=	√	×	=	√	×	=	√	×	=	√	×	=	
New Aspiration	37	17	54				0	0	0	1	8	9	0	2	2	2	3	5	0	0	0	0	1	1	71
Democrat	9	2	11	0	0	0				0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	14
Chart Pattana	13	8	21	0	0	0	0	1	1				2	2	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	27
Thai Nation	11	0	11	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
Solidarity	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Thai Citizen	3	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	5	5	0	0	0	14
Social Action	9	2	11	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
Palang Dham	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Thai	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mass	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	87	30	117	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	13	14	4	8	12	5	7	12	0	6	6	0	1	1	167

Source: Author's computations on data from the Election Commission of Thailand

Legend   √ : elected   × : not elected   = : total defections

In the three recent general elections, the Democrat Party had the least party switching. New Aspiration, on the contrary, which profited most in 1996 election but was bruised severely in 2001, saw 71 of its 125 existing MPs defect to other parties and came in fourth with only 36 parliamentary seats.

From the total of 167 party swappers in the 2001 election, 117 of them joined Thai Rak Thai, and 87 of these defectors (74.36%) got elected. Chart Pattana, on the contrary, had the second most MPs defectors from other parties (14), but only 1 was successful in seeking re-election. Besides Thai Rak Thai, no other political parties essentially benefited from MP defections. Thai Nation and Seridham, each with 12 MPs from other parties, had only 4 and 5 defectors elected, a less than 50% rate of success. The case of the Rassadorn Party was even more striking; all six party switchers that ran under Rassadorn's banner were rejected by voters. It can be said that most incumbents who changed party affiliation in the 2001 general election failed to be re-elected, except for those who ran under Thai Rak Thai's banner. Party switchers competing under party labels other than the popular Thai Rak Thai found themselves less successful in seeking re-election. Yet this does not necessarily mean that the attractiveness of Thai Rak Thai will endure or lead to a permanent re-alignment of political parties in the system.

Table 3.6: Number of Switching MPs and Their Success in Seeking Office

Election Year	Total Number of Switching MPs	Elected	Not Elected
2 July 1995	54	29 (53.70 %)	25 (42.29 %)
17 Nov 1996	92	62 (67.39 %)	30 (32.60%)
6 Jan 2001	167	99 (59.28%)	68 (40.72%)

Source: Author's computations on data from Election Bureau, Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interiors (1995 and 1996 elections); and the Election Commission of Thailand (2001 election).

Table 3.6 indicates that the number of switching MPs has increased noticeably in election after election, from 54 in 1995 to 167 in the 2001 election. In each election, more than half of the party defectors were still elected into parliament. It does not appear that electorates want to punish party swappers since those who moved to popular parties like Thai Rak Thai in the 2001 election were remarkably successful in seeking office while others mostly failed to be elected.

Table 3.7 Number and Percentage of Former MPs Failing to be Re-elected

Election	No of new candidates/total candidates contested	No of former MPs not elected	% former MPs not elected
2 July 1995	1,587 /2,372 (391 constituencies)	120 (332 former MPs contested)	36.14%
17 Nov 1996	1,452/2,310 (393 constituencies)	100 (368 former MPs contested)	36.80%
6 Jan 2001	2,341/2,700 (400 constituencies)	144 (359 former MPs contested)	40.11%

Source: Author's computations on data from Election Bureau, Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interiors (1995 and 1996 elections); and the Election Commission of Thailand (2001 election)

According to Table 3.7, during the past three general elections, the success rate of incumbent MPs in seeking re-election has been decreasing steadily. In fact, upholding a parliamentary seat is not an easy task, and the mission is getting more and more difficult. Maintaining the prospect for electoral success is a matter of life and death for MPs; hence, they have to ensure that voters' discontent can be managed and absorbed by the new party. Many politicians used this as an excuse to change party. Take Sontaya Koonpleum, the former Thai Nation party's Secretary General, as example. He said: "[his] group was convinced to change party by talking to the constituents (about whether they wanted their MPs in a coalition government)... We appraised the political direction, listened to the opinions of many delegations and made the decision." (Nation, July 23, 2004). Or as Udom Kriwattanusorn, an MP from Samutsakorn Province candidly

said, "No matter what I think, if my constituency believes moving to a smaller party with no chance to be in a government is a stupid idea, I will have to hold on what my people tell me.[17]"

Reasons to Party Switching

It should be stated up front that this study agrees with the perception that party switching is integral to the democratic system and should not be seen as pathological (Heller and Mershon 2004). The conclusion based on Heller and Mershon's study is that "switching springs from ambition but also and even more that switching reflects the pursuit of ambition under great uncertainty" (Heller and Mershon 2004, 22). This study, while agreeing with Heller and Mershon, explicates two additional points.

First, the ambition of Thai MPs is usually specifically based in the desire to be a part of the council of cabinets, or at the least a member of a coalition party. The motivation to become a member of the cabinet was expressed plainly by Banharn Silapa-archa, a former prime minister who once uttered the "immortal phrase:" *'Being in opposition is famished and starving.'*

Second, the propensity to party switching in Thailand is based on money contributions from a party to an MP's electoral campaign, thus raising the prospect of electoral success. In other words, MPs change their party affiliations according to a party's financial support. Naturally, the first and second points are related; parties with resources can command deep loyalty among its MPs and at the same time are more likely to form or take part in the government.

In general, politicians want to switch from a party with low incentives to a party that offers better political rewards. They thus seek to join the party that is most likely to form the government and gain access to patronage resources.

Interestingly, in a multiparty system such as the Thai case, there is flexibility in government formation, meaning that any party has a chance to be part of the government coalition. At the same time, the polarization system of government formation, where the first and second parties become the government and the opposition, allows small parties to join forces and become a potential party that can join a coalition at any time. Therefore, the size of parties is not the variable with the most discernible impact on switching. In contrast, a politician must take into consideration the reward and the risk that might occur after switching parties. The two worst things that can happen are failure in getting re-elected or failure of the new party to be included in a coalition government.

Among political parties, the fight for strong candidates is quite competitive. During election time there always are rumors of parties paying popular MPs thousands of dollars to run under their banners. While it is difficult to find reliable data, information gathered from press reports indicates that parties are offering 10 million to 40 million baht (about $US 250,000 to 1 million) to attract MPs depending on the individual's viability and constituency strength. Therefore, the pattern of party switching among Thai MPs is not unlike moving from one company to another for business employees where a person would want to move to a company offering higher salary and better benefits. And since financial support in Thai politics is not usually bound by political parties but by relationships between individuals (especially those who are party faction leaders), the nature of switching inescapably coincides with factions within political parties.

Faction Politics and Party Switching

Related to the issue of party elite interplay and party switching, a noticeable feature of party development in stage

II and stage III has been an increase in factional or group switching rather than individual switching.

Factions within a party are formed through a patronage system, under which an influential and wealthy parliamentarian is accepted as the faction leader, a very important person because faction leaders are those who have access to funds, political expertise, and connections. The links between the leader and the followers are based on personal ties and individuals gains. One of the major objectives of these factions is to fight for a seat for their leader in the cabinet to ensure their own access to privilege and benefits. Therefore, the nature of the faction has a binding effect on the pattern of party switching.

Because factions are organized in order to support and solidify the leadership of core party leaders, shifts of the parliamentarians from one party to others frequently involve MPs moving in clusters, not individually. The wholesale desertions have become quite a normal practice since large-sized factions can make more beneficial and commanding demands from the party leaders in exchange for their migration to support the new party. Recent phenomena indicate the success of wholesale desertion of cliques which cluster around faction leaders. The success at the polls of Thai Rak Thai was a prime example of various initial party factions moving and inserting themselves into the new party.

As mentioned earlier, Thai Rak Thai was an unusual amalgam of longtime politicians who defected from other parties as well as younger people making their debuts in parliament. Among the key players in Thai Rak Thai was Sanoh Tientong, a former interior minister who ditched New Aspiration to join Thai Rak Thai before the 2001 election, bringing approximately 60 of the New Aspiration Party lawmakers with him. Other factions that deserted their original parties to join Thai Rak Thai included about 35 MPs from Wang Bua Ban faction, and about 25 parliamentarians from the 'Serpent'

(naga) faction[18] (See Table 3.8). Such defections, which brought influential politicians with loyal voters into Thai Rak Thai, were among the keys to Thaksin's success in forming the government.

As displayed in Table 3.8, Thai Rak Thai was composed of several factions whose MPs defected from various original parties. In return, each faction's leaders received ministerial posts as political rewards for supporting the new party. For example, from the Wang Nam Yen faction, Sanoh Tientong's wife became a Cultural Minister and Sora-at Klinpatoom was granted a deputy minister position; from the Wang Bua Barn faction, Somsak Thepsuthin was awarded a minister position in the Office of the Prime Minister and Chavalit Yongchaiyudh and Wan Muhammad Nor Mata both took over two important ministries.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra also brought his own faction into his cabinet. This group of associates, who were loyal to Thaksin and his ideas, included Finance Minister Somkid Jatusripitak; Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai; Information, Communications and Technology Minister Surapong Suepwonglee; Energy Minister Prommin Lertsuridej; and Deputy Public Health Minister Sirikorn Maneerin (The Nation, Jun 2, 2004).

Another important part of the Thai Rak Thai Party comprised cabinet individuals such as Commerce Minister Wattana Muangsuk, Deputy Interior Minister Pracha Maleenon, and Education Minister Adisai Bodharamik. This group was composed of party financiers who owned national business conglomerates.

Table 3.8: Major Composition of Thai Rak Thai Party

Monopoly and Conglomerate National Capitalists	Rural Network Politicians	'Octoberists' and Thaksin's close advisors
-Thaksin Shinawatra: business empires included telecommunication concessions, satellite, real estate, airlines, and ITV television channel	-Sanoh Tientong, head of the "Wang Nam Yen" faction[19]: construction, grindstone mills, East Cement Co. Ltd., land developer.	-Somkid Jatusripitak: former director of Petroleum Authority of Thailand and advisor of the Stock Exchange of Thailand
-Suriya Jungrungreangkit: auto-parts business (Summit Auto Seats Industry Co., Ltd.)	-The "Wang Bua Barn" faction,[20] composed mainly of Northern MPs, headed by Yaowapa Wongsawat, Thaksin's	-Purachai Piumsombun, former university lecturer
-Pracha Maleenon: Bangkok Entertainment Company Ltd. Channel 3 Television	sister and Somsak Thepsutin: construction and farming business (Sukhothai Engineering	-Prommin Lertsuridej, M.D.: Vice President, Shin Satellite Public Co., Ltd.
-Adisai Bodharamik: Jasmine International Public Co., Ltd., and Thai Telephone & Telecommunication Public Co., Ltd.	Ltd. And Therdthai Farm). - Seridharm party faction, also known as 'the Serpent' faction, headed	-Surapong Seupwonglee, M.D. -Poomtham Vejayachai
-Wattana Muangsuk: son-in-law of the big conglomerate CP Group.	by Pinij Jarusombat. -New Aspiration party faction, headed by General Chavalit	-Pansak Vinyaratn, Chief strategic advisor
---------------------------------- -The "Future" faction was a group of the younger generation of the 'old capitalists' and wealthy families, i.e., Suranan Vejachiva, Pimon Srivigorn, Pimuk Simaroj. and Sitha Tivaree	Yongchaiyudh and Wan Muhammad Nor Mata, the Muslim MPs faction within the party. -Suvit Khunkitti and his network of Khon Kaen province and Northeast MPs from the former Social Action party. -Bangkok MPs faction, led by Sudarat Keyurapan, a former Palang Dham party member.	

Party Merger and Acquisition

Not only individuals or groups switched parties, but also an even more pronounced phenomenon occurred called "party merger and acquisition." Merger and acquisition developed as an ingenious method of expanding political parties in stage III of party development. It allowed a political party with over-flowing money to buy out not individuals or a cluster of MPs, but whole parties to generate its external growth.

In the past, party mergers occurred for two reasons. First they allowed a way around restrictions imposed by law and the constitution on small-sized political parties, and second they allowed merging parties to pressure the parties in government and insert themselves (once becoming bigger with more MPs) in the coalition government as a supplement party. The two cases below illustrate these points.

The Case of Solidarity Party in 1989: The Solidarity *(Akapab)* Party was the amalgamation of four opposition parties in April 1989[21] during the Chartchai administration. After the July 24, 1988 general election there were as many as nine opposition parties, most of them small. At the time, according to law, a member of the House of Representatives could introduce a bill only if the political party of which he or she was a member had passed a resolution approving the introduction and the bill was endorsed by not fewer than 20 members of the House of Representatives. In response, four parties (Ruam Thai Party with 35 MPs, People's Party with 19 MPs, Community Action Party with 9 MPs, and Progressive Party with 8 MPs) decided to merge and set up a new party called "Solidarity," the main objective of which was to create a party with enough votes in the House of Representative to be able to introduce a bill.

The result proved satisfying. After conflicts within the coalition government that led to the resignation of the Social Action and Democrat Parties, Solidarity Party was successful

in joining the Chartchai administration and received 12 min-
isterial posts for each party's major leaders. However, the coup
d'etat in 1991 ended this short-lived coalition government.

**The Merger between New Aspiration Party and Mass
Party in 1998:** The Mass Party, led by Chalerm Yoobamrung,
had always been a small-sized party with anywhere from one
to five MPs in the House of Representatives. The New Aspira-
tion Party, on the other hand, was able to gain as many as
125 seats in the House after the November 17, 1996 election.
The Mass Party's leader predicted that under the 1997 Con-
stitution small-sized parties would find it more difficult to get
their candidates elected through the party list system and,
more importantly, they would face more difficulties in ma-
neuvering political activities. Hence, the Mass Party's leaders
decided to merge with the New Aspiration Party. On June 9,
1998[22] the leaders of Mass and New Aspiration informed the
Election Commission of Thailand of the union of the two
parties, and the two Mass Party MPs became members of the
New Aspiration Party. Chalerm Yoobamrung, leader of the
former Mass Party became the New Aspiration Party's deputy
leader and also an elected MP on the proportional represen-
tation system.

Instead of mergers of small parties to put pressure on
the ruling party and escape the constitutional restriction, the
new breed of party merger in stage III of party development is
the acquisition of smaller parties by a big and resourceful
party. In the 2001 general election, Thai Rak Thai won 248
seats in the House of Representatives, then gained 14 more
seats through a party merger with the Seridham (Liberal
Democratic) Party. This gave Thai Rak Thai an unprecedented
simple majority. Less than a year later, Thai Rak Thai and
New Aspiration became one through an acquisition. Then on
August 10, 2004 Chart Pattana Party announced a merger
deal with Thai Rak Thai.

Details and chronologies of the three important party mergers and acquisitions follow:

The Acquisition of Seridham Party in 2001: The political route of the Seridham Party had been bumpy and erratic since its establishment before the March 1992 election. Its party leader, Artit Urairat, had switched to the Democrat Party. In the 2001 election, the party received 807,902 national votes (or 2.8%) and so failed to surpass the 5% threshold; hence, the party's leader and other core senior advisors did not get elected on the proportional representation system. With the decline in party viability under the new rules of the electoral system and diminishing party funds, party leaders announced their merger with the biggest party, Thai Rak Thai. Accordingly, on October 4, 2001 the Constitution Court allowed the amalgamation of the Seridham and Thai Rak Thai Parties. The newly elected MPs of Seridham Party subsequently joined Thai Rak Thai as party members and MPs (Nation, October 5, 2001).

The Acquisition of New Aspiration Party in 2002: The New Aspiration Party was included in the coalition government from the beginning and five party core leaders were granted ministerial and deputy ministerial posts. The party seemed full of hope with a good future. However, rumors had it that Thai Rak Thai had been sponsoring the New Aspiration 2001 election campaign and the two leaders of both parties had been talking about merging long before. Panya Yooprasert, a Senator from Udorntani, sums up the reason for the merger between Thai Rak Thai and New Aspiration as follows:

"At least, it is for own survival. According to veteran politicians, they have to spend 30-50 million baht [about US$900,000-1.1 million] in each election. When political parties need that much money,

it is inevitable to get involved with financiers and reciprocal interests.[23]"

After the parties resolved to merge and informed the Political Party Registrar Office of their intentions, the Constitution Court, empowered under Article 65 of the Political Party Act granted the New Aspiration Party's request to disband. With the court decision, the New Aspiration's MPs both from the party list and constituencies automatically became Thai Rak Thai members (The Nation, April 2, 2002). Chingchai Mongkoltham, the New Aspiration member who opposed the merger decided to register the new party under the same name and became the New Aspiration Party's new leader while Chalerm Yoobamrung went back to head the Mass Party.

The Acquisition of Chart Pattana Party in 2004: After several defections from MPs and party core leaders to Thai Rak Thai, the Chart Pattana Party's 27-person executive board decided to dissolve itself and settle on a merger deal with the ruling Thai Rak Thai Party. (Nation, August 11, 2004). The Chart Pattana Party added its 27 parliamentary seats to the 296 already held by Thai Rak Thai. The merger brought the total number of ruling party seats in the 500-seat lower house to 323.

Kraisak Choonhavan, son of the party's founder, Chartchai Choonhavan, attributed the demise of Chart Pattana to the rising costs of electoral politics. Kraisak stated candidly that:

> "Those (MPs) affiliated with a rich party enjoy state concessions, parade around in luxury cars and tailored suits….smaller parties cannot afford to finance the conspicuous consumption of their members and survive." (Nation, August 11, 2004).

An insight from Pongpol Adireksarn, a Thai Rak Thai Party executive committee member, gave another good perspective on party acquisition:

> "More and more small and medium-sized political parties are facing difficulties for survival. First, it is more difficult to push forward its policies into implementation. Second, political parties, small or large, need money. Even though the ECT provided some party funding, that is far from meeting the real expenses. Thus, for small parties to grow they are compelled to merge with a stable and resourceful party. Third, small-sized parties realized that to be successful politically is impossible unless they join with a bigger party."[24]

The stories of acquisition of the three parties above highlight two somewhat alarming trends of Stage III: (1) The major party's desire to control the competitive environment by expanding its size in the parliament via external growth, and, (2) The inability of small and medium-sized parties to compete in a new political environment of conglomerate business control over the political.

Table 3.9 reveals that during the past seven years, quite a few political parties that used to be major actors in the political system had ceased their operation by disbanding, merging with, or being obtained by other parties, all of which reflect the realignment of political elites.

Table 3.9: Characteristics and Viability of Major Political Parties in Operation During 1988-2004

Parties/ Established Year	Characteristics, Party Factions and Party Financiers	Present Viability (as of September 2006)
Democrat 1946	Former loyalist; predominantly educated middle class with liberal position.	Leader of opposition party
Thai Nation 1974	First established from military-business (textile) connection. Now primarily provincial entrepreneur led by Banharn Silapa-archa Supanburi faction with Pongsagorn Laohavichian and Dej Bunlong as party financiers.	Member of opposition party. Two big factions--Sontaya Khunpluem--Chonburi faction and Buriram factions—Natee Kliptong and Navin Chidchop defected to TRT in Aug, 2004.
Social Action 1974	Former Loyalist (MR.Kurkrit Pramoj), later headed by provincial business— Suvit Khunkitti who moved to TRT before 2001 elections.	Practically non-operational, having only one MP from the 2001 election.
Thai Citizen 1979	Bangkok-based party with a strong conservative party leader who was elected Mayor of Bangkok Metropolis in 2001.	Non-operational
Mass Party 1985	Bangkok-based party, drawn exclusively to conservative working class, the military and police.	Its leader, Chalerm Yoobamrung contested for Bangkok governorship.
Palang Dham 1988	Honest, austere and puritanical image party. Handed over to Thaksin Shinawatra, now the leader of Thai Rak Thai and Prime Minister.	Non-operational
Rasadorn 1990	A local-based political party in a suburb of Bangkok. Its leader, Wattana Assavaham and his clan are provincial influences who allegedly spend a lot of money in each election.	Dissolved in 1995 and re-emerged in 1996 election. Won two seats in the 2001 election. Now merged with newly established, Mahachon party in 2004.
New Aspiration 1990	Formed by a former army commander, General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh. The party's main supporters were military bases and people in Northeast region.	Merged with TRT in 2002, after the general election.
Chart Pattana 1992	Formed by former PM, Chartchai Choonhavan who split from Thai Nation party in 1992.	First, its leader Korn Tapparagsi defected to TRT and the party was merged with TRT in Aug, 2004.
Thai Rak Thai 1998	Formed by a telecommunication tycoon. Its core leaders are business conglomerate and politicians defected from other parties.	A ruling party 2001-2006; the first government in Thai history to serve a full four-year term.
Mahachon 2004	Proclaiming to be "third party." Formed by defectors from Democrat who merged with Rassadorn, headed by Anek Laothamatas, a renowned academic.	Contested in the 2005 general election for the first time

Conclusion

In summary, stage III of political party development under the control of business conglomerates in Thailand has brought about the following major changes:

1. The relationship between business and politics is becoming more intertwined and institutionalized. The propensity for party donations from party elites and financiers inevitably creates a gulf between parties and civil society. Although the phenomenon that capitalists assume major roles in the governance is not a recent one, it unfortunately may have come to pass that democracy, even in the West, is not about government for and by the people, but more realistically, for and by special interest groups and political elites.

2. Electoral behavior has become significantly less predictable, especially among the urban middle class. The increasing numbers of party switchers and their victories at the polls indicate party detachment from civil society. And the political elites' lack of party loyalty is mirrored by the citizenry at large.

3. Political parties resort to merger and acquisition as means of party expansion. The tendency is for acquisition of small parties by a big and resourceful party, instead of a merger among small and medium sized parties, which might be more useful and democratic. This tendency has caused an end to several major political parties in operation since 1988.

In this light, this study argues that the development of Thai political parties is in an evolving phase at the beginning of stage III under the control of the business conglomerate community. In this stage, there is also a discernible change in the political competitive arena that puts more emphasis on policies than in the past. This issue will be discussed in the next chapter.

NOTES

1   See concept of the "revolution-restoration" in Chapter 1, endnote 8.

2   General Kriangsak set a model of vote buying which was later called 'Roi-et disease' because of the huge amount of money he spent to win a seat in the 1983 election.

3   "Sia" is the Chinese honorific for the son of a wealthy Chinese business-man.

4   Somchai Khunpluem was known to have helped the Social Action party to get four of its candidates elected to Parliament in the 1988 general elections. After Kukrit and Sitthi walked out of politics, Somchai moved his support to the New Aspiration party. Most recently, two of his sons were elected MPs under the Thai Nation banner. See Rodney Tasker, "Time for a cosy chat" in Far Eastern Economic Review, April 18, 1991: 25-26.

5   "Kamnan" is an official title for a sub-district chief.

6   Chonburi is a major province and a center of Thailand's Eastern Sea-board development plan. There are ports, oil refineries, heavy industrial zones, and also beach resorts with notorious nightlife such as Pattaya.

7   Note that in 1991 the military, led by Lieutenant General Sunthon Kongsompong, staged its last coup to seize power from the civilian government, citing widespread administrative corruption as the prime reason. The military clung to the old tradition by forming 'intra-parlia-mentary party' to support its leader, General Suchinda Kraprayoon. The Samakhi Dham party won the largest number of MPs in the 22 March 1992 elections. Popular resistance to the military-backed government led to the May 1992 uprising. Consequently, the Samakhi Dham Party was disbanded before the September 1992 elections, while the Chart Pattana and the Seridham Parties were created out of the disarray of former Samakhi Dham's members.

8   Like the American mafia counterparts, Thai godfathers usually manage a cluster of legitimate enterprises, such as construction, manufacturing, transport, and hotels. Another source of wealth for some Thai mafia is their connection with sports associations, especially Thai boxing, which involves a huge sum of money. However, their principal resources are underground businesses, namely illegal lotteries, gambling, prostitution, providing hired gunmen, trafficking, smuggling weapons, and drugs.

9   Far Eastern Economic Review, August 20, 1992: 13.[0]

10 Interview with a Minister's strategist who does not want to reveal his identity, June 10, 2004.

11 A number of factors contributed to the economic boom in the 1980s. Some significant factors were foreign capital inflows, trade and financial liberalization policies, secular cheap labor force, and especially global and regional economic prosperity during that time. For debates on this

issue, see John Girling, *Capitalism, Democracy, and the Middle Class in Thailand.* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1966); and Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thailand's Boom and Bust.* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1998).

12 It should be noted that the monarchy is also part of the banking capital—the owner of Siam Commercial Bank.

13 In Mara Faccio's study, company is defined as connected with a politician if at least one of its large shareholders (anyone controlling at least 10 percent of voting shares) or one of its top directors (CEO, president, vice president, or secretary) is a Member of Parliament, or a minister, or is closely related to a top politician or party. See Mara Faccio, *Politically Connected Firm.* (Vanderbilt University, Owen Graduate School of Management, 2004).

http://mba.vanderbilt.edu/faculty/MFACCIO.cfm

14 From a report "2004's rankings of Thailand's 500 richest people in cooperation," conducted by Money & Banking Magazine and Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, in *Money & Banking Magazine*, December 2004, 23 (272): 176-234.

15 Personal Interview with Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, November 1st, 2001.

16 From several interviews between 2003-3004.

17 A conversation with Udom Kraiwattanusorn, October 7, 2004.

18 See "Checking Thai Rak Thai's Cliques and Factions" (Check Koom Kamlang Klum Kuan Thai Rak Thai) in Matichon, January 5, 2002: 2.

19 The "Wang Nam Yen" (the cool water palace) is a district in Sra Kaew province, where Sanoh Tientong established his reputation and organized his network of politicians from Prajeenburi, Sra Kaew, and Pratoomtani Provinces. For detail see Matichon Weekly, October 10, 1996: 17-18.

20 The "Wang Bau Barn" (the blossom lily palace) is the name of waterfall in Chiang Mai province. It signifies the Thai Rak Thai's faction of the Northern MPs. But since its incorporation with Somsak Thepsuthin, this faction also includes MPs from the Northeast, and Central regions, mainly the former Social Action Party's MPs. For detail see Mathichon Weekly, August 19, 2002, 3.

21 See the Order of Supreme Judicature of Thailand no. 1757-1759/1989, April 14, 1989.

22 See Election Commission of Thailand.

23 Interview with Panya Yooprasert, Senator from Udorntani, July 11, 2003. Interviewed by Puriwat Jaisamran.

24 Interview with Pongpol Adireksarn, *Thai Rak Thai party's executive committee and party list MP*, on February 9, 2003. Interviewed by Puripat Jaisamran.

CHAPTER IV

VOTE STRUCTURING AND
ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

This study has proposed that political parties in Thailand are now under the influence of the business conglomerate community, a condition which is significantly changing the style of vote gathering in the electoral process, with traditional electoral strategies and campaign techniques under challenge.

There are basically five changing modes of vote gathering and electoral campaigning, as follows:

First, the party, instead of the candidate as before, tends to be the focus of present day campaigning.

Second, in the new modes of electoral campaigns, parties are relying more on professional advertising and media specialists, conveying electoral messages through the electronic media, websites, billboards, television, radio, and newspapers in order to get their messages across to more varied groups of voters.

Third, related to the second mode, the new style of campaign strategies tends to originate with the national party rather than at the individual candidate level.

Fourth, candidates are depending more on political parties for financing their electoral campaigns.

Finally, political parties' policy platforms now take precedence in the campaign as policy becomes a new method (in Thailand) of gathering support during elections.

The new style of vote gathering in Thailand points to the escalation of "party-centered" campaigns. However, as we will see later, the escalation of party-centered campaigns is

not necessarily leading towards a mass bureaucratic party model (Panebianco 1988; McCargo 1997). Before exploring the new contexts and contents of electoral campaigning, the following sections will examine the importance of campaign strategies on party politics.

Political Parties and Campaign Strategies

Not all parties of different systems, or even within the same system, perform quite the same functions (Huntington and Moore 1970). Major national parties very likely serve broader functions than minor or geographically limited ones (Epstein 1986). Of all the activities performed by political parties, efforts in vote gathering and electoral campaigning are the most central in understanding party leadership, organization and performance. It is important not to assume this is the only function performed since parties are multi-functional. Still, in their provision of internal resources, and in their appeal to candidates, members, and voters, the major parties clearly see vote gathering as their dominant activity.

Since elections are fundamental to democratic politics (Dahl 1956), and vote structuring is fundamental to the electoral process, a consideration of the role of parties in the area of vote gathering is essential. It is apparent that much of the action in electoral politics takes place outside the formal campaigns, i.e., the importance of constituency services and legislative work in the Parliament. But this in no way implies that campaigns are inconsequential. The bottom line is that votes have to be sought, and the most concentrated work to win them takes place through the campaign.

Campaign strategies are influenced by the context in which the campaign occurs and by the types of parties carry-ing out the campaign (Farrell 1996). Contextual influences include, for example, electoral systems, societal settings, and the role of media. In a proportional representation electoral

system, voters choose between parties and their programs, a process which tends to promote greater campaign centralization (Katz 1980). Countries characterized by clientele emphasis, such as Ireland, are more likely to have lower degrees of campaign centralism and cohesion (Farrell 1993). A high level of party access to broadcasting media certainly affects the nature of the campaign run by the political parties, hypothetically increasing the degree of professionalization (Semetko 1996).

The type of party delineates whether the party is an incumbent or a challenger, whether the party is a big, established one or small and trying to offer a new alternative. In all, understanding the approach of vote gathering and campaigning will reflect party organization, performance, and leadership. Moreover, electoral campaigning and its processes, in essence, is the social integration of individuals into society and the body of politics, a vital part of political socialization. All parties perform this function to some degree by promoting electoral competition.

Campaigns confront parties and candidates with difficult problems of analysis and execution which even in the best of circumstances are only imperfectly mastered. For several decades, Thai people were used to electoral politics in which candidates, their personal networks and individual strategies were the hallmarks of campaigning. Voters were more independent of party labels and party awareness. Three major factors contributed to the endurance of the candidate-centered era, which at the same time explain the formidable existence of rural network politicians before the 1997 Constitution. These three factors were: 1) the multi-member constituency plurality electoral system; 2) the patron-client nature of Thai society; and 3) the lack of accountable electoral funding from party organization.

This study does not contend that electioneering in Thailand is no longer centered in the individual candidate's

network and organization. And the fact that party organizations are gaining force in the electoral process should not mean party professionalism has begun to reach campaigns at all levels. Certainly, the old techniques, i.e., get-out-the-vote walkabouts, constituency visits and services, and especially voter canvassing, are still employed. But, as the new proportional representation electoral system was introduced and parties deployed new kinds of vote gathering strategies, there were indications which lead us to believe that political parties will increasingly become the main intermediary entities in future campaigns.

While these changes mark the contest between a candidate's network characterized by primary reliance on personality, personal relationships, the traditional vote gathering method of canvassing, and constituency service on one hand, on the other hand there has been a rise in the control exercised by party machinery over many important aspects of the electoral process. These include candidate selection, strategic planning, modern techniques of marketing and mobilization through mass communication, allocation of campaign resources, and vote consolidation through national campaign issues.

Candidate-Centered Campaigns, Constituency Services and Political Patronage

In the candidate-centered era, candidates mobilized their own electorates. Within this configuration, constituency service and political patronage were of prime importance. The constituency service of legislators has been solidly documented in a variety of developing societies, such as Vietnam, India, Malaysia, and other countries. Likewise, political patronage is not a peculiar characteristic of Thai society. Lande (1965), Powell (1970), Scott (1972), and several other students of political development have all suggested this as a dominant

form of political organization in developing societies.

Constituency work appears to be more important to the members of developing country legislatures than it is to the members of the better-established House of Representatives in the West. But this does not mean the American Congress as well as Members of Parliament in Western countries can ignore their constituency works; they all are electorally accountable to the voters in their districts. Legislators can be punished at the polls if their constituents judge their performance to be poor. Whether constituents are well informed and thus decide their votes on the basis of sound judgment is another matter. In fact, what matters most is often not how much an MP has done for the constituency, but the perception constituents have of their MP.

Of all elite groups, MPs are probably the most accessible to citizens because they are not only in close contact with the people, but also because their representative role requires accessibility. Consequently, one would expect that many demands are directed at the individual representatives. The relationship between the MPs and their constituents is best characterized as personal and informal. From the standpoint of ordinary citizens, their representatives serve as the main conduit for constituency demands. An important question becomes: what activities do MPs actually engage in, in response to the constituency requests?

On this issue, Nikorn Jamnong[1], then Deputy Minister of Transportation, and Director of the Thai Nation Party, stated:

> "People do not choose MPs for being a member of the legislative body, but in fact people choose their patron, to help them getting water into their rice paddles, increase price for corn and so on. People don't understand the MPs' legislative function, or the parliamentary work, they don't listen to radio

> or watch television while working in the rice mill.
> So they don't know how well you debate in the
> parliament or what laws you help enact."

Generally, a Member of Parliament is expected to provide personal services as part of his/her routine ranging from interceding with government agencies on behalf of a district constituent, assisting constituents to find employment or secure a promotion, or personally arranging a marriage, to purely ceremonial functions such as attending house warming parties and funerals. Some MPs consider such tasks onerous, but no MPs can ignore constituency works and hope to sustain his/her political career.

Thus, the cost for maintaining MPs is high, requiring a lot of work and money to pay "social fees" in the community, i.e., a visit and contribution to temple fairs, a gift for voters' wedding ceremony, a flowered wreath and aid money for a funeral, for example. People judge the patronage, not the legislative representative and parliamentary work or what actions really affect national political interests. In this light, elections can be seen as a reestablishment of the distributive mechanisms of the traditional setting. Specifically, during elections, politicians, more than ever, need social approval. They need to prove to their constituents that they are "better" patrons than their rivals. This kind of competition gives the voters, as clients, a bargaining power which they would never have had if not for the elections (Scott 1972, 109).

This is especially true for Thailand's low income voters who mostly reside in rural areas. Voters residing in rural areas control more than 80 per cent of the House of Repre-sentatives seats. Most of the poor are from the Northeastern and Northern regions; 30 per cent of people in the Northeast and 13.5 per cent in the North have an income below poverty line, in comparison to only 1.1 per cent of people living in Bangkok and vicinity (TDRI Quarterly Review 2000, 18-22).

A wide gap among different groups of Thai people is also palpable; the income share by the lowest quintile group was only 3.88 per cent, while the highest quintile group control 57.63 per cent income share (the National Statistical Office's socio-economic data 2000). Low income voters, particularly those reside in rural areas, are thus vulnerable, to a greater extent, than are better-off electorates to incentives rooted in a patronage system provided by individual politicians and their networks.

In most cases a service request which originates in the district goes directly through the individual MP, and not through the party; thus, constituency service does not typically involve the party. It is an MP's own responsibility because the party is not ready, in terms of both financial and human resources, to help the candidates with district development. Before the termination of MPs' provincial development budget in 1999 during Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai's administration, Thai MPs received as much as 30 million baht a year to spend on constituency service and social duties to draw support and loyalty in the constituency. The abolishment of the MPs' budget forced political candidates to depend more on political parties and party's financiers. Financial capability, skill, and the interest of each MP are of paramount importance in order to solve problems in his/her district and serve the constituents most efficiently.

Thai MPs[2] verify that they make special efforts to discover and solve the problems troubling their constituents by spending time talking to people and community leaders. They tend to rely heavily on face-to-face communications rather than on impersonal printed materials. In other words, individual and communal interests are largely "aggregated" by individual MP and MP's "networks," not by any kind of party organization, branches or agencies.

The candidate's network incorporates leaders and notables in the community; they enable politicians at the top

to communicate with the people at the grassroots. In agrarian societies like rural Thailand, most residents are peasant farmers who move about on foot, by motorcycle, or by mass public transportation, so the most effective way to communicate with the people is face-to-face contact. Community leaders and notables possess both formal and informal power and enjoy prestige or reputation among the residents of rural villages throughout Thailand. By virtue of their status and reputation in the community, they exert certain pressure on the villagers upon decision-making during the electoral process (McVey 2000). In view of that, Thai community leaders sometimes act as vote buying agents or political canvassers for parties' candidates.

In vote buying, villagers are acting morally within the existing social norm which might run contrary to the idealist view of democracy (Anek Laothamatas 1996). For "vote-sellers, the case is largely symbolic, to confirm the social network that defines village life." (Callaharn 2003, 15). The choice they make is based on the belief that it will maximize their expected utility. Thus, the rationality of Thai rural voters is not necessarily different from countryside people around the world. Under the single-member constituency electoral system, Thailand has been divided into 400 small electoral districts, varying approximately from 90,000-140,000 voters. This has made vote buying in various forms more prevalent. As Samran Lertwongrak, a Thai Rak Thai Party rank and file member proclaimed: "Vote buying is very common. In central region, it usually costs about 500 baht [approximately US$13] per head. The smaller the constituency, the easier vote buying is going to be[3]".

In this light, the main feature of Thai elections has been the importance of individual candidates and their campaigns. Voters are most strongly influenced by their assessments of the particular candidates running in their district and of 'immediate gains' they receive from them. The relevant

implication is that political party organizations were less important in mobilizing voters, a conclusion which manifested itself in many ways. Electoral campaigns were overwhelmingly candidate-centered. Most candidates operated as individual political entrepreneurs. The risks, rewards, and aggravations of running a campaign were largely theirs.

Thai Rak Thai's attempts to promote and strengthen the party's banner since the 2001 general election onward have changed the contexts and contents of party and electoral competition in Thailand. Basically, they have brought some of the features of the centralized party to the Thai Rak Thai by linking the remote villages to the party leaders in Bangkok by various means and tactics discussed below.

New Contexts and Contents of Electoral Competition and Vote Structuring

The new contexts and contents of electoral competition do not totally erase the old style of electoral campaigning, and especially the importance of individual candidates. Instead a "simultaneous approach" of campaign strategies has come to play in the new era. The old techniques are still employed, but they are systematically organized by and conducted on behalf of political parties. Remarkably, the primary factor in the rise of a new style of political campaigning is not the growth and sophisticated development of party organization, but the empowerment of party leaders. The ability of party leaders to control slots and list of candidates, in conjunction with accessibility of mass media, have combined to hasten the rise of political parties in elections. The increase in the control exercised by political parties, and particularly party leaders, over the most important aspects of the electoral process can be characterized into five major areas, namely 1) candidate selection, especially candidate selection for the party list basis; 2) mass media and professionalization;

3) setting of strategies; 4) allocation of campaign resources; and 5) Policy platform.

1) Candidate Selection

The introduction of electoral systems under the 1997 Constitution is undeniably an essential contextual factor contributing to the change in elements of electoral campaigns. Since then, party leaders have steadily gained control over the candidate selection process. The methods of candidate selection in the slate-making process guarantee tight control by party leaders. In other words, the political careers of MPs under the proportional representation system, instead of being dependent on addressing the needs of specific localities, now depend primarily on satisfying their party's leadership, which determines their rankings on the party list for the election (Barkan 1995, 106-107).

Thai Rak Thai Party's leader Thaksin, obviously used this recently bestowed power (some would say "weapon") to demonstrate his superior authority over other party rank and file members when he arranged the Thai Rak Thai's party list candidates[4]. Old-style faction bosses of Wang Nam Yen and strategic alliances during the 2001 general election, such as Sanoh Tientong and his faction's members, were put at the bottom part of the list in the 2005 election. Sanoh announced his unhappiness by stating that "I have worked for this party for more than four years, and today I've been pushed back to the end of the line. I feel as if I am being violated. I am upset because my colleagues feel upset, and all I can tell them is that Thaksin may find other jobs for them" (The Nation, January 9, 2005). The power of party leaders in arranging the order of candidates in the proportional representation system, on the one hand can represent a party's living symbol, potential and viability in government formation. On the other, in a fragmented and unstable party system, it can

be a factor leading to the predicament of factional infighting within political parties.

The essence of what distinguishes electoral appeals under the single-member constituency electoral system from proportional representation revolves around the need to maximize party list votes across the country. And because in the proportional representation system, electoral messages must be targeted to voters everywhere, and not purely in areas of a party's strongholds, one of the significant implications of the change is a greater reliance on television as the predominant conveyor of campaign messages to voters.

2) Mass Media Communication and Professionalization

The revolution in information technology is the broadest and deepest of a long series of innovations affecting the electoral system in Thailand. Today's broadcast media of radio and television, mobile telephones and especially digital information technology have given political parties and electorates new and powerful information capabilities and led to dramatic consequences. They have altered patterns of communication and social interaction, raising the political parties' and party leaders' ability to communicate with larger masses of voters. Specifically, they enabled centrally created messages and programs to be transmitted to large communities, thereby creating larger audiences for party politics.

The magnitude of mass media communication in politics found in advanced democracies had not become a factor in Thailand before the 2001 general election. In fact, before the general election in 1995 political parties were not permitted to advertise their campaigns on television (Surin Maisrikrod and McCargo 1997). In this day and age, to contest effectively especially in the proportional representation electoral system, political parties as organizational entities seek to stimulate news coverage of their activities and performances. The Thaksin administration was a prime example of

a government party that effectively utilized mass media and information technology. Every Saturday morning, Prime Minister Thaksin broadcast on a radio program entitled "Thaksin Meet the People" to report directly to the people what the government did in the past week, what would be addressed in the cabinet next week, what he thought was the country's main problem, and from time to time, what the opposition and his critics had done wrong. The administration also used Digital Video Conferences for several government-bureaucratic meetings and sometimes broadcasted these conferences live to the general public. More interestingly, it was reported that the Office of the Prime Minister under the Thaksin administration was among the top ten business clients who spent the most money in advertising to promote the government's policies and achievements.

The revolution in information technology in Thailand made it even more convenient for the operation of the Thai Rak Thai Party as its party leader, PM Thaksin Shinawatra, himself used to own the ITV television channel and another party member owned Channel 3 television. Perhaps it is not surprising that there have been reports of political interference and pressure exerted on television journalists. Soon after ITV came under the control of the Shinawatra family's business, seven news commentators and staff with histories of incisive political coverage were laid off on the grounds that they had criticized the station management for interfering with editorial content in order to distort reports in favor of the then ruling Thai Rak Thai Party[5] (The Nation, October 21, 2001). Other news reporters had noticeably turned away from directly inspecting the government and some, on occasion, have become cheerleaders of the government and cabinet members. Moreover, in 2002, 20 per cent of shares owned by a fiercely independent media firm, Nation Multimedia, were bought by family members of the former Industry Minister, Suriya Jungrungreangkit, then the secretary-general of Thai

Rak Thai Party (Far Eastern Economic Review, December 11, 2003). The advantage of owning the air waves by the Thai Rak Thai party leaders, similar to Italian media tycoon and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, was that the party had its own very effective channels to communicate with voters.

There are also State-run TV stations, Channel 9 and Channel 11, operated under the Public Relations Department, which broadcast government activities, opening ceremonies headed by cabinet members, seminars and conferences with cabinet members as keynote speakers.

Another new and remarkable transformation of political parties under the era of business conglomerate influence is the increasing use of professional public relations agencies and media advertising to promote and publicize parties' activities, performance, and platforms. Thai Rak Thai, for example, relied on SC Matchbox Agency, a company under the Shin Corporation, to produce party advertisements, billboards, presentations, and marketing strategies. How Come Entertainment under Pantongtae, Thaksin's son, took care of Thai Rak Thai's advertisement on websites. During the 2005 election, the Democrats used Panda Multi Media Service Agency to look after their posters, brochures, and websites, while the Mahachon Party employed the Media Ltd. Agency for its newspaper ads, radio and television air waves buys (Business THAI No.4 Vol.170, December, 2004, 11).

The media-oriented campaign with its integrated themes, slogans, and symbols, is formulated on careful research of the audience listening, reading, and especially viewing habits. It is not so much that advertising men have taken over the business of formulating images of the candidates and political parties, but that political parties are employing professional marketing skills to familiarize themselves with the electorates. We have also witnessed the various new recruitment strategies employed by the parties in their quests for new candidates; that is, their propensity to

select and employ popular movie stars, newscasters from several TV channels, and candidates with the most "media-sellable" appearances, solid families and educational backgrounds.

In context, Thailand is still a society where the capacity of the political system to transmit and circulate information is limited, while at the same time, the ability of the people to gather, perceive and digest knowledge is low. As a result, political image is more significant and much more relevant to the electorates than political message. Television has thus become the most effective vehicle for appeals because it works everywhere. According to data complied by the National Statistical Office in 2000, 90.6 per cent of Thai households had televisions, increasing from 67.9 per cent in 1990, while the number of radio owners decreased from 81.3 per cent to 76.7 per cent in the corresponding years (National Statistical Office 2004). During the 2005 campaign period, Thai Rak Thai benefited most from television coverage. A survey conducted by ABAC Poll between January 26-30, 2005 found that during evening news programs on six free television channels, news about Thai Rak Thai's campaign activities appeared most frequently (270 times), followed far behind by the Democrats (160 times) and the coalition Thai Nation Party (102 times) (The Nation, February 2, 2005).

The most exciting reading in the new political campaigning might be the account of how extensive political parties used polls and information to formulate a systematic and integrated plan to win the hearts of voters. The Thai Rak Thai Party began setting up a well-managed database of information about the country's population as far back as July 1998. A rich database accumulated from innumerable surveys over the past seven years helped the party understand of voters' profiles, behavior, their wishes, and their problems (The Nation, February 9, 2005).

The growth of electoral professionalization in using such

polling information is unmistakable. Political parties are now marshaling their resources on polling to evaluate and determine party strength as well as the chances of their candidates to win in the each electoral constituency. With polling information, during the 2005 general election, Thai Rak Thai electoral candidates were ranked into three groupings--- A, B and C. Group A consisted of those who were guaranteed of winning, B class members were classified as incumbent MPs or inspiring candidates with slimmer chances of winning, and C group candidates were those who were likely to be defeated. Those candidates with minimal electability in groups B and C were often replaced by candidates with brighter chances to get elected.[6]

Political parties could now assess their possibility of winning or losing quite accurately, which in turn affected the amount of money, manpower and effort they wanted to invest in particular constituencies. The polling information also allowed political parties to shop for candidates with high prospects of winning. During the 2005 general election, all political parties referred to private and public polls to demonstrate their standing among the electorates in order to place pressure on their rivals, as well as to create a bandwagon effect in the electorates' decision making. This resulted in high levels of party switching as already discussed in Chapter 3.

Thaksin himself revealed the secret of Thai Rak Thai's victory in 2005 election by saying that "We have been conducting polls regularly, about once a month. That's why we know we would win at least 350 to 360 seats. The result was not a big surprise for us.....We had our surveys in hand and knew the result by inference from the percentage of the respondents." (The Nation, February 9, 2005).

It seems that ill-planned and poorly executed old-style campaigning is likely to be defeated from now on. Clearly,

though, massive amounts of money are needed for the new style of capital-intensive party management.

3) Setting of Strategies

A political party's primary task is the formulation and execution of propaganda programs that build a favorable party image and provide credible relevance for voters. In this context, two notable strategies in the new style of campaigning in Thailand are:

3.1 Projection of Party Leader as a Prime Minister

The distinguishing quality of political campaigning in Thailand at present is that parties are contesting to form the government. This is different from the previous electoral competition in a multiparty system in that any party had the chance to be a part of a government coalition. But the contest to win the right to form the government has intensified. For example, during the 2005 general election, Thai Rak Thai espoused that "A vote for Thai Rak Thai is a vote for Thaksin Shinawatra to lead the country with his particular style of leadership" (Bangkok Post, January 31, 2005). The Democrat and Mahachon parties also advocated their party leaders as Thailand's next prime minister. The leader of the Thai Nation Party, on the contrary, entered the election as a constituency candidate, yielding the opportunity to become prime minister and showing the party's willingness to ally with other major parties.

As stated before, Thai Rak Thai was a prime example of a party that applied top-down electoral strategies by trying to change the nature of electoral campaigns from candidate-centered to party-centered. In an attempt to centralize the party's electoral campaign and message, Prime Minister and party leader Thaksin Shinawatra told his party's candidates that[7]:

"You don't have to do anything else, only turn on and study the VCD (prepared by the party) and explain it to the people until they get the picture…. If you do this and still fail to get elected…. Then I don't know what to say."

Being the political party controlling public office, Thai Rak Thai was in a better position to take advantage of public resources in order to secure its electoral support. During November 6-11, 2004, about two months before the 2005 general election, the Thai Rak Thai government used state money and state agencies to launch a comprehensive five-day exhibition advertising the government's achievements. The exhibition entitled "From Past to Future: From Grassroots to Taproot" offered visitors freebies, from Ua Arr-torn (We Care) houses, eyeglasses for senior citizens, free health care services, cheap air tickets, … (and) face-lift cream (The Nation, November 7, 2004). This government's achievement exhibition mirrored the party's attempt to centralize and unify its campaign. The party-centered electoral campaign strategies would help party leader solidify party organization and legitimacy, instead of letting individual candidates take credit for success.

3.2 Membership Recruitment

Chart 4.1 and Table 4.1 indicate that the numbers for party membership and branches have increased significantly since the year 2000. Endeavors to recruit party members and expand their local branches are seen here as evidence of the parties' top-down strategies, leaning towards "territorial penetration" (Panebianco 1988, 50).

Member recruitment and branch expansion in Thailand occur when the central organizations at the national level stimulate and direct such development. MPs are encouraged by their party to recruit party members. The local canvassers,

on the urging from their MPs, then act as membership mobilization and enrollment agents. Party branches and members do not particularly perform as integral units and associations of party national organization, but rather, members are part of the party's central customer data base, creating a stock of regular customers willing to vote for the party in elections (Nelson 2004). People can join a party without having to pay membership fees to finance parties and their branches, although most political parties reward people in cash and in kind gifts for joining them. It should be noted that an individual can become a member of more than one political party at the same time since there is no prohibition on multiple party membership.

Chart 4.1: Numbers of Listed Political Parties' Membership Between 2000-2004
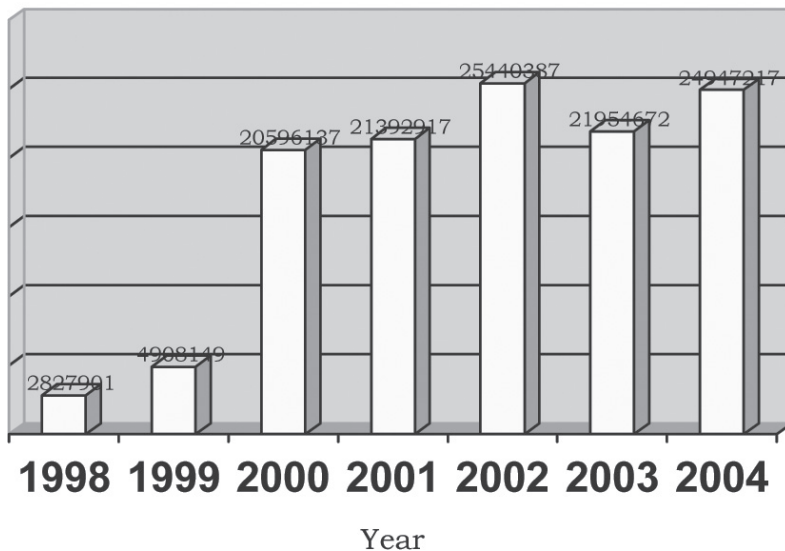
Source: Election Commission of Thailand

Table 4.1: Numbers of Membership and Branches by Political Party, 2001 and 2004

Political Party	No. of Membership (2001)	No. of Membership (End of 2004)	No. of Branches (End of 2000)	No. of Branches (End of 2004)
Thai Rak Thai	6,705,004	14,077,711	4	10
Democrat	3,753,911	4,018,286	170	195
Thai Nation	1,781,300	4,041,232	10	17
Mahachon	-	1,460,095	-	31
Total	12,240,215	23,597324	184	253
Other 32 Parties	9,152,702	1,349,893	1,200	781
Grand Total	21,392,917	24,947,217	1,384	1,034

Source: Author's compilation on data from Election Commission of Thailand.

4) Allocation of Campaign Resources

Undeniably, money plays a major role in deciding the outcome of elections. In Thailand, campaign spending by candidates for the House of Representatives was first limited to 350,000 baht (about US$ 8,750) (Political Party Act, 1979) rising to 1 million baht in 1992. For the 2005 general election, the Election Commission raised the campaign expenditures limit to 1.5 million baht (about US$ 37,500) per candidate. Legal expenditures permitted by law include spending on campaign administration, rent of office space, vehicles, staff salaries, travel expenses, media, posters and distribution of printed materials. Since 1932, it has been illegal to promise or to give money or other pecuniary benefits to voters, provide public entertainment, throw or promise to throw parties in exchange for votes, provide vehicles or contribute to public facilities or the like for voters and community associations. These acts are considered "vote buying[8]" (Callahan and Duncan 1996; Borwornsak Uwanno 2003). In reality, most

candidates, especially those who won, spent more than the legal limit on both lawful and prohibited vote-gathering activities.

In American politics, although rich candidates do not hesitate to use their own money, political money for campaign spending typically originates from fund raising and campaign contributions. The ability of candidates, especially the incumbents, to raise their own money has created conditions that enhanced the influence of individual candidates over political parties (Freed 1978). In Thailand, during the electoral campaign period, candidates have three major sources of political money: 1) their own money 2) their supporters or patrons, and 3) their political party (Barnharn Silapa-archa 1995; Anusorn Limmanee 1998).

Obviously, candidates are supposed to run their campaigns, in part, on their money. Rich candidates not only are self-reliant, but also sometimes provide support to their party members and contribute funds to the party as well (Anusorn Limmanee 1998, 431). Notably, leading politicians who acted as party financiers, i.e., Suriya Jungrungreangkit (TRT), Suthep Thugsuban (DP), Prapat Pothasuton (TNP), and Porntep Tejapaibool (Mahachon), normally ran on the party list basis to increase their chances of becoming a minister.

Most constituency candidates need money from political patronage and political parties. The patrons who provide money for candidates during electoral campaigning are local influential personalities (Robertson 1996; Ockey 2000). However, there were indications that the local power in Thailand was in jeopardy. The Thaksin government's policies such as the "war on drugs," "underground lottery abolition," and "eradication of influential personalities" *(Poo Mee Ittipon* or local godfather) led to the shuttering of sources of political money which once provided for several political candidates. Many influential people were closely scrutinized

by the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) and other state apparati. Kamnan Poh was in jail, and soon after his incarceration, his son, then Tourism and Sports Minister, switched from the Thai Nation Party to Thai Rak Thai along with MPs under his patronage. Pracha Phothipipat (Kamnan Siah), a Democrat candidate, had some of his assets seized (Matichon Weekly, January 28, 2005, no 1276, 10). These actions can be read as signs of parties trying to put pressure on rival patronage providers, and at the same time trying to tame the dependency of politicians on the influential personalities, forcing them to turn to the party for help.

Political parties under the influence of conglomerate business have more stable and longer financial pipelines, supplied mainly by party leaders. Political parties with better financial status can certainly provide more financial support to their MPs, and thus are more attractive than those less affluent ones. In general, parties tend to provide campaign support in accordance with candidates' potential to win. Banharn Silapa-archa, leader of the Thai Nation Party revealed that candidates with the likelihood to win would get more support from the party, but it also depended on previous agreements made with the party leaders (Banharn Silapa-archa 1995). An MP from Thai Rak Thai Party, who asked to remain anonymous, revealed that MPs' salary of 60,000 baht/month (about US$ 1,500) was never enough to make sure his constituency was content and satisfied. Part of this expense was subsidized by the party each month. Financial support from the party was especially needed during national holidays and festivals, such as Songkran (Thai New Year) and Loy Kratong festival. The amount of financial support from each party was not exactly disclosed, but during the 2004 Songkran holiday, each Thai Rak Thai Party MP received approximately 500,000 baht (US$ 12,500) in cash to entertain people in his or her district.

It is generally agreed that vote buying is still widespread and an effective way to get elected (Anusorn Limmanee 1998; Ockey 2003; Callahan 2003), the usual method being simply to hand out cash to voters via vote canvassers. These canvassers make up the candidates' personal networks and are not controlled by the parties. The murders of political canvassers in many provinces prior to the 2005 general election in February (The Nation, January 12, 2005) point to the endurance of traditional, old-style politics and vote buying. The money used for canvassing is difficult to be detected by the Election Commission because it is passed through various levels from candidates to their major canvassers, to their networks in district, villages, and polling levels, and finally to voters in targeted households.

Evidence points to the increasing amount of money distributed during election after election. Currency in circulation and cash flow are reported to increase in the month of an election or a month before, followed by a steep drop after the election. The fluctuation in bank notes is more obvious in the deprived areas in Northeast and Northern Thailand (Anusorn Limmanee 1995; Far Eastern Economic Review Jan 11, 2001:23).

During the 2005 general election, it was estimated that each candidate spent approximately 10-30 million baht, about 10 times more than the legal limit. The majority of candidates do not possess sufficient financial resources to compete in an ever more vigorous race. The prime resources necessary in a contemporary political campaign have changed, and as presently constituted, are beyond the ability of most candidates to deliver. Thus, this study suggests that party candidates are becoming more dependent on the national party organization (more specifically on party leaders).

5) Policy Platform

The stunning electoral success of the Thai Rak Thai Party in the 2001 general election has stimulated discussion about the character and future of political parties and party development in Thailand. One of the most striking features of Thai Rak Thai's success has to be the innovation to use policy as an effective vote-getting tool. Nikorn Jamnong, a rank and file member of the Thai Nation Party admitted that[9]:

> "Thai Rak Thai has opened the door to the policy importance. Before, all parties' policies look and sound alike. People cannot distinguish policy of one party to another. More importantly, people don't see the benefit of having policy. But Thai Rak Thai has made it significant. Now parties are competing more on the ground of policy."

The extravaganza of policy content and promises designed to appeal to all sectors in the society (Ockey 2003) has provoked a great deal of criticism, these policies included:

- Development of a national and universal health insurance program to provide basic clinical services at the cost of 30 baht (about US 70 cents) per visit.
- Provision of one million baht (US$25,000) funding from the Government Saving Bank to each of Thailand's 77,000 villages for a specific development project to be developed by the villagers and approved by a village committee. This was a macro-economic policy aimed at rejuvenating the rural sector.
- A three-year debt moratorium for farmers owing US$2,000 or less to the state-run Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC).
- A government-promoted One Tambon (sub-district), One Product (OTOP) scheme to encourage entre-preneurism of small and medium business (SME) in

provincial areas of Thailand.
- Development of the state-run Thai Asset Management
  Corporation to restructure the debts of commercial
  banks and help them with their non-performing loans
  (NPLs).

Clearly, Thai Rak Thai's policy platform entering the
2005 election was an extension of populist policy over the
past four years, with a heavy focus on poverty alleviation and
community development initiatives. In addition to the initia-
tives listed above, there was the promise to distribute two
million cows nationwide or dig new 1,260-cubic-metre wells
for farmers for just 2,500 baht (US$ 60), and the direct allo-
cation of budgets to villages according to their size -- small,
medium, large (SML) projects (Matichon, July 16, 2004). The
party claimed that implementation of the one million baht
per village along with the SML policies would help get rid of
the middlemen between the villagers and the state; i.e., pro-
vincial and local officers and also local and national politi-
cians who formerly were responsible for developmental
budgets in provinces.

As for other parties, the key areas of contention and
divergence among them seemed to be in respect to economic
and social reforms. The newly established Mahachon Party
opposed Thai Rak Thai's moves towards a market-based
economy, increase in government spending, privatization of
state enterprises, bilateral free-trade agreements, and special
economic zones. Its policies claimed to be social progressive
welfare, rather than populist policies since free medical health
care was for the poor only, the better off still needed to pay
(Bangkok Post, January 21, 2005). Mahachon's policies also
echoed corporatist principles, advocating the role of business
associations between the state and private sectors. The Demo-
crat Party's five-point platform, proposed during the election,
included promises of free education and health care, job

security for new graduates and debt relief for farmers. One can say that these were simple refinements of areas already touched upon by Thai Rak Thai (Bangkok Post, April 27, 2004).

In general, all parties were trying to propose to the electorates clearer platforms and programmatic policies. In truth, all those policies manifested more or less a populist inclination. Populist and direct-sale policies are launched in order to gain votes from grass-root electorates, which while positive, can also lead to the creation of a new hierarchical clientelism, in which the patrons are political parties. Obviously, political parties that can use their control of public resources to distribute benefits such as jobs, subsidies, infrastructure, housing and cash flow are in a better position to exchange material rewards for electoral support.

The political parties are now showing that they can provide services required by the electorate that were once generally available from the candidates' own patronage network. Patronage from this perspective concerns how political party leaders seek to use public institutions and public resources to their own ends, and how a variety of favors are exchanged for votes.

Following this logic, an important factor, therefore, is whether or not non-majority political parties are included in a coalition government and which portfolios or ministries they are in charge of. Generally the patronage function can be and is performed by all parties. But those parties which are part of the government are obviously in a much better position, equipped with benefits and budget, to draw the flow of support. These issues will be discussed in next chapter.

Conclusion

The altering in sources of financial funding for candidates coincides with the new style and technology of Thai

electoral campaigns, has furthermore led to changes in the nature of competition among parties. Thai political parties, like any other social agencies, are dynamic in nature. They are constantly redefined in the light of environmental, technological, and social changes. However, part of this redefinition has also led to a repositioning of party labels and lesser independence on the part of candidates.

In theory, when candidates for national political office look more and more to party funding, leadership, and brand name, party organization should be expected to strengthen as an electioneering device. Parties would be expected to broaden their mass membership through local branches, sophisticated administrative structures, and development of policy platforms to become more like political parties with mass bureaucratic structures (Panebianco 1988; McCargo 1997, 114-131). The reality, however, is not so clear. The decline of candidate-centered electoral politics and the rise of party-centered campaigning do not necessarily coincide with the rise of strengthened and more structurally sophisticated political party organizations.

Strikingly, with all the changes occurring through reform politics and new styles of campaigning, it is still the party leader, not party organs, that become the central focus of all major activities performed by political parties, including candidate selections, communication with the electorates, defining party strategies, providing financial support, and finally formulating policy platforms. In this light, the new direction of party development is neither leaning towards the mass bureaucratic model, nor towards 'professional parties' (Panebianco 1988). All key decisions are made at the top of organization; ideological goals (if any) are proposed by the leader; and the leader seems to be the only possible means to realize such goals. The use of mass media, professionalism and more sophisticated positioning and presentation of policy platforms represent the catch-all effort (Kirchheimer 1966) to

capture broad support from across the whole spectrum of the electorate. By emphasizing broad rather than specific policy programs parties are trying not to avoid alienation of any sectors of the electorate.

Finally, it should be noted that although political parties and party leaders have developed competing sources of power and political resources, candidates' unique personalities, their core personal loyalties, and political canvassers still play large roles in the political process, particularly in remote rural areas. Channeling of face to face communications between candidates and constituency electorates have begun to result in "competing centers of power" between candidates' clout and centralized party leaders. Therefore, more and more, the competitive domain of electoral campaigning will largely rest on the ability of parties to distribute state largesse in exchange for votes. In other words, parties will be judged on their capability and potential to deliver the services necessary to appeal to a more fluid electorate.

NOTES

1   Nikorn Jamnong, Deputy Minister of Transportation and Director of the Thai Nation Party, August 6, 2004.

2   Information comes from several interviews.

3   Samarn Lertwongrak, Deputy General Secretary of the Thai Rak Thai Party, August 6, 2004.

4   In addition to list of candidates for proportional representation in the 2005 general election, Thai Rak Thai also published two other lists - one of 105 candidates for cabinet seats, which consisted mostly of former and current cabinet members and veteran politicians, and another of 56 "political practitioners," who included academics and experts.

5   On March 8, 2005, the Supreme Court upheld the Labor Court's verdict that all television journalists were illegally dismissed and ordered ITV

to rehire and be back-paid to the time of their severance (The Nation, March 9, 2005).

6   A Conversation with Udom Kriwattanusorn, a Thai Rak Thai's MP from Samutsakorn province on November 18, 2004.

7   Thaksin Shinawatra's speech at the Thai Rak Thai Kick Off Campaign, Sunday October 17, 2004 at Miracle Grand Hotel, Bangkok.

8   These practices are not deemed to be unlawful outside the campaign period, which usually begins after the announcement of a royal degree. This provides a nice loophole for the politicians.

9   Nikorn Jamnong, Deputy Minister of Transportation and Director of the Thai Nation Party, August 6, 2004.

CHAPTER V

COALITION FORMATION AND PARTIES
IN GOVERNMENT

In Chapter 3 this study briefly analyzed the flexibility in government formation under Thailand's multiparty system in which any and all parties had a chance to be a part of a government coalition. To elaborate on that analysis, this chapter will explain aspects of coalition formation, the resources of the winning coalition, and the allocation of rewards among members of the winning coalition. The first part of this chapter reveals the complexity of the situation whereby the seemingly equitable coalition arrangements in fact yielded a high potential for destabilizing effects.

From 2001-2005, for the first time a Thai coalition government served a full four-year term. More remarkably, with the 2005 general election, Thai Rak Thai wrote a new chapter in political history by being handed a mandate to form a single-party government, all of which seemed to signal a trend towards increased government stability. However, we must note that perceived increased stability coincided with a greater influence of business conglomerate control over political parties --a merger which is also reflected in strengthened powers of the prime minister. The issue and effects of a strong prime minister heading single party government occupies the second part of this chapter.

The Thai Coalition Governments

A coalition is basically defined as two or more participants in a group of three or more actors who coordinate the use of their resources in controlling or attempting to control a

decision (Hill 1973, 5-46). Political gamesmanship requires quickly translating electoral victory into legislative power and a governing party. Building coalitions, and making them work, is at the heart of any system of government. The dilemma of party coalitions is that less than a majority fails to give the biggest party political control. An alliance of far more than a majority, on the other hand, might obligate it towards too many partners, all of whom expect payoffs of sorts. Therefore, Riker theorizes that participants will create coalitions just as large as they believe will ensure winning, and no larger. In other words, a "minimal winning coalition" is most likely to be formed (Riker 1972).

This chapter intends to show that when forming a coalition, Thai political parties were not only concerned with Riker's size principle (how many participants in the coalition), but also with the allocation of cabinet portfolios (which posts and how many each party would get). On this issue, Gamson's argument that parties seeking to form a coalition government would each demand a portfolio share proportional to the total resources that each contributed to the coalition is applicable to this study. Specifically, the amount of resources determined the number of seats in the Parliament each party controlled (Gamson 1961, 376).

The following sections will demonstrate various factors governing the pattern of coalition formation. Three significant factors are: 1) how rewards allocated among members of the coalition reflected the bargaining power of the parties; 2) the temperament of members of the coalition, namely leadership status and a party's factional conflicts, and; 3) cohesion and changes in coalition membership over time.

In a multi-party system as in Thailand, the allocation of cabinet seats carries a great deal of influence on the government's stability and effectiveness. Elected governments in Thailand had hardly ever been able to gain nearly enough

nationwide strength to capture a majority of the seats in the House of Representatives. As a result, government formation had generally been loose alliances of five or more parties, full of potential for destabilizing infighting. Table 5.1 below indicates that Thai political parties had relied on forming large alliances, preferably alliances assuring a majority in the representative bodies.

Table 5.1: Percentage (%) of MPs in Major Political Parties from 1986-2005 General Election.

Political Parties	27 Aug 1986	24 Jul 1988	22 Mar 1992	13 Sep 1992	2 Jul 1995	17 Nov 1996	6 Jan 2001	6 Feb 2005
Democrat	**28.8**	13.4	12.2	**21.9**	22.0	31.3	25.6	19.2
Thai Nation	18.2	**24.4**	20.6	21.4	**23.5**	9.9	8.2	5.0
Social Action	14.7	15.1	8.6	6.1	5.6	5.1	0.2	-
Thai Citizen	6.9	8.6	1.9	0.8	4.6	4.6	-	-
Progressive	2.6	2.2	-	-	0	-	-	-
United Demo	11.00	1.4	0	-	0	-	-	-
Community Action	4.3	2.5	-	-	0	-	-	-
Puangchon Chao Thai	0.3	4.8	0.3	-	0	-	-	-
Mass	0.9	1.4	0.3	1.1	2.0	0.5	-	-
Ruam Thai	5.5	9.8	-	-	0	-	-	-
Rassadorn	5.2	5.9	1.1	0.3	0	-	0.4	-
Palang Dham	-	3.9	11.4	13.1	5.9	0.3	0	-
Samakhi Dham	-	-	**21.9**	-	-	-	-	-
New Aspiration	-	-	20.0	14.2	14.6	**31.8**	7.2*	-
Solidarity	-	-	-	2.2	0.5	-	-	-
Chart Pattana	-	-	-	16.7	13.6	13.2	5.8*	-
Seridham	-	-	-	2.2	-	1.0	2.8*	-
Nam Thai	-	-	-	-	4.6	-	-	-
Thai	-	-	-	-	-	0.3	-	-
Thin Thai							0.2	-
Thai Rak Thai	-	-	-	-	-	-	**49.6**	**75.4**
Mahachon	-	-	-	-	-	-		.04
% of seats controlled by Coalition Government	66.9	61.6	54.1	57.5	60.8	56.2	73.6	75.4

Source: Author's calculation based on information gathered from following: a) Surin Maisrikrod, *Thailand's Two General Elections in 1992: Democracy Sustained* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992).

b) Pornsak Pongpaew, *Rattabarn Pasom (Coalition governments)* (Bangkok: Political Science Association of Thailand, 2001).

c) Department of Local Administration, Ministry of the Interior.

d) Election Commission of Thailand.

Note: Percentages highlighted represent political parties in the coalition government, while bold numbers represent political parties that received most seats for that election year.

*Note: Seridham, New Aspiration and Chart Pattana were eventually merged with Thai Rak Thai in 2001, 2002, and 2004 respectively.

Table 5.2: Political Parties in Coalition Governments, 1988-2005

Head of Government	Government Duration	Parties in Coalition Governments
General Chartchai Choonhavan	**Group 45** 4 Aug.88 -9 Aug.90	**Thai Nation**, Democrat, Social Action, Rassadorn, Mass, United Democrat
General Chartchai Choonhavan	**Group 46** 9 Dec. 90 -23 Feb.91	**Thai Nation ,** Thai Citizen**,** Seridham, Social Action, Rassadorn, Puangchon Chaothai, Solidarity
Mr. Anand Panyarachun	**Group 47** 2 Mar 91 -22 Mar 92	Interim Government after the 1992 Military Coup
General Sujinda Kraprayoon	**Group 48** 7 Apr.92 -9 Jue. 92	**Samakhi Dham**, Social Action, Thai Nation, Rassadorn, Thai Citizen
Mr. Anand Panyarachun	**Group 49** 10 Jun. 92 -22 Sep. 92	Interim government, after the People's Uprising, May 1992 Incident
Mr.Chuan Leekpai	**Group 50** 23 Sep.92 -12 Jul.95	**Democrat,** New Aspiration **,** Palang Dham, Social Action.
Mr.Banharn Silapa-archa	**Group 51** 13 Jul. 95 -24 Nov.96	**Thai Nation**, New Aspiration, Palang Dham, Thai Citizen, Nam Thai, Social Action, Mass.
General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh	**Group 52** 25 Nov. 96 -8 Nov.97	**New Aspiration**, Chart Pattana, Social Action, Thai Citizen, Seridham, Mass.
Mr.Chuan Leekpai	**Group 53** 14 Nov.97 -9 Nov.00	**Democrat***, Thai Citizen (cobra group) Thai Nation, Palang Dharm, Solidarity, Thai, Social Action, Seridham, Chart Pattana
Police lieutenant colonel Dr.Thaksin Shinawatra	**Group 54** 17 Feb. 01 – 6 Feb 05	**Thai Rak Thai** (merged with Seridham, New Aspiration and Chart Pattana), Thai Nation
Police lieutenant colonel Dr.Thaksin Shinawatra	**Group 55** 6 Feb.05- 19 Se. 06	**Thai Rak Thai**

Note*: The Democrat Party, having the second largest number of seats, was given a chance to form the government after the resignation of General Chavalit and the New Aspiration Party.

Sources: Author's compilation on data provided by the Secretariat of the Cabinet (www.cabinet.thaigov.go.th/bb2_main.htm)

Notwithstanding, each coalition government applied different strategies. Some ended up in failure, such as Seni Pramoj's attempt to form a minority government after the February 1975 general election, which lasted only eight days. Twenty-two political parties were elected into the House of Representatives. According to tradition, the first attempt to form the government belonged to the party winning the largest number of seats in parliament. Because the Democrat Party had the most votes (seventy-two) in the House, Seni Pramoj was formally selected as prime minister. Seni's new cabinet was based on a coalition with only the Social Agrarian Party, thus forming a ninety-one-seat (thirty-four percent) minority government (Pornsak Pongpaew 2001, 168-169). On March 6, the vote of no confidence was requested by the opposition. The result was 152 to 111 which ended the brief tenure of the coalition government (Morell and Chai-Anan Samudavanija 1981, 118). A reason that the government failed to win the vote of no confidence was many MPs were displeased that the Democrats did not bring any of the smaller parties into its coalition. This action, however, would have reduced the number of portfolios available for the Democrat MPs.

Subsequently, most coalition governments were composed of more parties than the minimum proportion of resources (generally fifty per cent of the MPs in the House of Representatives) necessary to control a decision. In other words, the Thai coalition always exceeded Gamson's "decision point" (Gamson 1961, 374). The aim was not merely to form a coalition, but to control as many votes in Parliament as possible.

Reward Allocations

How rewards are allocated among the members of a winning coalition depends largely on the amount of resources (number of MPs) they can contribute to a coalition and also on the bargaining power of the parties. For instance, the Democrat-led coalition in 1992 combined five parties with a total of two hundred and seven seats in the Parliament. Forty-eight ministerial posts were the rewards to be divided among the coalition participants. Each party received the number of portfolios proportional to the number of MPs they had. There-fore, the quota was roughly one cabinet portfolio per 4.3 MPs (207/48). Accordingly, the Democrat got twenty portfolios, the New Aspiration took eleven, the Social Action received five of the shares, Palang Dharm and the Solidarity obtained ten and two posts, respectively.

Coalition formation, inevitably, necessitates compromise, so while the Democrats, as the leading party in 1992, should have had controlled key ministries such as Interior, Transportation and Communications, and Finance, instead, Prime Minister Chuan had to give the powerful Interior portfolio to the New Aspiration Party leader since they threatened to walk out of the coalition unless its boss was given this important ministry (Far Eastern Economic Review, October 1, 1992). Transportation and Communications, and Finance portfolios were acquired by the Palang Dharm and the Solidarity Parties (Pornsak Pongpaew 2001).

The quality and hence appeal of the ministries varies. Grade A ministries include Interior, Transportation and Communications, Industry, Commerce, and Agriculture. These ministries are highly coveted, for they control large budgets and award billions of baht in government contracts. If we are to believe the rumors, control over these ministries offers vast opportunities for personal and party enrichment. The politicians with the most power were given the premium, with

smaller, less lucrative ministries going to the others. As a politician rose within his party, his assignments to more lucrative positions would follow. Mostly, little or no concern was given as to whether a particular politician was suited to his position in terms of experience or other professional qualifications.

It should be noted that the formation of a coalition that emphasizes majority rule made the number of seats more important than the number of parties working efficiently together. There was no definite rule as to how many parties should be in the governing coalition and how many in the opposition. The Thai coalition allowed any party with even less than one per cent of the total Members of the House of Representatives to enter the government; for example, the Mass Party, in the 1996 general election had only 0.5 per cent of resources (or two MPs, see Table 5.1 above). In other words, size was not an indicator of which party would be in a coalition. Thus, small parties could often have disproportionate bargaining power. No matter how powerful the core party might seem, it could not assume power without the support of its coalition partners. This gave smaller parties influence far beyond their numerical strength and was a major reason why the core party could not hope to control all major ministries.

Under these conditions, there was no inducement to create party bases for the long-term in order to build a bigger party because that did not necessarily guarantee the possibility of being in the coalition. Such prospects opened more opportunities for mid-sized parties, such as the Social Action Party, which was "the potential party" that ended up in a coalition every time for ten years from 1986 to 1996.

As previously stated, members of the coalition agreed to divide the ministerial portfolios in proportion to the number of seats each party held in the House. What's more, some

chief policy areas had been fragmented into more than one ministry and allocated to the delegates of different political parties. In practice, each party in the coalition agreed not to intervene in the affairs of those ministries under the responsibility of other parties. Consequently, the coalition government usually suffered from a lack of common policy and coordinated program implementation. The following illustrates this phenomenon.

The Banharn Silapa-archa administration (1995-1996) offers a crucial example. Mr. Banharn, while Prime Minister, controlled the Ministry of Interior himself. He then assigned four deputies, two from the Thai Nation, one from the Palang Dham, and the other two from the New Aspiration Party. During Genral Chavalit's New Aspiration led cabinet (1996-1997), of the five portfolios in the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, one was given to the Chart Pattana (Suwat Lippatapanlop), one went to the New Aspiration (Aram Lhoveera), one to the Seridham (Pinij Jarusombat), the other to the Social Action (Somsak Thepsuthin) and the final position to a non-elected MP, Direk Jareonpol. In the Chuan government (1997-2001), the three portfolios in the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare were given to the Democrat, the Thai Nation and the Thai Citizens Parties. During Thai Rak Thai's first cabinet (2001-2004), of three posts in the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives, two went to the Thai Rak Thai (Choocheep Harnsawad, a member of Wang Nam Yen faction) and Prapat Panyachartrak, a member of Thaksin's faction), and the other went to the Chart Thai MP, Natee Kliptong[1].

This sometimes meant that each minister went his or her own way and there was more than one government policy in each area. Such a "sectorization" of government decision making was similar to the highly competitive composition of the Italian government. However, in the Italian case, the majority summit between the prime minister, some ministers,

and the leaders of parties in the government coalition works as an organizational instrument for internal coordination (Criscitiello 1994, 190, 197-198). The Thai result of fragmented government without an extra-governmental device to increase agreement among coalition parties was weak ministerial policy coordination. Accordingly, the country was run by mini-governments, rather than by a single effective coalition. The fact that members from different political parties were placed in the same ministry proved to paralyze and destabilize the government instead of promoting administrative efficiency. More importantly, the instability of a fragmented coalition government has been cited as a principal reason lagging political development in Thailand.

Factions and Payoffs

Political parties in Thailand, as in many other countries, are not unitary actors. They comprise many groupings with their own agendas under the party banner. Thus, intra-party and factional politics is often a fundamental determinant of coalition behavior (Luebbert 1986; Maor 1997). In a coalition government, therefore, the prime minister's power to appoint and dismiss ministers is fairly restricted. It is the party leaders who make decisions about the distribution of ministerial portfolios through a series of internal negotiations among their followers and various rival factions. Actors and forces within the party compete with each other in the struggle for relative influence within the organization (Maor 1997, 176). Under this circumstance, another condition affecting payoff distribution is the existence of factions within coalition parties.

In Thailand's faction-based political parties (see Chapter 3), a quota basis allocation of cabinet seats reflected not only the shares of political parties, but also the size and number of faction leaders within the coalition parties. To be

more specific, factions had been the core of allocation of rewards, through cabinet seats; cabinet portfolios were allocated according to internal factional arrangements under the control of faction leaders (Ockey 2003, 671; McCargo and Ukrist Pathamanand 2005, 73-74). This made faction leaders a vital variable in payoff division because these faction leaders joined the party guaranteeing a group of MPs under their control. They needed to uphold this pledge after each election to maintain their quota of cabinet seats.

As stated in Chapter 3, Thai Rak Thai was an unusual mixture of rural politician factions which had defected from several parties. Once they were part of the Thaksin coalition government (2001-2004), these factions bargained hard for cabinet shares equivalent to their numbers. The biggest faction, Wang Nam Yen, was granted three portfolios, whereas other factions of rural politicians, namely *Wang Bua Barn, Wang Nam Yom, Seridham, New Aspiration,* and *Suwit Khunkitti* network received one post each. Accordingly, factions made the distribution of power and maintaining of party cohesion more difficult and complicated.

James Ockey pointed out that the Thai Rak Thai grand coalition government in 2001 stemmed from the need to marginalize several faction leaders within the party because the grand coalition would limit the threat of withdrawal and ability of any single faction to undermine the government (Ockey 2003). With the ability to manage and control factions and faction leaders, the power of the prime minister was fortified.

Cohesion and Changes in Coalition Partners

Cohesion and changes in coalition partners over time affected the stability and longevity of the government. All coalition parties were free to change their delegates in the cabinet as they wished, and decisions were usually made by

party leaders. The changes that led to cabinet reshuffles some-
times also led to the dissolving of the parliament.

Traditionally within Thai politics, coalition disharmony
has been one of the main causes of parliamentary dissolu-
tions. For example, in 1996 parties in the ruling coalition
forced Prime Minister Banharn Silapa-archa to resign by
threatening to cast their votes on a no-confidence debate
against him. Although Banharn survived a vote-of-no-confi-
dence motion, he finally dissolved the House of Representa-
tives and stepped down as prime minister on September, 27,
1996 (Bangkok Post, September 29, 1996). This was mainly
because the prime minister could not manage to hold coali-
tion partners together. It should be noted that while house
dissolution has been a main reason for electing a new
government, sometimes a beaten prime minister resorted to
resignation, and a former opposition party could be chosen to
form a new government. This was the case for the Democrat
Party in 1997 after the New Aspiration Party-led government
was forced to leave (See Table 5.2).

Both inter-party and intra-party conflicts of partners in
a coalition affect that coalition's stability. A winning coalition
ends once a party in the unit withdraws its support. The
result is a coalition which no longer has sufficient resources
(elected MPs) to control decision-making. The government
survives only as long as the coalition dominating the House
can survive. The prime ministers constantly have to balance
the interests of coalition partners with many internal con-
flicts of interest.

Thus has been the history of Thai coalition governments.

The First Thaksin Government: A Coalition with *"Dictatorial Powers"*

Considering the fragmented nature of Thailand's highly
multi-party system, forming the coalition is only the first step;

sustaining it long enough to lock up final legislative victories is much harder. But, this was not the case when one participant in the coalition had initial resources nearly sufficient to control decision-making.

After the 2001 general election, Thai Rak Thai Party won 248 seats, just two seats short of an absolute majority in the 500-member Parliament. Soon after the election, the Seridham Party merged with the Thai Rak Thai yielding a plurality of 52.4 per cent of the House of Representatives. When a coalition was formed with Thai Rak Thai controlling more than half of the elected MPs, a condition of a "full-fledged coalition situation" was violated and incomplete. Indeed, one participant had "dictatorial powers" over the whole coalition (Gamson 1961, 374-375). The "dictatorial power," granted by controlling more than half of the resources in the House of Representatives, coupled with several laws under the 1997 Constitution, had made it easier for Prime Minister Thaksin to exercise his superior power in cabinet decision making.

To support our statement that the degree of prime minister's authority has been increased, a study of relationship between bureaucrats, political parties and the prime minister is indispensable. Such study hinges on models of cabinet decision making within parliamentary democracy, according to Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle (1994, chapter 1). Laver and Shepsle argue that various constraints from key political institutions generate different models of cabinet decision making. The models of government in parliamentary democracy include: 1) Bureaucratic government; 2) Legislative government; 3) Prime-Ministerial government; 3) Party government; 4) Cabinet government, and 5) Ministerial government. Rather than repeat the model, this study employs some of its essential features to characterize the relationship between three crucial actors.

The relationship between the tripartite actors in Thailand, namely the prime minister, the politicians, and the

vast national bureaucracy, can be divided into three impor-
tant periods corresponding to the three stages of political
party development: bureaucratic control of political parties,
rural capitalist and network politicians, and the business
conglomerate model.   A strongly entrenched bureaucratic
domination (1973-1988) was characteristic of the first period
so much so that the Thai politics was dubbed "bureaucratic
polity" (Riggs 1966; for an extensive review on bureaucratic
polity see Anek Laothamatas 1992). The intermediate episode
of relationship between the tripartite actors, in accordance
with the second stage development, saw an increasing role of
the politicians, especially those controlling ministerial
portfolios. A significant change in the political executive group
took place in the third period when both bureaucrats and
ministerial government came under control of the prime
minister, yielding a monocratic authority, represented by
business conglomerate Prime Minister, Mr. Thaksin
Shinawatra.

        During the first period, the cabinet and its decision-
making structure were very much bureaucratic and tied up
with routine matters. For a long period in the 1980s under
the Prem administration, the bureaucrats were able to exert
their influence over all major policies. Specifically, Thai
bureaucrats had a policy agenda of their own and they were
in a strong position to determine government policy outputs.
(Chai-Anan Samudavanija 2002, 146-147). In addition,
political parties had little interest in or capacity for develop-
ing general policy positions. Most political parties' policies were
largely drawn from the National Social and Economic Devel-
opment Plan issued by the National Economic and Social
Development Board (NESDB). These allowed inexpert
politicians and skilled bureaucrats to form a firm alliance in
running and administering the country without significant
constraints from outsiders.

        At the end of the semi-democratic system and the

beginning of a fully elected government under Prime Minister Chartchai (1988), the role of politicians and ministers seemed to increase. Under the Chartchai government a group of the prime minister's advisors was formed under the name of *Ban Pitsanulok* (the official residence of the prime minister, close to Government House). These young advisors served as a think tank for the administration (McCargo and Ukrist Pathamanand 2005) exemplifying a new era in which government policy was largely originated and implemented by politicians. There were also several incidents when politicians had interfered in the key policy institutions and arbitrated in appointing and transferring high-ranking bureaucratic positions. In all, it seemed that cabinet ministers were becoming more powerful. Montri Pongpanitch, who was secretary-general of the Social Action Party and a Minister of Transportation and Communications once retorted that he did not have to take order from anyone, and that he was prepared to resubmit a project to the cabinet only for acknowledgement, not approval (Far Eastern Economic Review, October, 1990, 19).

The prime minister's power remained limited by the need for a viable coalition, and by the power of party leaders in choosing their delegates for ministerial positions. The party's membership to be named ministers and deputy ministers were recommended by the head of that political party. However, considering the poorly-organized, undisciplined nature of Thai political parties, the role of political parties in imposing their policies on their own ministers hardly ever happened the way the British political parties' caucuses did. Party roles in the government had for the most part been kept separate from the government once all portfolios were allocated. Moreover, as previously indicated, each party in the coalition agreed not to intervene in the affairs of those ministries under other parties' responsibility. Thus, the actions of ministers were not constrained by strategic decisions of their party, or by the cabinet's collective decision. As a result, party organizations

were detached from establishing meaningful policy outputs resulting in a higher degree of ministerial autonomy that correlated with weak collective decision making.

Although factions played vital roles in bargaining for cabinet portfolios, once faction leaders were appointed ministers, they did not have to respond to their faction or their parties in terms of policy decisions. They, however, were project suppliers and financial providers for MPs in their factions since they had access to substantial state funds (see Ruland et al., 2004, 45). These ministers were expected to act as agents of their factions, not their parties. In other words, although internal party politics played a major role in cabinet seat allocation, in terms of cabinet decision making, internal party politics was less relevant.

Altogether, there was no evidence to conclude that during an episode of the multi-coalition government a different allocation of cabinet portfolios implied a different policy profile. As has been elaborated, party positions were not commonly known to all relevant actors in Thailand before the 2001 election. In addition, they were not credible since political parties seldom acted in accordance with their published positions. Therefore, there was no criterion to judge whether the decisions of parties' ministers deviated from party positions. In short, since the Thai ministers acted on their own initiative and did not operate as agents of their parties, it was nearly impossible to make predictions about the consequences of assigning politicians from particular parties to particular offices.

Right after the 2001 general election, the initial coalition was formed between Thai Rak Thai (248 MPs plus 14 MPs from the Seridham Party), Thai Nation (41 MPs), and New Aspiration (36 MPs), while the new cabinet had 36 positions to reward. The quota system instilled in the coalition payoff allocation was intact. As usual, the payoff was to be distributed according to the proportion of resources coalition

participants contributed, therefore the allocation of cabinet seats was based on a quota system of nine MPs per one cabinet portfolio. Accordingly, Thai Nation and New Aspiration took four portfolios each and the remainder went to Thai Rak Thai, which controlled most of the key posts. When Chart Pattana merged with Thai Rak Thai at the very end of the government's full four-year term, Prime Minister Thaksin announced that Chart Pattana would receive the two cabinet portfolios. (The Nation, June 24, 2004). This indicated that Prime Minister Thaksin was a fully autonomous decision maker in choosing coalition partners and allocating shares of payoffs[2]. In effect, a coalition this big could prevent the opposition from starting a vote of no confidence against him.

Although the power of the prime minister was obviously increased, the government structure based on power struggles within groups and factions was difficult to implement. Factions within parties which felt their rewards were under-represented or ignored voiced dissatisfaction. During the Thai Rak Thai administration, 2001-2004, Prime Minister Thaksin reshuffled the cabinet ten times, for the most part as intra-party reassignments of portfolios. These changes were designed to appease or reward various factions. The posts were rotated to balance both the number and quality of portfolios distributed to each faction. One can also read the frequent cabinet reshuffle as the exercise of formal power by the prime minister in hiring and firing government ministers at will. Frequent cabinet reshuffles, especially when they were done by moving one minister to oversee another ministry, or switching the cabinet position to rotate government's pay-offs, indicated that division and specialization of labor in policy formation, implementation and administration were not taken into consideration. Effective policy which depended upon the allocation of cabinet portfolios to those appropriate politicians and continuous policy concern was not the norm.

In sum, the primary characteristics of Thai parties are

cooperation and compromise rather than political convictions about complex issues or ideologies. Attempt to set up a government can not be secured by drawing lines neatly around any single political position, so it has been pursued by attempting to mobilize participants from across the board of conflicts and interests. One can say that in Thailand, the more forceful and ideological oriented the parties were, the more difficult for them to be included in a coalition.

Thus, ideological tightness is seen as a political weakness, not strength, as it relates to becoming part of the ruling coalition. As a result, political parties have not been programmatically coherent or much concerned with policy processes and output. In other words, they have been vehicles *for organizing the government but not for governing.* It is difficult to argue whether lack of policy is the cause or the effect of coalition government. It is, however, arguable that the constant shuffling of coalition governments with several parties in the council of the cabinet is surely related to the inability of the government to put policy into effect. Generally, in a coalition government stability is superficial; each party is aware of the possible dissolution of the House, thereby necessitating another election at almost any moment. When Thai Rak Thai won enough seats to form a single-party government there was a high hope that government stability would be more attainable.

Towards A Single-Party Government and a Business Conglomerate Model of Political Parties

In a parliamentary system, power means participation in the cabinet, and maximum power means holding as many of the cabinet positions as possible (Lijphart 1984, 48). When one party has a majority of the parliamentary seats, the majority party thus will be most likely to form a one-party cabinet to capitalize on controlling the government. Prime

Minister Thaksin declared on many occasions prior to the 2005 election that Thai Rak Thai will be the only party forming the government for many long years[3]. Thai Rak Thai has written a new chapter in political history when it was handed a mandate to form a single-party government[4]. With a resounding mandate giving it 376 MPs, or 75.4 percent of the House of Representatives (see Table 5.1), Thai Rak Thai had formed a one-party government without precedent in modern Thai political history. The emergence of the Thai Rak Thai Party as a single-party government in 2005 raised many questions for the future of Thailand's democracy. The most salient is whether the Thai political party system will move from a fragmented multi-party system towards a two-party system, or will it turn into a political system with one dominant party.

The subsequent section will discuss elements of Thai Rak Thai Party as "party government." Party government exists when the actions of office holders are influenced by values and policies derived from the party (Rose 1976, 371). In other words, the life of party politics affects government policy, and political parties have certain control over cabinet behavior. Richard Katz refers to the condition where the party has the ability to control the formal government apparatus as the *partyness* of government (Katz 1986b, 45).

As a single party controlling absolute House majority, there was no longer a worry about coalition disharmony, and the need for coalition bargaining had vanished. But this did not automatically increase the degree of "partyness" of Thai Rak Thai. A crucial yardstick for measuring the partyness of government is to assess the priority of the party in the recruitment and control of cabinet ministers (Muller 1994). While one can say that most appointed ministers were Thai Rak Thai "party related," it could be argued that the ability to control the composition of the cabinet rested more in the hands

of Prime Minister Thaksin than in the existing party structure and organization. As Thaksin once said, the party has given him "a free hand in selecting the next batch of ministers, from within and outside the party" (Bangkok Post, January 9, 2005). This reflected a new level of prime ministerial autonomy. Under this circumstance, it was not the party that had a secure control of cabinet ministers, rather it was the prime minister who determined the performance of *his* cabinet personnel.

Since the overthrow of absolute monarchy in 1932, Thailand has adopted a parliamentary system along the lines of the Westminster model. People elect Members of Parliament, and the prime minister selects cabinet members from among elected MPs (Lijphart 1984). In the Thai case, however, the various constitutions did not stipulate that cabinet members must be members of the House of Representatives; hence, there have been non-elected MPs in every administration. And once the 1997 Constitution introduced a proportional representation electoral system, most ministers in the first Thaksin cabinet were elected party list MPs. Remarkably, however, in the Thaksin's cabinet after the 2005 general election, only six of the thirty-five ministers were elected Members of Parliament. As Chang Noi, a newspaper columnist, points out, this new direction is more and more similar to the American presidential model where voters directly elect a head of the government who then appoints his "secretaries" from outside the rank and file of elected representatives in the Congress[5].

In light of the business conglomerate model, business groups took many important portfolios in the Thaksin cabinets[6]. Six major business groups involved in the government can be classified as follows[7]:

    1) The **telecommunication industry** groups: this group included Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and

his sister, along with the Jasmine group of Minister Adisai Bodharamik.

2) The **automobile parts industry and automobile dealers** of the Summit group that included Suriya Jungrungreangkit (also Thai Rak Thai's secretary general) and Sirikorn Maneerin, donator and treasurer of the party.

3) The **entertainment industry** group of Pracha Maleenon, the owner of BEC World which runs Channel 3 television.

4) The **agro-business group** of Charoen Phokphand (CP Group). This group was represented in the cabinet by its long-standing political lobbyist, Pitak Intravitayanant and Wattana Muangsuk. The head of the CP group endorsed Thaksin before the election.

5) The **real estate businesses** and large landowners overseeing the Ministries of Agriculture, Foreign Affairs, and Science and Technology, for example.

6) The **construction contractor businesses.** This group consisted of faction bosses in the party, i.e., Sanoh Tientong, Somsak Thepsuthin, Anurak Jureemart, and Suwat Lippatapanlop.

The large number and diversity of business groups in government signified that the dynamic business sector is directly in control of the processes of policy decision-making and implementation through integral connections with political parties and their leaders[8]. This is mainly because the business sector has the most desirable assets -- capital and expertise -- resources which enable the business sector to exercise its influence on the policy making process to their advantage (Pasuk and Baker 1997).

It should be noticed that besides the concentration of business conglomerate representation in the Thaksin

government, elements of civil servants and a high-level tech-nocracy in key ministries and agencies were also visible. Along with the need for professional managers, the specialized expertise of bureaucrats was pit against the elected politi-cians. Among these, with their greater access to specialized policy information, was Suchart Jaovisith as Deputy Finance Minister. Others were professionals such as Kasem Wattanachai in Education, Surapong Suepwonglee in Public Health, Prapas Panyachartrak in Agriculture and Gen. Thammarak Issa-rangkool Na Ayuthaya, Defense Minister. These civil servants, noticeably, all had close and personal relationships with Prime Minister Thaksin.

Interestingly, these business persons, former civil ser-vants, as well as other veteran politicians, with or without prior party background, once holding a government position were elected to party executive positions or granted a role in party organization. To be specific, there were twenty-three party founders, thirteen party executives, twenty-eight advi-sors to the party, thirty-four advisors to the party leader, a list of one hundred and five political executives, a list of fifty-six party political practitioners, and one hundred and nine-teen party committees[9]. Most cabinet ministers were drawn from one of these lists. This practice made it look like rank-and-file party members had a priority in cabinet minister recruitment; however, in reality, such decisions depended solely on Prime Minister Thaksin.

The "partyness" of Thai Rak Thai in controlling min-isterial behavior was less evident compared to its sturdy abil-ity to monitor its MPs. During the 2005 censure debate against Transportation Minister Suriya Jungrungreangkit in connec-tion with the Suvarnabhumi Airport scandal, government whips (who at the same time served as deputy party leaders) were instructing 377 party MPs, out of 500 members of the House of Representatives, to vote in support of Suriya regard-less of what opposition lawmakers had to say (The Nation,

June 30, 2005). Moreover, the flow of the legislative agenda was vastly controlled by the government MPs. The legislative power and the opposition parties could hardly impose policy alternatives on the government. In other words, with the majority legislatures, the Thaksin government could legislate at will.

While the fragmented coalition government, as previously articulated, allowed cabinet ministers to make policy decisions within their jurisdiction, it was revealed that ministers in the Thaksin government needed to seek cabinet policy approval and by and large acted as agents of the Thai Rak Thai Party. It has also been claimed that the Thaksin advisory team had been able to check on all policies performed by the ministers after they were approved by the cabinet (The Nation, January 17, 2001). However, this study deems that these men and women worked closely as the "idea suppliers" for the party leader, not as an integral part of the party's organization. McCargo and Ukrist Pathamanand (2005) suggest that these advisors helped empower the party leadership and the Office of Prime Minister at the expense of the faction bosses and cabinet ministers who had typically played central roles in previous governments.

An effective party system requires that the parties are able to bring forth programs to which they commit themselves (Schattschneider 1950). This means parties should come forward and put their platform into effect. By virtue of one-party control the cabinet, Thai Rak Thai Party's policy platforms were to a large extent identical with the government's polices. To account for decision making in a single-party majority government, similar to Britain, it is necessary to determine if the real policy decisions are made within party organization.

After several cabinet meetings, it was clear that government policy and the cabinet agenda did not reflect a

process of collective decision making in the party organization or the Council of Ministers. Rather, it mirrored the monocratic power exercised by the prime minister. Moreover, the second Thaksin government (2005-September 2006) issued a decree which allowed the prime minister to hold an emergency meeting with only one other minister and reduced the quorum for cabinet meetings to one-third. McCargo and Ukrist Pathamanand (2005, 99) persuasively argue that The Thai Rak Thai administration was essentially run by the prime minister in conjunction with a small team of trusted advisors, who were closely involved in both the formulation and presentation of policy.

In essence, the Thai Rak Thai "team" was not created to provide specialized information needed for specific policies in various government departments. Rather, the staff group was created by the party leader from close associates of the party leader. This situation did not substantially help stabilize the "partyness" of the Thai Rak Thai Party in the long term. In fact, the Thaksin government consisted primarily of a strong nucleus made up of the powerful prime minister, his appointed cabinet members and close advisors. Consequently, the roles of ordinary MPs were declining, their chances of becoming ministers were fading, and more importantly, their power in checking and scrutinizing the executive branch was diminishing.

NOTES

1   See the Secretariat of the Cabinet's Document.

2   This circumstance is similar to the "Prime-ministerial government model," suggested by Richard Crossman (1972). As summarized by Laver and Shepsle, factors impinging upon the Prime-ministerial government model include: Rights and duties of the prime minister are designated explicitly by the constitution; The prime minister comes first in the government formation procedures, then it is the prime minister who select members

of the cabinet; The prime minister has the formal power to hire and fire government ministers at will, subject only to the ultimate need to maintain the confidence of the legislature; and finally, the electoral competition is regarded as a contestation between leaders of political parties. See Richard Crossman, *The Myths of Cabinet Government.* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972); and Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle, "Cabinet minister and government formation" in *Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government,* eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chapter 1.

3   For example, at the party's Annual Meeting, April 27, 2003 (Matichon, April 29, 2003: 2) and at the Thai Rak Thai Party's seminar for election preparation, December 27, 2003 at the Ambassador City Hotel, Chonburi (Matichon, December 29, 2003, 2)

4   The outcome is reminiscent of the Seri Manangkasila Party's victory under Field Marshal Plaek Pibulsongkram in February 1957. The party won 85 seats as against 28 seats captured by the Democrats, while small parties and 13 independent candidates took the rest. With a public outcry of "dirty election," however, the Seri Managkasila government was overthrown in September that year by Field Marshal Sarit's bloodless coup. On this issue see Likhit Dhiravegin, Demi-Democracy: The Evolution of the Thai Political System. (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1992), 142-145.

5   See www.geocities.com/changnoi2/westwash.htm; The Nation, April 25, 2005.

6   Note that the 1997 Constitution required that all cabinet ministers divested their business holdings when they entered government. However, in practice, their family members still retained interests and owned a majority stake in those businesses.

7   See also Krungthep Thurakit, October 14, 2002. Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thaksin: The Business of Politics in Thailand.* (Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2004); and Pasuk Phongpaichit, "A Country is a company, a PM is a CEO," Paper presented at the seminar, Statesman or Manager? Image and Reality of Leadership in SEA, April 2, 2004. Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University.

8   According to Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker in their study on the roles of technocrats, business groups, and the military in policy making, during the 1980s, the business sector was successful in persuading policy-makers to direct policies to their advantage, while technocrats -- who have freedom in writing macroeconomic policy -- do not have an important role in deciding how and when the policy is implemented. See Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, "Power in Transition: Thailand in the 1990s", in *Political Change in Thailand*, edited by Kevin Hewison, (London: Routledge, 1997).

9   See Thai Rak Thai's website at http://www.thairakthai.or.th/

CONCLUSION

THAI POLITICAL PARTIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The main premise of this book has been that the development of political parties in Thailand has not followed the stages of party development common to Western democracies, namely, the elite party, the mass party, the catch-all party and the cartel party. Instead, the transformation of Thai political parties proposed in this book can be divided into three stages, namely:

I) Political parties dominated by bureaucratic and military forces;

II) Political parties supported by rural network politicians; and

III) Political parties heavily influenced by business conglomerates.

Most recently, during the last decade, the dynamic interaction among the bureaucratic elite, rural network politicians and national capitalists has intensified, with national business conglomerates gaining power and influence through parliamentary and cabinet councils. The electoral system, rules and regulations during "the reformed politics" under the 1997 Constitution, instead of enhancing participation by a majority of the population, have allowed organized business to break the hold of the bureaucrats and monopolize both political and economic powers.

Furthermore, the emergence of the Thai Rak Thai Party in 1998 instituted a fundamental change in the party development process of Thailand. Specifically and undeniably, Thai Rak Thai has altered the outlook and perception of people towards political parties as well as changing the ways in which

Thai political parties operate. Parties' activities and functions in the era of business conglomerate influence include clear policy direction and tangible policy output; attempts to represent various social groups; effective use of mass media and information technology; and, the enhancement of the images of the parties and their leaders.

All of the above points require substantial party resources. Moreover, the new directions initiated by the rise of the Thai Rak Thai Party have increased the capacity and functions of political parties far beyond past norms and expectations. The new conditions imposed by Thai Rak Thai have compelled other parties to adapt their electoral strategies by making universal appeals to voters, especially in terms of policy attractiveness, with less consideration for policy effectiveness.

In this light, while the core of party development in the West is manifested through ideologies, membership, social representation, and linkages with civil society (see Figure 1 below), the core of party development in Thailand rests almost solely upon a stable source of party financial resources and leadership ability.

The consequences of Thai party transformations at each stage are evidenced primarily in the adaptations and changing roles of the parties. The most obvious tendency comprises the attempts by political parties, especially parties active in government, to penetrate all areas of public life. We have witnessed that parties have acted as sources of patronage in response to the various demands of societal sectors by providing individual and collective benefits through populist policies. In doing so parties have dipped into state money to sustain party activities and distribute extensive client services, activities once rendered primarily by Members of the House of Representatives.

In this process of change, the relationship among political parties, state and civil society has evolved significantly. Parties and civil society during the military and bureaucratic

domination were under the state's rule. During the rural network politician era, parties, and especially individual MPs, acted as intermediaries between the electorate and the state. In the current business conglomerate stage, political parties are trying to become state managers by advertising economic development as the ultimate goal of the nation (See Table 1.3, Chapter 1). Many party policies have been directed towards this goal, such as universal health care, free-education program, One Tambon-One Product (OTOP), Village Funds, and debt moratoria for low income farmers.

Notwithstanding, what has been a consistent phenomenon in Thailand is that despite many significant changes which have occurred both outside and inside party politics, political parties remain weakly rooted in society. Although Thai civil society has made impressive progress in the last 30 years by challenging undemocratic rules, it still remains basically feeble, fractured and without enduring impact. A fragmented civil society cannot go far in creating effective bridges between political parties and the electorate, in making political parties more responsible, or in encouraging participation at all levels.

Figure 2 below shows that currently Thai political parties are not only moving out of the sphere of state, but also trying to acquire the new position of manager of government and the state by playing a more substantial role as providers of patronage and welfare through their policies. At the same time, there is a tendency of political parties to try to move closer to civil society and to become legitimate, popular representatives. However, the linkage between political parties and civil society continues to be weak, vague and often sensationalized.

Figure 1: Mass Parties Linking State and Civil Society[i]
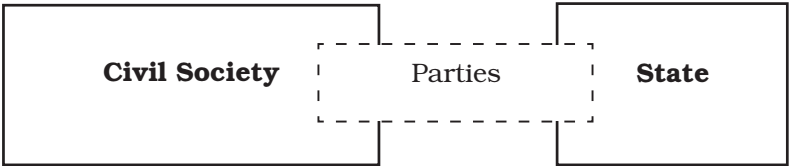
Figure 2: The Relationships between Thai Political Parties, State and Civil Society
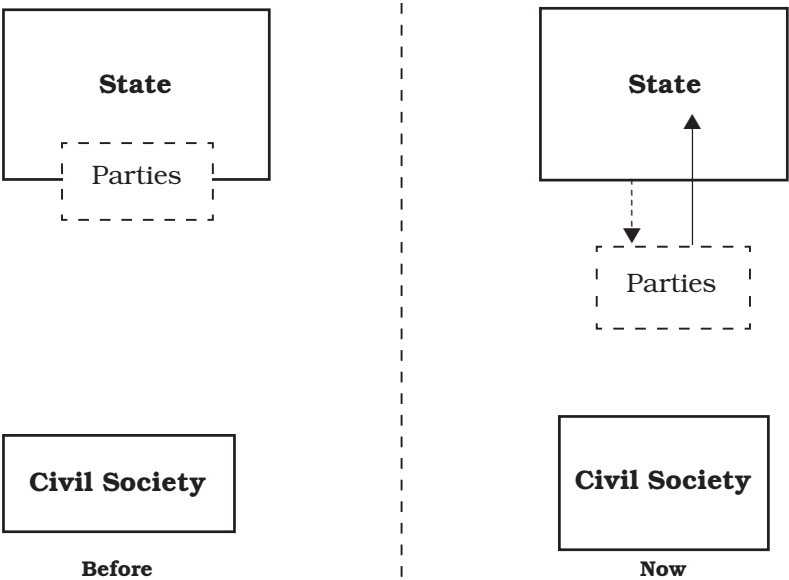
There are several reasons for the current setback of societal forces in Thai party and electoral politics.

First, voters' attentions are directed to focus primarily on the rivalry between the major parties which use materialistic incentives through populist and client-based policies in

exchange for voting support. This reflects the inability of political parties and the party system to meaningfully represent the structure of Thai social cleavages and to base their appeals on the issues that are actually most salient to the electorate. In view of this, the party members and general voters alike are still subordinate to the political parties and party elites.

Second, there is no systemic way of fund raising, hence the gap between the electorate and parties continues to widen. The ever-increasing proportion of party donations from party elites and financiers inevitably creates a gulf between parties and civil society. Accordingly, the relationship between business and politics is becoming more intertwined and institutionalized, while the majority of the people are left out of the loop.

Third, as for political socialization, Thai political parties never emphasize non-electoral tasks such as giving their members a political education, or recruiting them to be the parties' rank and file. For the future of Thai politics, we must seriously consider whether civil society can succeed in engaging voters in a rational discussion of political parties' policy platforms (or lack thereof) so they can make well-informed decisions when it is time to go to the polls.

Because in Thailand voters generally have few or no links to specific parties, every election is a new and random event. The number of party switchers and their victories at the polls is yet another key indicator of party detachment from civil society. The result is that the likelihood of changes in party alignments is high, the market is wide open, and voters are still available to all comers. Ironically, while there is increasing evidence of lack of strong party identification among voters and politicians, parties can still exert disciplinary measures on their MPs. A practice of strong party line voting in Thailand can attest to this fact, an indication that Thai MPs respond more to the parties and party leaders who

control money and resources, rather than to the electorate.

Cautiously, the transformation of Thai political parties into Stage III when political parties are under the influence of business conglomerates and national capitalists has fostered a growing number of arrangements of mistreatment and exploitation of politico-economic power. The interplay between business and politics can be summed up as the mutually beneficial relationship of trading power for wealth, and wealth for power (Girling 1996, 35).

NOTES

i   Katz and Mair employed several illustrations to elaborate the models of party development in the West. The above illustration is to explain the mass parties linking state and civil society. For details see Peter Mair (with Richard S. Katz) *Party System Change: Approaches and Interpretations,* (Oxford: ClArendon Press, 1997), chapter 5.

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IPPS maintains an internet web site, or home page (www.fpps.or.th) which provides up-to-date briefings on ongoing activities, as well as reproducing articles from our monthly newsletter in both Thai and English.

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About the Book

Thai Political Parties in the Age of Reform

By Siripan Nogsuan Sawasdee

The author aims to study the changed structure of electoral system and electoral process during the period of political reform and their impact on the development of the Thai political party system, the institutional context in which these changes are located, major Thai political parties' organizations, Leadership, platform, ideology and funding to determine their strengths and weakness and their possibility in winning the general elections.

This book contains 6 Chapters;

- Literature review and Theoretical framework
- Political parties and the Thai society: Historical Perspective
- Structures of competition and vote structuring
- Process of parties adaptation, constraint and control
- Party readjustment in the wake of institutional changes
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"...The author raises a very important issue concerning the relationship between political parties and business conglomerates. In this third stage of development, thai politics has brought in a new factor which makes the state – society relations more complicated, and may lead to a highly unstable situations."

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