Intra-Party Democracy in Thailand

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Introduction

This study is concerned with Intra-Party Democracy (*IPD*) in Thailand. Thereby it aims to provide a better understanding of the organisational structures, the procedural capacities and patterns of participation and decision-making inside political parties in Thailand. IPD is a very broad and ambiguous term describing a wide range of methods for including party members in intra-party deliberation and for the distribution of decision-making power within political parties. While the definition, causes and consequences of internal party democracy is contested among scholars, there is a tendency in recent research on political parties in older and newer democracies, to associate a higher degree of internal democracy with more democracy in the broader polity.

The relevance of the research topic to the promotion of democracy, good governance, and participation in the Kingdom of Thailand is evident: Since 1988, Thailand has been undergoing a process of political transition characterized by manifold conflicts and fractions. Deep-reaching social conflicts and cleavages have not been accommodated and, hence, have led to disruptions of democratic procedures. The intensifying polarization between the camp of elected Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai party (TRT) on one side and opponents, including the parliamentary opposition and People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) on the other, escalated in mid-2006. Eventually, the military staged a coup d'état against Thaksin on 19 September 2006. Although there was a general election in December 2007, the return to electoral democracy did little to heal existing divisions in Thai society. Rather, political polarization continued between the pro-Thaksin dominant coalition party of Palang Prachachon (PPP) led by Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej and a re-energized PAD, which reached a new climax. Though Samak was forced from office for malfeasance from office in September 2008, at the time of writing this article, a deep political schism continues.

Even though the ongoing political crisis cannot be attributed to a single factor alone, many students of Thai politics point to the incapacity of the party system to accommodate social and political tension, its feeble and insufficient institutionalization and the lack of adequate opportunities for political representation and participation within political parties as major obstacles to democratic governance in Thailand.

In fact, there is broad consensus among scholars that the institutionalization of a democratic multiparty system is a crucial element in the consolidation and stability of new democracies. As vote-seeking, office-seeking, or policy-seeking organizations (Strøm 1990), political parties perform a variety of key functions in democracies: articulation and aggregation of societal interests; recruitment of political leadership; development and promotion of public policies; and elite level intermediation with the bureaucracy, the military, and the judiciary. At least in theory, political parties articulate group aims and demands and transmit them into those political institutions where the authoritative political decisions are made, such as parliaments and the cabinet. Therefore, party organizations and party elites are in a position to most powerfully facilitate consolidation or, conversely, to bring about a regime crisis. Thus, E.E. Schattschneider (1942: 1) concludes "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties".

While political scientists agree that political parties are crucial actors in representative democracies, the question of whether and to what extent political parties need to be internally democratic in order to promote democracy within the wider society remains disputed. Those who emphasize the necessity of intra-party democracy see it as an end in itself, providing opportunities for political participation that will help citizens expand their civic skills (Macpherson 1977; Löfgren 2003). Based on the deliberative theory of democracy, others such as Teorell (1999) argue that IPD provides a necessary linkage between citizens and the political parties which makes policy agenda-setting inside democratic institutions accountable to the public.

Sceptics of intra-party democracy, however, argue that broad-based participation of party members and supporters in the party organisational decisions is dysfunctional and inept. They argue that it diminishes operational efficiency, squanders scarce resources while also restricting the party leadership's scope and flexibility of strategic interest in competing for voters and post-election coalition bargaining (Duverger 1954; Strøm 1990). For this reason, Schattschneider also concludes that "democracy is not to be found *in* the parties but *between* the parties" (Schattschneider 1942: 50).

This study employs a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Primary data was collected through interviews with politicians and experts, using two respective sets of structured questionnaire. The questionnaire for politicians was aimed at getting inside information from respondents on their opinion, experiences and views regarding intra-party democracy in Thailand. On the other hand, the non-politician experts (academic researchers, NGO representatives and members of various state institutions) were interviewed to get alternative perspectives and gain insights from convergences and divergences of responses given by the two groups. On the whole, a total of about 30 interviews were conducted. Secondary data was collected from relevant publications, reports, acts of parliament, the National Constitution, political party constitutions, party profiles, newspapers and ECT statistics. In addition, the research includes a desk study of the existing scholarly literature on intraparty democracy and on political parties in Thailand.

Five empirical research questions guide the further analysis:

(1) Which ideas of intra-party democracy can be identified in the party system of Thailand and how do these ideas correlate with the concepts of intra-party democracy within the scholarly literature on political parties and democracy?

(2) What is the state of intra-party democracy in Thailand?

(3) Which factors may explain our findings regarding intraparty democracy in Thailand?

(4) How does the state of intra-party democracy impact the legitimacy and stability of democracy in Thailand?

(5) What conclusion can be drawn out of the results for the promotion of party politics and democracy in Thailand?

The discussion of these questions is structured as follows. Firstly, theoretical concepts of intra-party democracy used in the research on political parties and democracy research will be discussed. As such, a concept for an empirical analysis and evaluation of intra-party democracy in Thailand will be generated (section 1).

The second section of the study provides and overview of the development and the current properties of political parties and the party system in Thailand. Thirdly, forms and degree of intra-party democracy in Thailand will be defined and evaluated (section 3). Out of 39 political parties that fielded candidates in the 2007 general election, the survey will especially focus on three political parties that assume a particularly relevant role within Thailand's party system because of their electoral support, their strength within party competition, and their historical relevance for party politics: (1) the People Power Party (Palang Prachachon--PPP)

which today commands the ruling coalition; (2) the Democratic Party (Prachatipat--DP), the nation's oldest, still functional political party and main competitor of the PPP; and (3) the Thai Nation Party (Chart Thai—CTP), a long-standing party (founded in 1974) which, since 1992, has been under the leadership of former Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-archa.

The fourth section of the analysis discusses possible causes of the presented findings. Subsequently, this study's findings aim to provide the foundation for further discussion about consequences for the role and the functionality of political parties within the consolidation of representative democracy in Thailand (section 5). Finally, the analysis arrives at recommendations for the further strengthening of intra-party democracy and political parties' development in Thailand (sections 6).

I**. Theoretical Framework**

The analysis of intraparty democracy in a given society ultimately depends on the concept of democracy informing the understanding of the role of political parties in political life.

1. Democracy

Even a brief discussion of what democracy is must begin with saying that democracy is an essentially contested concept. To put it simply, an essentially contested concept is one where there is widespread agreement on an abstract notion itself ("people's sovereignty"); whilst there is endless argument about what might be the best realization of that notion. In the words of Walter Gallie who introduced the term, essentially contested concepts are "concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users" (Gallie 1956: 169), and these disputes "cannot be settled by appeal to empirical evidence, linguistic usage, or the canons of logic alone" (Gray 1977: 344). Gallie provided detailed arguments as to why democracy is an essentially contested concept. Contemporary studies continue to demonstrate the relevance of his ideas as David Collier and others explain in a recent publication (Collier, Hidalgo, and Maciuceanu 2006)

Having said this, we must note that numerous definitions of democracy derive from different traditions of political thinking. Lack of space does not allow us to discuss various conceptions such as participatory, competitive, or deliberative democracy in detail (see Dahl 1989, 2004; Pennock 1979; Lipset 1995; Sartori 1997; Held 1996; Habermas 1992, 1998). Rather it is sufficient to emphasize that probably the most influential definition of democracy in comparative politics and empirical democratic theory in the past four decades was set out by Robert Dahl in his work *Polyarchy* (1971). Dahl offered a procedural definition of democracy that includes the following eight procedural and institutional criteria (Dahl 1971: 3):

1. Freedom of association

2. Freedom of opinion

3. Right to vote

4. Right to be appointed to a public office

5. Right of political elites, to compete for votes and support

6. Existence of alternative, pluralistic source of information

7. Free and fair elections

8. Institutions, whose policy depends on elections and other expressions of the citizens' preferences.

While Dahl's concise conceptualization of democracy remains popular in scholarship and policy, in recent years "it has been amplified, or précised to various degrees by several scholars and theorists."(Diamond 1999: 10). The result has been a constructive process of re-

conceptualization of Dahl's concept of *Polyarchy* / democracy.[1] Scholars have added elements to Dahl's concise but insufficient definition of democracy which are considered by many researchers as essential components of *modern, liberal democracy* but which are not covered in Dahl's conception, for example the rule of law and horizontal accountability (checks and balances between the legislative, the executive and the judiciary).

Thus, an alternative, more ambitious concept of liberal democracy which goes beyond minimalist concepts of electoral democracy gained prominence in political science and policy. How does liberal democracy extend beyond minimal conceptions of democracy? In addition to the elements of Robert Dahl's *Polyarchy*, liberal democracy requires the following (cf. Diamond 1999, 2008; Croissant and Merkel 2000; Merkel 2004, 2008):

1. Elected officials must have the actual power to govern, that is, liberal democracy requires the absence of reserved domains of power for the military or other non-elected veto powers.

2. There is horizontal accountability of officeholders to one another.

3. There are extensive provisions for civil rights and civic pluralism guaranteed by the rule of law under which all citizens are politically and legally equal, and the state itself is subject to and constrained by the law.

The UN Human Rights Commission offers a further definition of liberal democracy. It reads as follows:

> *"The Human Rights Commission (…) declares that the essential elements of democracy include respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, inter alia freedom of association, freedom of expression and opinion, and also include access to power and its exercise in accordance with the rule of law, the holding of periodic free and fair elections by universal suffrage and by secret ballot as the expression of the will of the people, a pluralistic system of political parties and organizations, the separation of powers, the independence of the judiciary, transparency and accountability in public administration, and free, independent and pluralistic media (…)".*

> (Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2003/36, UN Doc E/CN.4/2003/59).

2. Representative democracy and political parties

While democratic theory certainly does not equate democracy with party democracy (Ware 1992; Parekh 1992), liberal democracy, by definition is representative democracy. In representative democracies, political parties are "the central intermediate structures between society and government" (Sartori 1976: ix).[2]

In representative liberal democracy, political parties perform the important function of legitimizing the political system by representing the different social groups and lending authority to political decisions. Moreover, by seeking votes and offices and by engaging in policy-making, they perform a variety of other functions: "(a) the identification of goals […], (b) the articulation and aggregation of social interests […], (c) the mobilisation and socialisation of the general public within the system, particularly at elections […], and (d) élite recruitment and government formation" (von Beyme 1985: 13). Thus, political parties and party systems are of central importance for the quality and stability of any democratic system. Especially in new democracies, democratic consolidation requires that a system of well-institutionalized political parties take root in society, for only such a system fosters the development of dura-

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[1] According to Dahl (1989), the ideal of democracy is as a theoretical utopia. Instead, Dahl calls democratically advanced nations *polyarchies*. A *polyarchy* has elected officials, free and fair elections, inclusive suffrage, rights to run for office, freedom of expression, alternative information and associational autonomy. Those institutions are a major advance in that they create multiple centers of political power.
[2] By political party, we mean "an institution, that (a) seeks influence in a state, often by attempting to occupy positions in government, and (b) usually consists of more than a single interest in the society and to some degree attempts to 'aggregate interests'" (Ware 1996: 5).

ble patterns of peaceful and stable alternation in government (Shin 1995 Morlino 1998; Gunther/Diamond 2003; Katz/Crotty 2006; Dalton/Shin/Chu 2008). This increases the likelihood of the relevant political actors' assessing the potential gains of compliance with the rules of the political game more favourably than their violation. By this, political parties may contribute to the process of making democracy "the only game in town", to use Adam Przeworski's apt phrase (Przeworski 1991).

3. Intra-party democracy

Intra-party democracy is a topic of research interest not only in the context of democratization and new democracies but also in the context of long-established democracies. In fact, most of the academic literature on organisational aspects of political parties deals with political parties in the West.

While research on the internal life of political organizations has a fairly long tradition dating back to the very early times of party research (e.g. Ostrogorski 1902; Michels 1911; Epstein 1967), in the 1970s, scholars turned their attention away from organizational aspects of individual political parties towards the analysis of party systems and inter-party competition (Lawson 1994). Approximately twenty years passed before questions surrounding IPD were again given high priority in party research.

At least three factors account for this re-vitalized interest in the notion of IPD (cf. Norris 2004; Bojinova 2007). First, it is attributed to the apparent transformation of Western political parties from previous models of centralized and hierarchically structured party organizations towards "stratarchical" organizational models (Carty 2004). In a stratarchical party, organizational power and authority does not finally rest in any single place, or with any single set of individuals – it is (more or less) decentralized among geographic layers of the organization but tightly controlled by party elites at each of these different levels (Niedermayer 1995). Secondly, with the so-called third wave of democratization in the past three decades or so, political parties in young democracies have become a new ground for academic interest (Gunther/Diamond 2003). Third, with the recent wave of democratization, democracy promotion surged to the top of the international policy agenda (Carothers 1999: vii). International governmental and non-governmental organizations have increasingly focused on the promotion of IPD as a way of promoting democratization (Carothers 2006). Within the international promotion of a democracy community, aiding political parties to implement instruments of IPD has become a very relevant issue.

3.1 What is Intra-party democracy?

Despite the increased attention to issues of internal party democracy, the very concept of what internal democracy is has remained contested (Linz 2002). The main debate is whether IPD refers to the participation and voice of parties' rank-and-file or to the responsiveness of parties to voters in the national electorate – a distinction which can be traced back to the classic writings of Maurice Duverger and Robert Michels. According to Duverger, democratic parties are internally democratic, when members and leaders adequately represent the party voters (1954). On the other hand, for Michels, IPD means that parties give substantial decision-making authority to their members. This would allow them to control, through organizational mechanisms, the party leaders and members of parliament. At the same time, however, Michels remained sceptical about the possibility of IPD. As framed in his famous "iron law of oligarchy", Michels argued that party leaders (as opposed to mere party members)

tend to dominate parties due to their knowledge of, control over, and proximity to the levers of party power (Michels 1966 [1911]).[3]
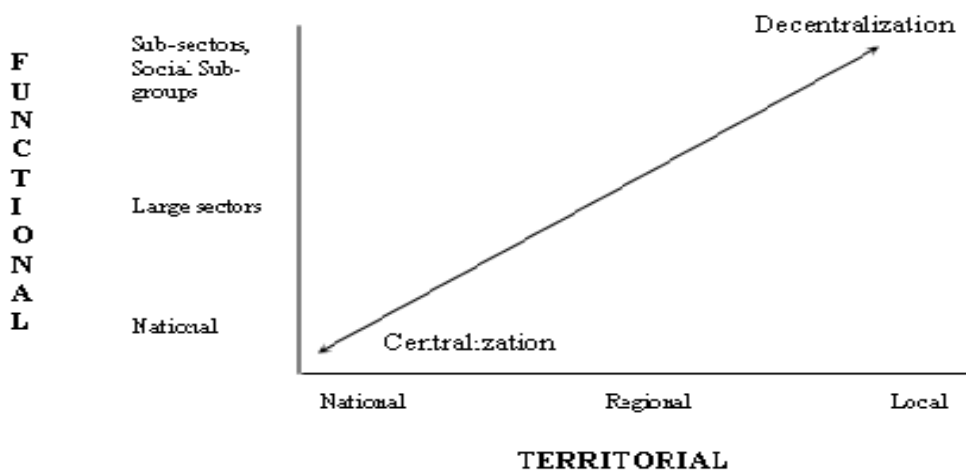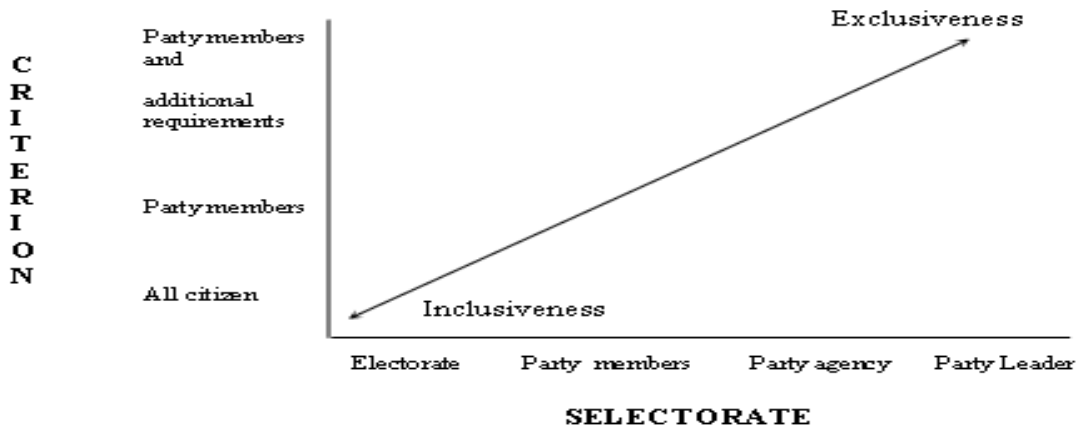
Based on Susan Scarrow (2005) and others (Pennings and Hazan 2001; Teorrell 1999; Norris 2004; Bojinova 2007), the present survey conceptualizes IPD as a characteristic of the distribution of decision-making power among members and leaders within a political party along the two principle dimensions of inclusiveness and decentralization (Scarrow 2005). However, it must be stressed that there is a difference between IPD in terms of participation and voice of parties' rank-and-file as opposed to IPD in terms of participation and voice of intra-party factions.

- Inclusiveness refers to how wide the circle of decision-makers in a party is. It captures the openness of political parties to inputs from both within and outside the body of party members.

- Centralization refers to the extent to which decisions are made by a single group or decision body. It captures the extent to which members of different levels and functional background are included in party decision-making. In decentralized political parties, the national party organization focuses on coordination and communication. In centralized parties, the national party committee has the decision-making authority. "Stratarchical" political parties have several centres of decision-making power which are interdependent to each other but tightly controlled by party elites.

Thus, IPD is a two-dimensional, ideal type concept. The two dimensions are not binary categories (inclusive – exclusive) but represent analytical continuums. In real political life, political parties will differ from each other in terms of the degree of inclusiveness and centralization of decision-making power. In addition, they represent analytically different properties of the organizational qualities of political parties: a political party can be rather inclusive by delegating decisions to a wide circle of decision-makers but can also be centralized by minimizing the power of organizational subunits within the party.

Figure 1: Two Dimensions of Intraparty Democracy

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3 As Sartori (1976, 1987) argues, Michel's „iron law" is at best a "bronze law" as the emergence of so-called "stratarchical" political parties in Western democracies demonstrate (see also Niedermayer 1995)

Source: based on Bojinova 2007.

From these two dimensions we develop three criteria that help to distinguish different degrees of internal party democracy. Borrowing from the analytical frameworks of Rahat and Hanzan (2001), Bille (2001), Scarrow (2005), Mipdem (2005) and Bojinova (2007) these three criteria are: (1) candidate selection; (2) policy selection; (3) coalition formation. Two key questions relate to each of these criteria.

(1) Candidate selection: Who can be selected as a candidate for party office and for local and national public office, and who belongs to the selectorate (inclusiveness)? At which level of the territorial structure of party organizations are candidates and are they selected according to functional criteria, such as representation of regions, professions, women, or minorities (centralization)?

The process of selecting candidates is most inclusive if all supporters of a political party could potentially become party candidates and be selectors in the process of candidate nomination. It is most exclusive, if only a small segment of party members can be candidates (because of highly restrictive party regulations) and if the selectorate consists of only one person (the party leader). The selection of candidates is decentralized when party organizations select their candidates for national public and party office at the local level and/or according to functional criteria. In centralized political parties, the selection of party candidates

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at the national level as well as the local level is centralized at the national party centre and there are criteria of functional representation.

(2) Policy selection: What role do party elites, party members and/or supporters play in setting party policies? At which levels do they participate in the drafting of party policies? In inclusive political parties, all members and supporters are entitled to participate in the debate and selection of party platforms and policies through institutionalized forums of consultation and plebiscitary decision-making. In exclusive parties, a single party leader determines party policies. The process of policy selection is most decentralized, when the there is continuous or at least regular consultation of party members and supporters at various levels of the territorial layers of the party. The process is most centralized, when the national party organs select party policies exclusively.

(3) Coalition formation: Who decides if a political party forms a government coalition? In inclusive political parties, party leaders are obliged by formal party regulations or informal agreement to seek the approval of party members and/or supporters before entering into coalitions with other parties at the national level. In the exclusive party, party members and party agents other than a single leader are not involved in coalition decisions at all. In decentralized parties, coalition formation process involves party organs and members at all territorial layers of the party and includes participation from various functional groups. The final decision to form a coalition is made by party agents at the territorial level at which the coalition is to be formed. On the other hand, in centralized parties, the national party organ(s) exclusively decide about coalition formation.

Figure 2:   Dimensions and Criteria of Internal Party Democracy

		Dimension	
		Inclusiveness	**Centralization**
Criteria	**Candidate selection**	Who can be selected? 1. Segment of party membership 2. All Party members 3. All supporters Who selects? 1. Party leader 2. Party agency 3. All party members 4. All supporters	Where are candidates selected? 1. National party organ(s) select entirely 2. Both national and sub-national organ(s) participate 3. Sub-national organ(s) select entirely Functional representation? 1. None 2. Sub-districts 3. Reserved seats for specific groups
	Policy selection	Who sets policies? 1. Party leader 2. Party agency 3. Party members 4. All supporters	Where are policies selected? 1. National party organ(s) select entirely 2. Both national and sub-national organ(s) 3. Sub-national organ(s) select entirely
	Coalition formation	Who decides about formation of coalition? 1. Party leader 2. Party agency 3. Party members 4. All supporters	Where is coalition formation decided? 1. National party organ(s) 2. Both national and sub-national organs 3. Sub-national organs

3.2 The Virtues and Perils of IPD

The value of intraparty democracy and the exogenous consequences it has for the broader democratic system and the society at large are by no means uncontroversial. Two lines of argument can be identified here:

- On the one hand, there is an antinomic or at least cautious argument stretching back to E.E. Schattschneider's *dictum* that "democracy is not to be found *in* the parties but *between* the parties" (Schattschneider 1942: 50). Even though this is an extreme voice, several scholars point to the perils of IPD as it diminishes operational efficiency, uses up scarce resources while also restricting the party leadership's capabilities to manage party affairs, thus reducing the capability of political parties to compete for votes (Niedermayer 1995: 128). It may also deepen conflict between different interest groups, factions and ideological camps within the party, thus weakening the cohesiveness of legislative parties and making it more difficult for political parties to provide stable and effective government. In addition, several authors assume that IPD produces legislatures, cabinets and policies that are less reflective of the electorate as a whole as party activists tend to make more extreme ideological stands than either the more pragmatically oriented party leadership or the 'median voter' (Downs 1956, May 1973). Since IPD gives voice to party members and supporters who are particularly active and ideologically inclined activists, expanding IPD could drive parties away from more moderate political positions and reduce policy-flexibility.

- On the other hand, a synthesis proposition argues for a harmonious and complementary link between intraparty democracy and national democracy. Certain authors emphasize the positive effect that the internal democratization of political parties may have on the representation of ideas of the electorate in party policies and on the strength of party organizations by attracting new members. In addition, it is argued that IPD has a positive effect on linkage, improving the party's ability to connect with social groups. It is further argued that IPD strengthens bottom-up decision-making and also provides better opportunities for meaningful participation of under-represented or marginalized social groups such as ethnic minorities, youth and women.

  Other authors defend the relevance of democracy within parties as essential for the realization of a number of political outcomes. Löfgren argues that democracy in the party organisation cultivates a civic culture of democratic education among the citizens, caters to popular participation, collective ownership, legitimacy and responsibility of party decisions. This assertion denotes a direct link between IPD and the democratic quality of the political system as a whole. As Bille (2001: 2) put it: "It is hard to understand how a regime can be classified as democratic if the political parties have an organizational structure that leaves no room for citizens to participate and have influence." Even authors who acknowledge that democracy at the national level can exist with internally undemocratic political parties acknowledge the value of IPD for the legitimacy of democracy. For example, the theory of deliberative democracy argues that internal party democracy in the form of open debate and exchange of arguments among equal, free and rational individuals does avoid "policy extremism", leads to more responsible and better public policies, and, as in this model, opinions are not pre-given but are formed through participatory debate and exchange of arguments within political parties (Teorell 1999).

While there is no consensus about the justification and benefits of IPD, even advocates of IPD emphasize that implementing procedures of internal party democracy involves certain trade-offs for political parties and may produce some unintended consequences:

- Expanding IPD makes parties more responsible to party members and supporters but can imply over-emphasizing policy-orientation at the expense of office- and vote-seeking (Strøm 1990: 577). This "could lead to electoral platforms out of touch with the electorate and constrain party leaders in post-electoral coalition bargaining" (Teorell 1999: 364). For example, Luebbert (1986) in his theory of coalition behaviour argues that party lead-

ers, seeking to keep their dominance in the party, try to negotiate party agendas (mostly relating to policy issues) that create the least disunity among party members. With little disunity, most MPs will keep supporting the party leadership. Protracted government formation negotiations invariably involve disputes among rival factions as well as among parties (Luebbert 1986: 170).

- Plebiscitary participation raises the inclusiveness of decision-making within political parties. However, it could also make political parties more exclusive as they adopt more extreme policies, making it difficult to provide representative government.

- Internal democratic procedures may attract new members and provide fresh incentives for active participation of the rank-and-file. However, it can be argued that it weakens internal cohesiveness and raises the possibility for factionalism, party splits and other-related crises, possibly harming party institutionalization and organizational continuity.

- Internal party democracy gives more value to internal participation and transparency. 'Too much' internal democracy, however, could overly dilute the power of a party's inner leadership.

- Certain methods of inclusive candidate selection such as open candidate selection can provide incentives for populism and may lead to the nomination of 'outsider' candidates. Thus, instead of providing more responsible and capable leadership, it could also produce less qualified and more controversial party leadership.

To us, it seems that both lines of reasoning have some merits. Even though internal democratic procedures may be very useful for both political parties and the broader polity, whether the virtues or the perils of this concept prevail depend very much on the modalities of IPD, the type of party organization (mass-branch, caucus-cadre, catch-all and electoral professional parties), their goals (primarily focused on electoral success or policy-orientation) as well as the political context that political parties face.

3.3 Intra-party Democracy and Party Models

Since the early years of party research, scholars have undertaken numerous attempts to classify political parties and to develop detailed party typologies. This "has resulted in a substantial number of party models". (Krouwel 2006: 249). Yet, most of these typologies and classifications are not based upon elements of IPD. An exception to this tendency is a typology of political parties developed by Susan Scarrow (2005). On the basis of crucial features of concentration and centralization of internal decision-making power, she distinguishes between five models of party organization

(1) Leader dominated parties are loosely structured parties dominated by a single prominent individual. Usually the party leader (often the party founder) is self-selected. Political parties of this organizational type show little concern about promoting internal democracy. The existing, minimal and weakly institutionalized party organization is utilized to mobilize political support, whereas decision-making power is tightly held at the centre. Thus, in this party model, decision-making is exclusive and highly centralized.

(2) Cadre parties (based upon Duverger's typology) are not organized around a dominant charismatic or resource-rich political leader but tend to be dominated by a small and self-selected leadership group, often consisting of elected individuals, prominent community leaders and party bureaucrats. The cadre party is organized in closed and local caucuses which have minimal organization. Decision-making power is dispersed among leaders at different levels of party organization. This party type generally is weakly institutionalized as decision-making within the party relies on informal rules and backroom methods. In addition, cadre parties tend to be "office-oriented", that is, they seek the power and privilege of possessing public office. Such parties, totally non-ideological, do not necessarily seek to lead

government. They tend to coalesce together under a centralizing personality though party finance has traditionally been decentralized, drawn from intra-party groupings. This party type tends toward exclusive but decentralized decision making.

(3) The third model of party organization is the *party of individual representation* (Duverger's mass party). The defining element of this model is the extra-parliamentary mass mobilization of social groups on the basis of well-articulated organizational structures and ideologies (Krouwel 2006: 250). They are basically policy-seeking parties. As such, this party type builds up permanent organizations that enrol and organize supporters between elections in order to foster solidarity with the political cause. It has representative structures that give appearance or chance of popular involvement in candidate selection and policy articulation. Thus, it tends towards inclusive but centralized decision-making.

(4) In *corporatist parties*, leaders and representatives of various interest groups have privileged positions within the party. Delegates from these social sub-groups and larger segments sit in party councils and act on behalf of their 'constituencies'. The corporatist party can be either office- or policy-seeking. Decision-making tends to be less inclusive than in mass parties and more centralized than in cadre parties.

The fifth model is the *party built on the principles of 'basis democracy'*. This party aims to represent the party base in as many as possible arenas of decision-making. This party type traces its origin back to single-issue, participation-oriented social movements which in the 1970s formed the nucleus of the so-called 'Green' or environmentalist parties. Their structures of organization and decision-making are shaped by the ideal of plebiscitary democracy which prioritizes broad participation from enrolled members and even non-affiliated supporters. These issue-oriented, sometimes highly ideological parties possess highly inclusive procedures which prioritize broad participation in both deliberation and decision making. At the same time, they tend to be decentralized as they emphasize the subsidiarity principle.

Furthermore, these party types have differing organizational characteristics such as the importance of membership organization, the position of party in central office and in public office as well as resource structure which all impact on the degree of inclusive and decentralized intra-party decision-making:

Table 1: Party Type and additional organizational characteristics

	Leader dominated party	*Cadre party*	*Party based on individual representation (Mass party)*	*Corporatist party*	*Party build on the principle of basis democracy*
Importance of membership organization (grass-roots)	Non-existent or minimal	Non-existent or minimal	Voluntary membership organization is the core of the party	Representatives of functional groups is the core of the party	Members and supporters as a pool of recruitment of political personnel
Position of party in central office vis-à-vis party on the ground	Minimal, party in central office subordinate to party in public office	Minimal, party in central office subordinate to party in public office	Symbiosis between party in central office and party on the ground	Dominant	Subordinate to party on the ground
Position of party in public office vis-à-vis party in central office and on the ground	Core of the party organization	Core of the party organization	Subject to the extra-parliamentary leadership	Subject to extra-parliamentary leadership	Subject to extra-parliamentary leadership
Resource	Personal wealth	Personal wealth	Membership	Interest groups,	State subsidies

structure			contributions, ancillary organizations, party press and enterprises	state subsidies	
Inclusiveness of decision-making	Decision-making monopolized by leader	Decision-making controlled by oligarchy	Membership participation subordinate to party bureaucracy and leadership	Symbiosis between party leadership and representatives of functional groups; rank-and-file subordinated to party agency	Inclusive participation is core value
Centralization of decision-making	Centralization by the national centre	Decision-making power dispersed among leaders at different levels of party organization	Centralized at the national centre	Certain degree of decentralization among functional groups	Decentralized decision-making

Source: based on Scarrow (2005) and Krouwel (2006), modified and supplemented by the authors.

The five party types are not totally exhaustive nor are all criteria mutually exclusive. In reality, political parties might exhibit features of more than one model. To a certain extent these party types overlap with other, more common typologies such as Duverger's (1954) classical typology of mass-branch and cadre-caucus parties, Karen Strøm's (1990) differentiation of office-, vote- and policy-seeking parties and Krouwel's basic party models of elite party, mass party, electoralist catch-all, cartel party and business-firm party (Krouwel 2006: 252-260). At the same time, however, this classification provides sufficient conceptual clarity and precision to provide a conceptual map for empirical descriptions and analyses.

II. The Thai Party System

The history of political parties in Thailand is relatively brief, compared with many other new democracies. Since the coup d'état against the absolute monarchy in 1932, no formal political parties existed. The *People's Party* – leader of the 1932 "democratic revolution" – was misnamed, for it was closer to a political association or club. Political parties did not come into being in Thailand until the constitution of 1946, which explicitly allowed the free organization of political parties. Under this constitution, several parties were organized of which only the *Democrat Party* (*Prachithipat*, DP) survived. The DP, although it briefly became the ruling party in 1947-48, acted as the main opposition party in parliament until 1975 (see Thak 2007 [1978]).

Effective control over state apparatuses, frequent coup d'états, the forced dissolution of existing parties and legislative enactments by the ruling powers of the "bureaucratic polity" (Riggs 1966) blocked the emergence of well organized and politically powerful parties in Thailand before the mid-1970s (Anusorn 1998: 403-436). Despite these initial weaknesses, parties have been becoming more significant from the late 1970s on (Siripan 2006: 5).

Rather than evolving through the emergence of contesting ideas of ideologies, the formation of Thai political parties since the late 1970s was influenced by three political and institutional factors: the vertical centralization of political power and access to state resources within the unitary organized state; the horizontal decentralization of decision-making authority between state agencies and cabinet ministries; and the dispersion of political power resources within oversized multiparty cabinets and factionalized political parties (Hicken, 2008). The electoral

system at that time (plurality rule in multimember constituencies with plural voting) and ubiquitous money politics further fostered the impact of these three factors on the party system. As the result, the party system was deeply fragmented and factionalized, far from well-institutionalized and its lack of social linkages was clearly evident.

As in many other new democracies around the globe, political parties in Thailand are assumed by many as one or even the 'weakest link' in the political architecture of the democratic system (Thornton 2003; for general view see Carothers 2006). Political parties are hardly the only problematic institution in Thailand's struggling democracy. However, corruption scandals, frequent changes of political parties and cabinet instability as well as the shock wave of the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 contributed to a deep crisis of public confidence in the party system. For many intellectuals, civil society activists, in the media and in urban middle class party politics became synonymous with instability, corruption, vote buying and the collusion of "dark interests" and politics (McCargo 2002; Connors 1998).

The 1997 reforms took these concerns into account and seek to promote five reform objects regarding party politics: (1) reducing the number of political parties; (2) reducing the influence of money politics and strengthening substantial policy differentiation between political parties; (3) setting incentives for the emergence of well-institutionalized political parties with strong membership; (4) improving the professionalism of party organizations; and (5) enhancing internal cohesiveness of political parties by weakening the power of intraparty factions and strengthening central party leaderships' control over candidates and representatives (Hicken 2006; Reilly 2006).

In order to achieve these objectives, the 1997 constitutional reform included a new election system, reformed party and election by-laws, the establishment of an autonomous Election Commission, the exclusion of political parties form the popular election of the Senate, as well as a stronger Prime Minister vis-à-vis parliament and cabinet. For example, introduced in 1998, the *Organic Law on Political Parties* and the *Organic Law on Elections* plus the newly founded Election Commission strictly regulated party operations and accounting practices in order to enhance transparency and accountability within the party system. In addition, these laws required political parties to introduce new elements of intraparty democracy and forced political parties to broaden their membership and establish party branches at the sub-national level. Party switching was made more difficult, thus intraparty factions were weakened (Siripan 2006; Chambers 2007).

However, as one western student of Thai politics pointed out, the "architects of reform do not seem to have anticipated […] potential drawbacks of their scheme" (McCargo 2005). The most significant of these 'drawbacks' was the rise of TRT and Thaksin Shinawatra to political prominence. Even though the explanatory weight of institutional variables is controversial, it is likely that constitutional and electoral reforms were instrumental in the rise of "Thaksinocracy". One might even say the institutional reforms have worked too well.

With the rise of Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai party in the late 1990s, some of the 'deficiencies' of Thailand's political parties and party system seemed to have changed. For example, fragmentation declined; factionalism became weaker; and political parties discovered policies and party platforms as means to mobilize votes. Some political parties began to pay more attention to the need of developing working branch organizations at the sub-national level. On the level of the party organization, some observers noticed the emergence of internally more centralized "electoral-professional" parties" (McCargo 1997).

Several political observers as well as experts and politicians we interviewed for this study define the post-2006 coup institutional framework as an attempt to reverse some of these trends. For example, in order to prevent the re-emergence of single-party (or single-leader) dominance in the political arena, the 2007 constitution encourages the de-concentration of the party system, the anti-agglomeration of party leader prowess, and a revival of intraparty factionalism. Furthermore, the revised organic laws on political parties and elections with
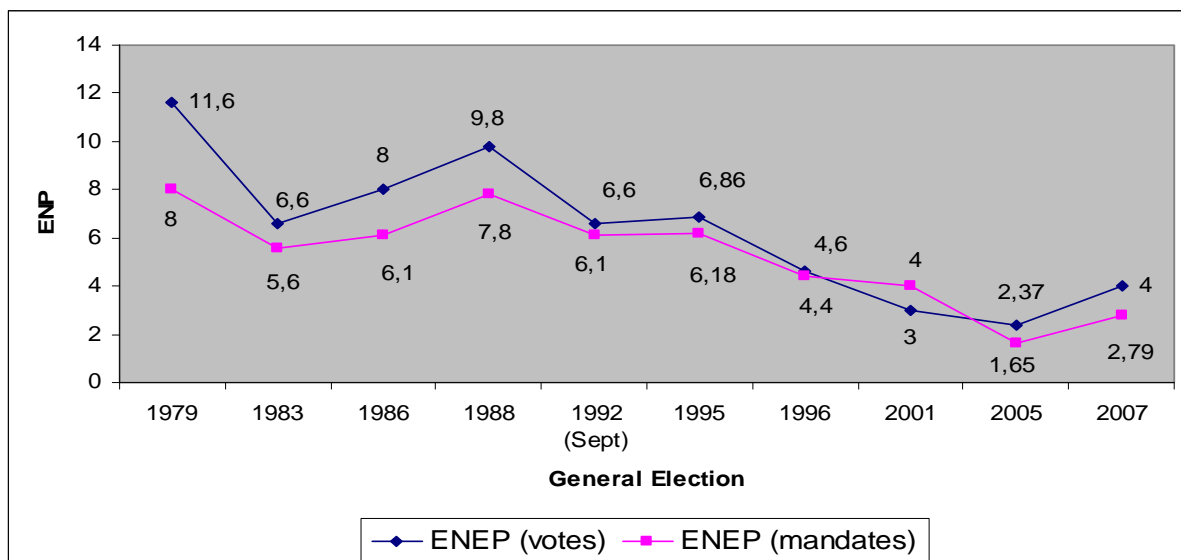
their curious mixture of regulations that weaken the coherence of parties and incentives for stronger organization structure and membership orientation turn the screws tighter on political parties. At the moment of writing this study it is to early for a comprehensive assessment of the lasting effects of the new political and institutional environment on the party system. The initial impression, however suggests the return of some of the attributes specific to the party system in the pre-Thaksin era.

Especially before 2001, political scientists have noted five related problems inhabiting Thailand's political parties and party system which are still relevant to the current situation and worthy of further discussion: (1) fractionalization of the party system; (2) regionalism and the lack of national representation; (3) weak institutionalization of political parties and the party system; (4) factionalism; (5) predominance of leader-dominated and cadre parties.

1 High fragmentation

One characteristic of Thailand's party system is its high number of parties. From 1979 to 2001, there often were as many as 16 relevant parties in Thailand competing in an election, and the effective number of *parliamentary* political parties hovered around 6.0.[4] After 1997, supported by the new institutional setting and strategic learning on the side of *Thai Rak Thai*, the effective number of political parties dropped from 4.6 (1996) to 1.6 in the 2005 election. In 2007 it climbed again to 2.79.

Figure 3: Effective Number of Parliamentary and Electoral Parties

Note: The 2001 and 2005 elections were held under the auspices of the reformist 1997 constitution. During the 2006 election, the opposition parties refused to field candidates. Besides Thai Rak Thai, only one minor party managed to win seats. The 2007 number represents the effective number of electoral parties in the constituency election. Source: calculations by the authors based on data from the Election Commission of Thailand and Nelson (2001).

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[4]The effective number of political parties is the convention al measure in party research to calculate the "real" number of political parties in a party system. We calculated the effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP) and effective number of electoral parties (ENEP), respectively, using Laakso and Taagapera's (1979) measure N for each of election in our data set. N weights parties by the proportion of seats they receive, thus reducing the influence on the measure of parties that receive few seats. N is calculated for n parties receiving seats, and for p_i representing the proportion of seats in the legislature controlled by party *i* or, one divided by the sum of the squared proportions of the seats.
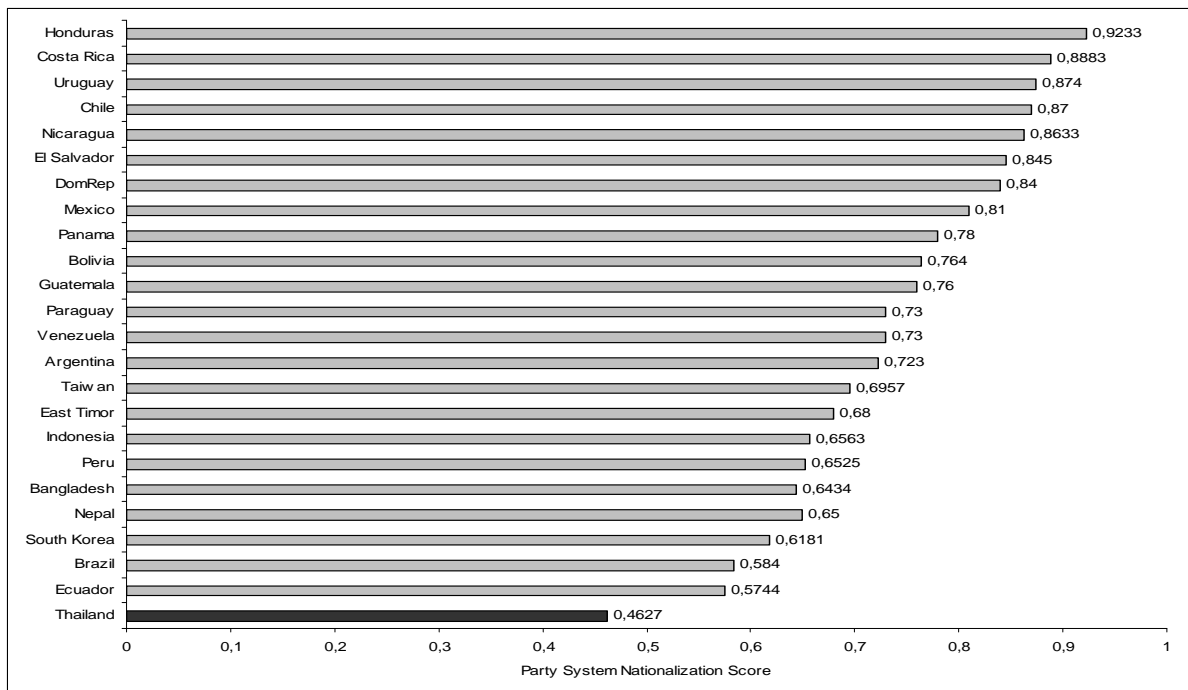
Even though large party fragmentation is not inherently negative for democratic stability or consolidation, in Thailand it had the consequence of forcing political parties to create over-sized multiparty cabinets of more than five parties in average, that were difficult to sustain and, hence, of low durability (Chambers 2008: 302; Hicken 2008: 148). It is worth to mention that the number of parties already was in decline before the 1997 constitution (see Figure 3). The outcome of the 2007 general election suggests that the long-term trend towards concentration of the party system sustains despite efforts to craft institutions which direct the party system in the opposite direction. However, Thailand's party system still ranks high among parliamentary democracies around East Asia (Croissant 2002; Reilly 2006; Rich 2007).

2. Pronounced regionalism

Another key feature of the Thai party system is the strong degree of regionalism. As it is the case with party system fractionalization, party system regionalism does not necessarily constraint the quality or the consolidation of the broader democratic system. However, under a nationalized party system, public policy, ceteris paribus, is likely to be more oriented towards working for the national common good (Jones 2007: 18). In contrast, in regionalized party systems such as in Thailand, public policies are directed far more towards the satisfaction of particularized regional or local interests, often to the detriment of the national common good. Furthermore, regionalization makes it difficult for parties to penetrate electoral areas outside their own regional bases. As parties concentrate on certain groupings of provinces, political polarization between regional constituencies tend to deepen.

A number of recent studies show that Thailand's regionalized multiparty system ranks high among parliamentary democracies around the world in terms of territorial segmentation (Hicken 2008). Indeed, among 25 Asian and Latin American democracies, Croissant and Schächter (2008) found Thailand to have the least nationalized party system, as the major parties' vote shares vary widely across provinces.[5]

Figure 4: Party System Nationalization in Thailand and other democracies

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[5] For the concept of party system nationalization and its measures see Jones/Mainwaring 2003, Hicken 2008.

The data clearly demonstrate that most political parties do not draw their MPs from all regions. Even the TRT, which won a three-quarter majority of seats in 2005, was not able to gain seats in the southern region where the Democrat stronghold was. Even though the exact nature of this phenomenon is still not clear, a possible explanation for the lack of nationalized political parties in Thailand might be the fact, that there has been no complete transition from a fragmented and clientelistic type of politics dominated by local political personalities to *national representation*. National party organizations structured along nationwide cleavages have not completely replaced the atomized type of political representation. Despite the transformation from "candidate" to "party-centered" campaigns in recent years (Siripan 2006: 121), the electoral success of many candidates in the various constituencies still depends primarily upon local issues (for a more elaborated discussion see Hicken 2008). That said, it is important to note that most political parties, except the Democrat Party in the South, do not actually represent the interests of particular regions (Anusorn 1998: 419): "As representation in Thailand is more local than national, this role belongs largely to MPs not parties." The Thai Rak Thai party used to be strong in the Northern region and the Isaan because of the popularity of Thaskin Shinawatra (a native son of Chiang Mai) and his "populist" policies among voters in these regions, and due to the ability of TRT to recruit smaller parties and candidates who had strong local support.

3. Weak institutionalization

A third element of the critique about political parties in Thailand is their weak institutionalization and the inchoate nature of the party system. The term 'institutionalization' describes "the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability' (Huntington 1968: 12). The degree of institutionalization depends on four key dimensions: first, the extent to which parties manifest continuity, come and go, or fluctuate in vote shares in electoral competition; second, the strength of ties between citizens and parties in terms of voting allegiance; third, the degree to which elites bestow legitimacy on open elections and parties as the key route for achieving power; and finally, the extent to which party organizations possess autonomy from party leaders and their minions as well as the amount of genuine intraparty pluralism allowed (Mainwaring 1998; Mainwaring/Torcal 2006)
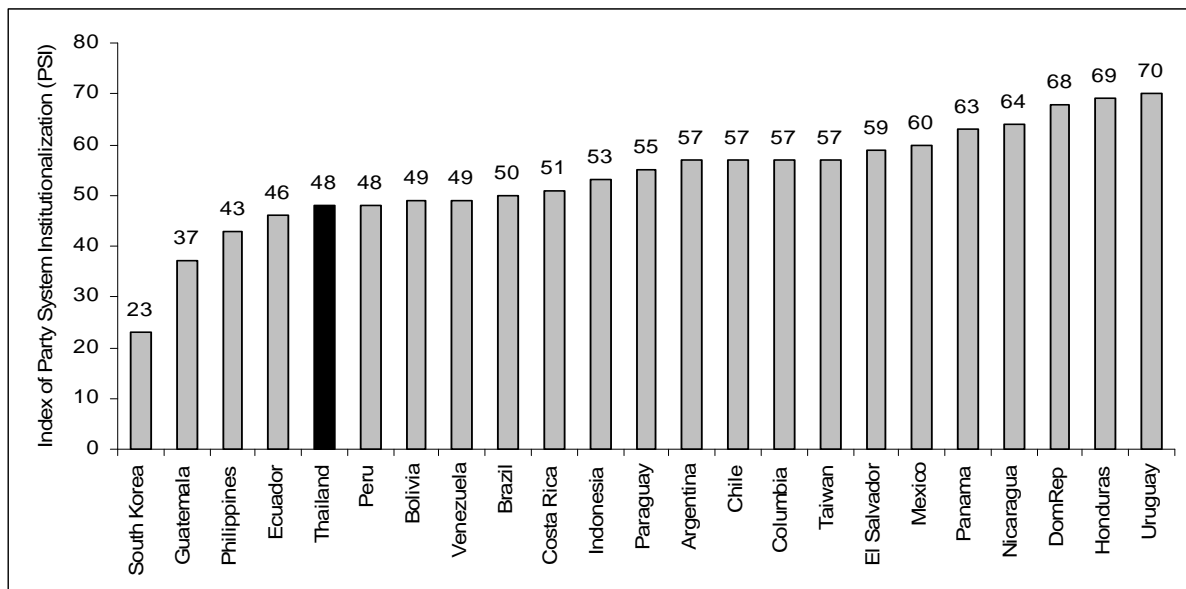
In an institutionalized party system „actors develop expectations and behaviour based on the premise that the fundamental contours and rules of party competition and behaviour will prevail into the foreseeable future. In an institutionalized party system, there is stability in who the main parties are and how they behave." (Mainwaring/Torcal 2006: 207). In less institutionalized ("inchoate") party systems, in contrast, parties rise and fall from election to election, roots in the population are often shallow, charismatic parties flourish, and party organizations and the legitimacy of parties are weak. In less institutionalized party systems, power is more highly centralized in the party leaders and lower-level party members are often unable to effectively air grievances. This leads to increasingly severe intra-party conflicts between factions and the party leader with the eventual result that factions either defer to the party leader, defect to another party, or use their control over finances as a tool to modify the party leader's behaviour (cf. Zariski 1960).

Inchoate party systems not only tend toward stronger factionalism and weaker intraparty democracy, as powerful personalities centralize control over intraparty decision-making. The lack of institutionalization of the party system is also often associated with pathologies in governance. Low levels of party system institutionalization can be associated with high turnover in political office, inability to legislate, gridlock between different branches of govern-

ment, inability to hold politicians accountable for public policy, and, potentially, the delegitimation of parties and democracy (Mainwaring/Scully 1995; Mainwaring 1998).

Empirical studies suggest that in Thailand, political parties are quite inchoate (Hicken 2006; Ufen 2008). A recent comparative analysis of party system institutionalization in 23 new democracies in East Asia and Latin America found that Thailand is among the least institutionalized party systems:

Figure 5: Party System Institutionalization in Thailand and 22 other democracies

Note: The Index of Party System Institutionalization (IPSI) is an aggregate index that consists of four partial indices: (1) stability in inter-party patterns of competition; (2) party roots in society; (3) the legitimacy of political parties and elections; (4) political party organization. The score for each partial index values between 0 and 100. To calculate the IPSI these four scores are summed and then divided by four. Source: Croissant 2008, Figure 1.

Following Mainwaring's typology of well-institutionalized and inchoate party systems, Thai parties have only been institutionalized to the extent that elites have bestowed legitimacy on open elections and parties as the key route for achieving power. Even after Thailand's 1997 and 2007 institutional reforms, Thai parties have remained only shallowly institutionalized. McCargo (1997: 118) refers to "authentically Thai" parties as being characterized by "the dominance of personalities and the influence of money". The "cadre-esque" (ibid.), inchoate, and decentralized nature of Thai parties has allowed personalism, clientelism, and kinship ties to prevail among party members.

4. Strong Factionalism

Intra-party factions (*phak puak*) tend to be essential actors in Thai parliamentary politics. As such, Thai parties tend to be partitioned along factional lines. Intra-party factions are separate political groupings which come together to achieve common material or political interests (e.g. the extraction of rent through control of cabinet portfolio positions). Intra-party factions can be defined as the often temporary grouping together of politicians and their support groups both within and apart from an overarching party structure. Power relationships within factions are based on a central personality or financier who maintains his power through dependency relationships with faction-based politicians.
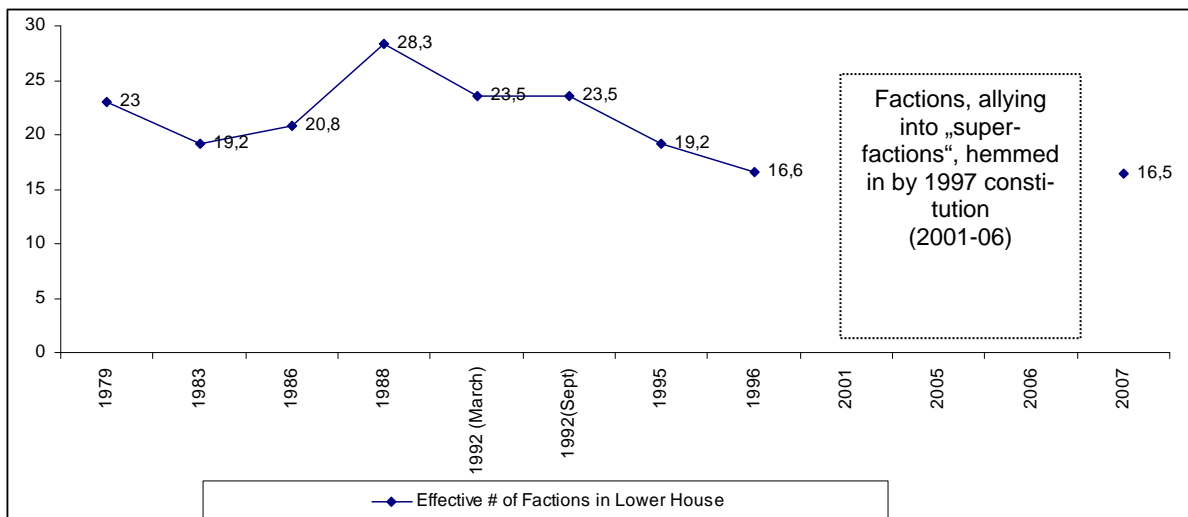
The earliest examinations of factionalism in Thailand were studies by Thaweesak (1986), Lertsukekasem (1988), Khokongprasert (1990) and Sutranan (1991). They all reached the conclusion that political parties in Thailand are much factionalized. In a similar way, Ockey (1994) emphasized the significance of factions in Thai political parties. Ockey also argues that factional bickering destabilizes cabinets, exacerbates political corruption, hinders the development of political parties, and makes Thailand's languishing parliamentary system more subject to coups d'état (Ockey 1994: 259).

More recent works on Thai factionalism by Sajjayan (1997), Khamnurakhasa (2000), Tanapornpan (2001), Chambers (2001, 2005, 2006, 2008), Ockey (2003), and Nelson (2005) conclude that post-1997 parties in Thailand have relied on factions to establish their electoral networks; parties have been unable to develop convincing policies to influence rural voters; coalition building has been based on the size of individual factions; and patronage flowing from cabinet postings has been controlled and distributed by factions (Ockey 2003). In addition, in a recent quantitative analysis, Chambers (2008) found a significant relationship between the effective number of intra-party factions and the longevity of cabinets, coalitions, and parliaments in the period 1979 to 2001.

For the most part, factions are differentiated by personality but also by geography. In this latter regard, factions are often provincial groupings of politicians and sitting MPs. Larger groupings consist of collections of neighbouring provinces' politicians: regional factions. Alliances of regional factions come together to form super-factions, consisting of huge constellations of MPs. The rise of super-factions has paralleled the evolution of Thai parties with large numbers of MPs in Thailand's post 1997 political environment. Without their parties, factions lack institutional legitimacy. Factions act as party principals. Meanwhile, the party leader (also often the leader of the dominant party faction and a highly charismatic figure), acts as the agent. This agent must satiate participant factions to keep them cooperating within the overall party organization. Given that factions provide parties with finance and act as the intermediaries between central party offices and voters on the ground, these cliques are highly significant to the central party leadership. Provincial and regional factions control *rabob hua kanaen* (vote-canvassing networks) which national parties depend on to collect votes. Ultimately, Thai parties are generally quite decentralized in terms of factional autonomy One anomaly to the factiousness of Thai parties has been the Democrat party.

The effective number of intra-party factions across 12 general elections, from 1979 until 2007, has shown a diminishing in their quantity and a growth in their size until 2006, and a growth again of factions and their diminishing in size in 2007.

Figure 6: Effective Number of Factions in Thailand (1979-2007)

Factions, allying into „super-factions", hemmed in by 1997 consti-tution (2001-06)

Effective # of Factions in Lower House

Factionalism in Thailand has engendered intra-party conflicts in which factions compete with each other for seat(s) in the cabinet, "the disgruntled losers often seeking to topple ministers within their own party" (Ockey 1994: 265). Such factional bickering has given rise to the ne-gotiating of intra-party gentlemen's agreements to swap seats between factions every six months (hence cabinet reshuffles every six months), leading to concerns that the govern-ment might become destabilized.

The faction system became increasingly institutionalized given the growth of the business class during the 1980s as well as effects from the use of multi-member district magnitude during elections. The growth of factionalism paralleled the increasing involvement of civilian businessmen and their political parties both in the Lower House of Parliament and in the cabinet over the last two decades. Multi-member districts had meanwhile encouraged MP candidates to run against each other at election time while forcing these people to attach themselves to certain affluent party bigwigs. Neither the 1981 Political Party Act nor the 1991 Constitution did much to discourage the growth of factions. Both enactments sought to de-velop Thai political parties into Duvergian mass parties (see Duverger, 1955), stipulating for instance that parties must have at least 5000 members to register, that parties must have members across different national regions, that parties must compete for at least 25% of all electoral seats, and that candidate finance must be limited to 350,000 baht each (McCargo in Hewison, 1997; Ockey, 1994, p.269). The 1997 basic law did succeed in hemming fac-tions in under strengthened party verticalization. In this way, Thai Rak Thai party leader Thaksin Shinawatra succeeded in ensuring that TRT factions could not defect from the party while being compelled to follow orders or not face renomination. The 2007 constitution, how-ever, emancipated factions from the 1997 restrictions. Today, Thai factions exercise more power within parties than they have in over 10 years. In the end, given that organization and finance have invariably been controlled more by factions than parties, parties, in many cases, have come to depend on the resources of factions to enter into ruling coalitions (Ockey 1994: 255). Factions are thus important actors in the making, durability, and breaking of both parties and cabinets (Chambers 2008).

5. Dominance of Leader-dominated and cadre parties

Over the last half-century of their existence, Thai political parties have generally followed two models: the leader-dominated party and the cadre party. Meanwhile, mass membership, corporatist, and issue-oriented parties have been slow to develop in Thailand. Classic mass parties have never evolved in Thailand. While there was a Socialist party (perhaps fitting into

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the mold of issue-orientation) which participated in the 1976 election, it quickly evaporated after that year. A partial variant of the corporatist party might be found in *Thai Rak Thai* (including *Palang Prachachon* and *Puea Thai*)[6] on one side and *Prachatipat* on the other but these two are still different forms of party (see table below).

For the most part, Thai parties have preoccupied themselves with achieving material gains for their leaders and office-seeking instead of policy seeking, combined with a lack of ideological appeal and party platforms that would link political parties with social groups and provide a voice to mass memberships. Thai party organizations have been mere legal shells verticalized around a single personality, dominated by notables, or controlled by factions. In Thailand, idealized Duvergian mass parties have thus not evolved while cadre parties have been quite common.

Whether formed around a single personality or a grouping of cadre notables, Thai parties have developed along four paths:

- The first trajectory derived from establishment by metropolitan politico-businesspeople. Thailand's oldest and youngest relevant parties (the *Advanced Party*, founded by Bangkok businessman Kukrit Pramoj in late 1945 [Thailand's first real political party], and the *Thai Rak Thai* Party, set up by telecommunications tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra in 1998) were both born through the efforts of such urban entrepreneurs/political bosses.

- Secondly, parties in Thailand have been created following mergers between political parties. For example, Narong Wongwan's *Ekkapap Party* was formed in 1990 through the amalgamation of the *Community Action*, *Progressive*, *Ruam Thai*, and *Prachachon* parties.

- Thai parties have thirdly arisen from factional splits. For example, the *Social Action Party*, representing the faction of Kukrit Pramoj, split off from the *Democrat Party* in 1974.

- Finally, Thai parties have sprung up as instruments of military factions in the Lower House. In this way, as Thailand has shifted increasingly toward a parliamentary democracy, military groups have sought to continue exerting political power in the changed political playing field. Many of these parties later became political party factions (e.g. *Siam Democratic Party* entered *Chart Thai*).

Table 2: Types of Thai parties

Political Party	Method of Formation	*Party Type*
Democrat	Entrepreneurial group	*Cadre/corporatist*
Seritham	Factional split	*Cadre*
Rassadorn	Military personality/group	*Leader-dominated*
Ekkapap, Sammakhitham	Merging of small parties	*Cadre*
Social Action	Factional split	*cadre*
Tin Thai	Factional split	*cadre*
Thai Rak Thai	Single entrepreneur and group	*Leader-dominated/corporatist*

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[6] On September 21, 2008, Yaowapha Wongsawat (sister of Thaksin, wife of Prime Minister Somchai, and a former executive of court-dissolved Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party officially registered the Puea Thai or PT (For Thais) party. The party was created as an optional holding company in case Thailand's courts decide to dissolve the People's Power party. In that case, PPP MPs could seek refuge in Puea Thai. The party's leader is Suchart Thadadamrongvej, who served as Finance Minister in the government of Somchai Wongsawat. It also has two deputy leaders and a five-member executive committee. Many ex-MPs from the PPP and TRT have already signed up for the Puea Thai party. It must be emphasized that PT is specifically the fall-back of Yaowapha's PPP Wang Bua Baan super-faction, composed of five regional mini-factions (approximately 150-160 MPs). Her party rival is Newin Chidchob (another former TRT executive banned from politics for five years). The 73-member Newin faction's optional holding company party is to be called the Suwannaphum (Golden Land) party. See "Puea Thai Emerges," Bangkok Post, http://bangkokpost.com; Thanong Kanthong, "Newin and Non-Newin Groups in Power Struggle," *The Nation* Weblog, September 16, 2008, http:www.nationmultimedia.com.

Palang Prachachon/Puea Thai*	Factional split	*Leader-dominated/corporatist*
New Aspiration	Military personality	*Leader-dominated*
Chart Thai	Military personality/group	*Cadre --] leader-dominated*
Mahachon	Factional split	*Leader-dominated*
Palang Dharma	Military personality	*Leader-dominated*
Matchima Tippathai	Factional split	*cadre*
Puea Paendin	Factional split	*cadre*
Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana	Fractional split	*Leader-dominated*
Pracharaj	*Factional split*	*Leader-dominated*

Table 2 above shows some of the major political parties in Thailand's recent history. It indicates a correspondence between method of political party formation in Thailand and party type. Both *Thai Rak Thai* (with heirs *Palang Prachachon* and *Puea Thai* included) and *Democrat Party* began from civilian, entrepreneurial groups and have tended toward a flexible party type, combining corporatism with either leader-dominated characteristics (TRT, PPP, etc.) or cadre-ism (DP). Nine parties emerged from factional splits, with some dominated by a leader and others by cadre groups of notables. These parties have tended to be provincial in focus as well as small to medium-sized. Some parties (four in the table) emerged through the efforts of Thai military groups. These have tended to be leader-dominated. Finally, some parties have evolved from mergers (e.g. *Samakkhitam*). Such parties have tended to be cadre in nature. One variable important for determining party type is size. Smaller parties tend to be more vertically directed by a single leader while larger parties—generally challenged with problems of finance, the sheer difficulties of centralized administration, and the inability to satiate intra-party factions—tend to be more decentralized. An exception to this has been *Thai Rak Thai* under Thaksin Shinawatra.

6 Political Parties in Thailand since the 2006 Coup d'état

At the moment of writing this report, 66 political parties have registered with the Election Commission. Most of them are micro parties, unable to win representation at the national level. For example, of the 31 political parties competing in the party list vote and 39 contesting the constituency portion of the 2007 general election, only seven managed to win any seats. Of these seven parties, five are 'new' political groupings founded after the 2006 military coup against Prime Minister Thaksin, whereas only two parties – *Chart Thai* and the *Democrats* – can be labelled as 'old' more or less established parties who have been around for more than three decades (see Table 3).

Table 3: Election Results (2001-2007)

	2001				2005				2007			
	Number of Seats			% of votes	Number of Seats			% of votes	Number of Seats			% of votes
	Districts	Party List	Total	Party list	Districts	Party List	Total	Party list	Districts	Party List	Total	Party list
New Aspiration	28	8	36	7.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.53%
Chart Pattana	22	7	29	6.2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Seritham	14	0	14	5.3	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Rassadorn	2	0	2	1.3	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Social	1	0	1		--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Action											
Tin Thai	1	0	1	2.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Thai Rak Thai	200	48	248	40.7	310	67	377	61.1	--	--	--	--
Democrat Party	97	31	128	26.4	70	26	96	23.2	131	33	164	40.4
Chart Thai	35	6	41	5.3	18	7	25	6.6	30	4	34	4
Mahachon	--	--	--	--	2	0	2	4.3	0	0	0	.07
People Power	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	199	34	233	41
Matchima Tippathai	--	--	--	--				--	11	0	11	1.4
Pua Pandin	--	--	--	--				--	17	7	24	5.3
Rum Jai Thai Chart Pattana	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	8	1	9	2.4
Pracharaj	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4	1	5	0.38
Others	0	0	0	5.7	--	--	--	4.8	--	--	--	4.5
Total	400	100	500	100	400	100	500	100	400	80	480	100

Source: Election Commission of Thailand.

A quick glance at the origins of these 'new' political parties, however, indicates that they all are fractions of Thaksin's defunct Thai Rak Thai party. Between the May 30, 2007 dissolution of the TRT and revocation of decrees #15 and #23[7], and the end of October, 2007, numerous factions migrated from TRT to the following five parties:

1. *Palang Prachachon Party*. The PPP is largest of the TRT remnants. In fact, it can correctly be identified as the rump loyalist party of ousted PM Thaksin Shinawatra, whereas the four other parties emerged to act as middle alternatives between PPP and the main anti-Thaksin parties.

2. *Puea Paendin Party*. The party stands on a myriad of northeastern factions, has no clear platform, is personalist in combining the interests of its faction leaders, and may also be a proxy of a certain military clique. The party is covering parts of Thailand's northeastern region.

3. *Ruam Jai Thai Chat Pattana*. The RJTCP claims platform policy stances and feeds on the resources and persona of a powerful former TRT faction leader (Suwat Liptanpanlop). The party is centered around Nakorn Ratchasima province.

4. *Matchimathippatai*. Matchimathippatai alleges a broad though superficial policy platform, is built on the personas of former party leader Prachai Leopairatana and current (former) Secretary General Anongwan Thepsutin, wife of a former TRT faction leader (Somsak Thepsuthin). The party's regional stronghold is centered in Thailand's lower north.

5. *Pracharaj Party*. The Pracharaj is a mere personalist entity for faction leader Sanoh Tienthong, who had earlier been a party executive and faction boss for Chart Thai, New Aspiration, and TRT in that order chronologically. Pracharaj is principally located in Thailand's far east where most of its MPs come from and where the party has its main vote-base.

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[7] On July 18, 2007, the junta-installed National Legislative Assembly (NLA) passed a bill revoking parts of the Council for Democratic Reforms' announcements #15 and #27, originally passed in the wake of the September 19, 2006 military coup. The first decree had barred existing political parties from engaging in political activities while the second had prohibited the registering of new parties. Meanwhile, a ban was placed on the use of any dissolved party's name for five years—clearly aimed at Thai Rak Thai.

Outside of former TRT faction-created parties, the Democrat Party (Prachatipat) is known as something of a spear-bearer for opposition during the era of PM Thaksin. The second major non-TRT force is the Chart Thai Party of former PM Banharn Silpa-archa.

6.1 Thai Rak Thai and Palang Prachachon Parties

Thai Rak Thai (TRT, *Thais Loving Thais*) was founded in 1998 by telecommunications billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra who became its first leader. In 2001, TRT won a landslide victory in general elections (see Table 3), based partly on Thaksin's enormous financial investment in the campaign, a successful marketing strategy, the party's ability to draw in defecting factions from other parties before the election, and also Thaksin's promise to pursue numerous populist policies (later implemented) that appealed to mostly rural Thai. TRT won another landslide election in 2005, ensuring Thaksin's leadership as Prime Minister to 2006 (Croissant/Dosch 2001; Croissant/Pojar 2005; McCargo/Ukrist 2005; Nelson 2005).

As Prime Minister, Thaksin encouraged the merging of smaller parties into *Thai Rak Thai*. Between 2001 and 2005, TRT incorporated *Seritham*, *New Aspiration*, *Rassadorn*, and *Chart Pattana* into itself. The only parties with MPs other than TRT were the *Democrat*, *Chart Thai*, and *Mahachon* parties.

TRT's popularity and parliamentary prowess derived from the support it received from the majority of voters in Thailand's north and northeast (Croissant 2008b). These two regions together accounted for the far majority of Thailand's voting base. TRT was highly verticalized in terms of party organization. Virtually every decision depended on the party leader or a coterie of executives at the top, whose decisions had to be reviewed by the party leader. As such, Thaksin ran TRT much like a corporation with a corporate board and himself as CEO (Siripan 2006).

Thailand's September 19, 2006 coup marked the end of Thaksin's TRT premiership. The 1997 constitution was voided, parties were temporarily outlawed and TRT was forced to regroup. A case against TRT for malfeasance in the 2006 election had already been launched and it appeared that the party might be dissolved. On May 30, 2007 TRT was indeed dissolved, its party executives (including Thaksin) were banned from active politics for five years. Thereupon, the *Thai Rak Thai Group* (loyalists of ousted PM Thaksin Shinawatra), sought refuge in the *Palang Prachachon* (PPP, *People's Power Party)*).

Palang Prachachon Party was founded on November 9, 1998 by Police Lieutenant Colonel Karn Tienkaew. Though PPP's name implied a people-oriented ideology, the party was devoid of any policy orientations. Rather, it was little more than a micro-holding company for MP factions looking for a party host. PPP did compete in the 2005 general election but gained no seats. In late July 2007, however, the PPP became the legal holding company of *Thai Rak Thai*. The party included (Yaowapha Wongsawat's) Wang Bua Ban, Sudarat, and Chidchob factions, bringing together minimally 130 ex-MPs previously elected in the 2005 election. On August 9, over 10 ex-MP members of *Chart Thai* migrated to PPP.[8] Other ex-TRT politicians migrated from *Matchima* to PPP. Veteran firebrand Samak Sundaravej was enticed to head the political entity. He immediately raised eyebrows by admitting to be a "nominee" of (former PM) Thaksin Shinawatra.[9] Such a role was illegal under the 2007 constitution. Surapong Suebwonglee, a loyal Thaksin stalwart, assumed the post of Secretary General, while Kuthep Saikrajarng became the party spokesperson. As for its objectives, PPP's policy orientations mirrored those of Thai Rak Thai, pushing the same programs for Thailand's rural and urban poor.

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[8] "Chart Thai Loses Over 10 Former MPs," *The Nation*, August 9, 2007, http://www.nationmultimedia.com.
[9] Sopon Ongkara, "Sidelines: Samak Spits Venom As Thaksin's Nominee." *The Nation*, August 26, 2007, http://www.nationmultimedia.com.

The December 2007 election returned pro-Thaksin politicians to power through their plurality victory. Forming a coalition government with four other remnant parties of TRT plus the *Chart Thai*, the PPP government lead by Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej sought to continue Thaksin's pro-rural poor policies but also amend the military-sponsored 2007 constitution, which had empowered the judiciary to pursue cases against politicians such as Thaksin.

Though PPP's organizational characteristics remain rather murky, one can surmise that since the party was meant to be a proxy for Thaksin's TRT, that Thaksin himself retained surreptitious control over it. Still, PM Samak Sundaravej appeared at least superficially as the party's leader and his combative personality belied that of an apparent CEO leader. The PPP's executive committee perhaps held more sway under Samak than it had under Thaksin's TRT. Indeed intra-party factiousness was more pronounced in PPP than it had been in TRT. This owed partly to the inability of Samak to match the factional juggling abilities of Thaksin but also to the 2007 constitution which, to some extent, weakened party leadership control over MP behaviour. Moreover, PPP was simply a large party with many factions seeking the spoils of office. In 2008, new Prime Minister Somchai's government encountered a delay in getting started given the jockeying for posts by the PPP's intra-party cliques.[10]

In September 2008, Thailand's election Commission ruled unanimously to recommend the dissolution of PPP for complicity in the election irregularities of one of its executives. The case was forwarded to the Supreme Court where it appeared that the ECT decision would be upheld in short order. During the same month, PM Samak was convicted on charges of malfeasance and he was compelled to resign from office. The PPP immediately renominated him to the premiership. However, the Isaan Pattana faction refused to vote for Samak's reinstatement, effectively keeping him from becoming prime minister once again. This is interesting as it shows the growing power of factionalism in Thai political parties (especially PPP) in Thailand's post-2007 era. Thereupon, deputy PM Somchai Wongsawat was elevated to take Samak's place as Prime Minister and (ultimately) party leader. Surapong Suebwonglee and Kuthep Saikrajrng continued to serve as Secretary General and party spokesperson respectively.

6.2 Prachatipat (Democrat Party)

The *Democrat Party* is today Thailand's oldest still-functioning political party. In Mark Askew's words "The Democrat Party is the great survivor in Thailand's fraught history of parliamentary politics" (Askew 2008: 42). The party has had five leaders with three serving as as Prime Minister. Formed on April 5, 1946, DP was early on royalist in character. It initially contained four major faction leaders: Khuang (as Party Leader); Seni Pramoj (as Deputy Party Leader); Kukrit Pramoj (as Secretary General); and Liang Chaiyakarn (who soon broke away to form the *Prachachon Party*). By the late 1950s, the Democrats had effectively become the moderate parliamentary opposition to military dictatorship. Following the death of Khuang Aphaiwong in 1968, internal discord took hold. In addition to personal rivalries among the remaining faction leaders, mild ideology also played a role in factional differences. One group of Democrats wanted to "stick to the free enterprise policy" while Seni's faction favored what they called "`mild socialism.'" By 1975, the party was split into the factions of Seni Pramoj, Pracha Burontanit, Chumpol Maninate, and Yai Sawitachat. The 1976 military coup against a Democrat-led government cemented this party's identification with pro-democratic elements.

Many of the *Democrat Party*'s founders have been Sino-Thais from Bangkok but also Thailand's south. Since at least the 1970s, southerners have increasingly placed their trust in the

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[10] Anucha Charoenpo, Aekarach Sattaburuth, "Jockeying by Factions Delays Aide Postings."*Bangkok Post*, October 1, 2008, http://www.bangkokpost.com.

Democrat Party (longer than any other region in Thailand has trusted one party). Southerners have a unique dialect and culture, and the party became the vehicle for Southern political identity. In the 1980s, the DP was also popular amongThai southern Malay Muslims. Yet in 1988 most Muslim Thai MPs, increasingly disenchanted with the lack of attention from the Democrats, defected from the party, moving as a faction (the *Wadah* [unity] Group). This effectively divided Muslim voters between the Democrats and whichever party *Wadah* entered. Still, Chuan Leekpai, a southern son, served as Thailand's Prime Minister twice (1992-5; 1997-2001), and succeeded in increasingly galvanizing linkages between *Prachatipat* and the South.

The financial crisis of 1997 cost DP voter legitimacy and it became a small opposition leader to the dominant governing party of TRT from 2001 to 2006. DP's factions are not as clear as in other parties. However, though personalities are important in DP, region seems to best differentiate one faction from another. Thus, there has been a Northern, Central, Bangkok, Northeast, and Southern faction. Party switching by DP MPs is a rare event, though it does occur.

In terms of ideology, *Prachatipat* has tended to champion fiscal conservatism and a tight monetary policy. The Democrats today paradoxically support greater democratization in Thailand despite implicitly supporting the military's coup against Thaksin in September 2006. Further, they have increasingly promoted equitable reforms for Thailand's poor. In 2008, DP exists as a pro-pluralism mainstream parliamentary alternative between PPP and *Chart Thai* on one side and the extra-parliamentary, anti-government *People's Alliance for Democracy* (PAD) on the other. Ultimately, the *Democrat Party* stands as a time-proven leading party in Thailand's evolving democracy.

Organizationally, the party is much more transparent and less verticalized than other Thai parties. Open committee decision-making generally takes precedence over back-room deals by party elders. It is the only party in Thailand which has a meaningful, formalized electoral process to select party leaders. The party leader (since March 2005: Abhisit Vechachiwa) is less powerful than in most other parties. He is responsible only for party administration and for being the representative of the party. He cannot appoint people to party positions or committees without the consent of the Executive Committee, the party's main decision-making organ. Given its long history in which the party ha experienced many generations of leadership, the party has become an institution under the collective responsibility of the Executive Committee—not a mere vehicle for a single Thai politico (Anusorn 1998: 424; Askew 2008).

Moreover, the party's relative longevity compared to other Thai parties has perhaps enabled it to become more institutionalized. It possesses a general assembly, which elects an executive board that oversees the party. This board includes the party leader, the secretary-general, several MPs, and other party officials. The party's secretary-general oversees the branch offices and committees, and the party's director manages personnel, accounting, conferences, public relations, information services, and registration. The party is seeking to build more branches, engage in training seminars, and aims to build support in Thailand's north and northeast.

Today the *Democrat Party* finds its support predominantly from southerners but also from Bangkokians. The current secretary-general, Suthep Thuebsuwan (from the Southern province of Surat Thani), has long been a Democrat party power-broker. The present leader, Abhisit Vechachiwa, is a young, charismatic orator from a notable Bangkok family. His elevation was partly an attempt by the Democrats to diminish support for *Thai Rak Thai* among Bangkokians.

6.3 Chart Thai (Thai Nation) Party

Thailand's second-oldest, still relevant political party today is *Chart Thai* or CTP (formed in 1974). Originally, this party represented the military faction of *Soi Rajakru*, the Phao-Phin military faction during the *Serimangkasila* period. *Chart Thai's* party leader was General Praman Adireksan, former Minister of Communications during the 1950s. The Deputy Party Leader was former UTPP MP General Siri Siriyothin. General Chatchai Chunhavan, General Phin's son, served as Secretary General. The major financiers of the party were Banharn Silpa-archa and Anuwat Watanapong. While the two major intra-party factions formed around Praman and Chatchai, smaller factions formed around the other party bigwigs. In the mid-1980s, Chatchai Chunhavan assumed the post of party leader. Following Chart Thai's 1988 general election victory, Chatchai became prime minister and served until 1991 when he was toppled by a military coup. In 1992, Banharn Silpa-archa became party leader in a revitalized CTP without Chatchai. Banharn himself became prime minister following the 1995 election. However, Banharn's government lasted only 1 year and his party has been partly blamed for crony capitalism which contributed to Thailand's financial collapse in 1997. Since 1997, CTP has become a medium-sized Thai party that seems to represent the Central region of the country, where the party has its local strongholds.

Once ridden with multiple, regional factions, in 2008 it is composed of the rump faction of Banharn (centered in Suphanburi province), who, at 76, remains party leader. Meanwhile, Somsak Prissanananthakul oversees a mini-faction centered in Angthong province.

Organizationally, the party represents a quasi-feudal organization in which ultimate decision-making rests with Banharn though his family and highly trusted party elders have great influence. The Chart Thai leader is able not only to carry out and control all party activities but also to veto any party resolution and decision of the party's main organ, the Executive Committtee.

CTP has a low level of institutionalization, where personalistic ties take precedence over regulations and elections. "This informal nature influences all aspects of the party's structure and decision-making." (NDI 2004: 141). Moreover, CTP is a party generally devoid of ideology, instead seeking to be part of any coalition in power. Banharn has acquired the nickname of "the slippery eel" for his tendency to move from coalition from coalition.[11] Indeed CTP has previously supported both a Democrat-led and Thai Rak Thai led government. In its platform, the party promotes a vaguely worded strategy of "Sajaneeyom" (New Ideology), and emphasizes Thailand's agricultural development.

7. Summary

Over the last 50 years, Thai politics has witnessed the very protracted development of parties. They have been a minor sideshow to the continuing dominance of monarchy and military, as well as the growing importance of business associations (e.g. Thai Chamber of Commerce) and civil society movements (e.g. *People's Alliance for Democracy*). Hobbled with the shallowness of representation, institutional weaknesses, the proven malfeasance of some party leaders, the perception of many Thai people that parties are vehicles of the corrupt, and the fact that Thai democracy is still only slowly emerging, Thai parties face many obstacles indeed.

With such weaknesses, one might wonder if parties have any significance in Thai politics. They do. Parties are important, first, because they are legitimate parliamentary players—they are the legal vehicles within which politicians and factions must operate. Secondly, parties, being national organizations unlike factions, assume greater importance than factions during moments of national tension.

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[11]   "The   Dust   is   Thick   in   the   Air,"   *The   Nation*,   September   10,   2008, http://blog.nationmultimedia.com/print.php?id=5772.

In Thailand, parties are relatively weak, generally non-ideological, and voter needs tend to be much more instrumental. Issue cleavages that are often considered determinants of party evolution in West European and some Asian countries (see Lipset and Rokkan [1966]; Caramani 2004; Ufen 2008; Croissant/Schächter 2008),"have generally played a minor role in the [Thai] electorate's voting behavior", except for the southern region (Surin/McCargo 1997: 135). Rather than political mobilization of issue cleavages, finance, corruption, and the hiring of regional vote canvassers have been necessary in winning elections (Ockey 1994, 2003; McCargo/Callahan 1996, Chambers 2001).

Mass-bureaucratic political parties, corresponding to Continental European parties with mass memberships, and elaborated party platforms do not exist in Thailand. Most parties sway between cadre and leader-dominated political parties (see Table 3). Of the seven political parties in parliament, five belong to the type of cadre or leader-dominated parties. So far, only *Thai Rak Thai* (and its related successor, the PPP) and the *Democrat Party* have been able to combine corporatist attributes to a party type which, for the former is decidedly leader-dominated and for the latter was originally cadre-esque. Interestingly, these two parties—with hybridized party types—dominate Thai party politics today and are already shaping the future of Thai party characteristics.

III. The Status of Intra-party Democracy in Thailand

As mentioned above, most parties in Thailand belong either to the types of leader-dominated and cadre parties or combine elements of both party models. These party models are said to have a lower degree of IPD (in terms of participation of parties' rank-and-file) due to the dominance of party elites, the lack of mass membership and the low commitment to the representation of politically marginalized social groups, such as women, the youth and minorities. While the following analysis points to a number of important variations between individual political parties in Thailand, most findings of our empirical survey support this assumption.

1. Views regarding intraparty democracy

The findings of our interviews with party representatives and non-partisan experts reveal that political parties and particularly politicians seem to look at intraparty democracy in an elitist way. In general we are able to identify three somewhat different views regarding internal party democracy among party representatives.

The first position sees intra-party democracy as a diffuse principle that is not working as a practical system. According to this view, intraparty democracy is impossible as far as grassroots members are concerned. Furthermore it is undesirable from a functionalist point of view as it can lead to volatile political agendas and "playing politics" inside the party. Therefore, rank-and-file neither can nor should not have much say in internal decision-making. To let them participate actively in party affairs, in this view, risks disintegration of the party itself.

In contrast, the second opinion we found in our interviews is that a certain degree of internal democracy can and should be realized in Thai political parties. According to this position, a party is internally democratic when the leadership is elected by party members or representatives thereof; decisions are made by the elected leaders; and the collective leadership has to be responsible for its actions. Furthermore, according to this more demanding conception, to be called internally democratic, the process of decision-making within the party should be as open as possible; decisions must not be completely top-down and should be as transparent as possible.

The third, and by far the most frequent opinion we found among party politicians, is that respondents gave weight to two critical elements of intra-party democracy - participation and

consultation. However, when asked who should participate and be consulted, respondents tended to compare their political party to some kind of family or informal grouping. Decisions should be made by the leader or the collective leadership of the party after MPs and executive committee members have had the opportunity to "say their opinion" without fear of reprisals. The rights of minority cliques within the parties (e.g. factions) should be respected and they should be included in decision-making. However, the role of the rank-and-file however was hardly mentioned.

Furthermore, when we asked experts and scholars about their view of intra-party democracy, most respondents mentioned popular participation and consultation, transparency and accountability, as well as regular free and fair intraparty elections as a basis for assessing a party's intra-party democracy. These results were in congruence with definitions of intra-party democracy provided in the literature. Interestingly, the dominant view of these experts is that while most of the political parties have detailed party constitutions and a rudimentary party organization at the sub-national level, in most parties, the members of the executive committee and the MPs dominate the selection and nomination of candidates for intra-party and national office, respectively. As far as inclusion is concerned, intraparty democracy in most Thai parties is defined in terms of inclusion/exclusion of faction leaders from decision-making. In terms of decentralization, the dominant view within political parties in Thailand is congruent with the stratarchical party model, in which organizational power and authority does not rest in a single leader, but is decentralized among various layers of the party organization. However, given the weak institutionalization and organizational structure of Thai political parties, decentralization is understood as distribution of decision-making authority among party elites either at the national centre or, when factionalism correlates with regionalism, among party elites at different provinces or regions.

Expert views converge in the assessment that in most parties except the Democrat Party the election of the party leader by the executive committee member and party conventions is only a formality. Typically, party elites in Thailand prefer a patronage-oriented selection system, in which rules of recruitment are not clear, and the selection process is dominated by power brokers at various levels of the party organization. In one of the respondent's words, "Thai political parties are an extreme case of Robert Michel's 'iron law of oligarchy'". According to non-party experts (ironically, most party officials seem to agree) the Democrat Party is the only party in Thailand that has a formalized, meaningful electoral process to select the party leadership (e.g., executive committee members and the party leader). In other parties, important decision-making processes are encapsulated form the sub-national bureaucratic party organizations ('party branches') and the non-elite members because of distrust for 'selfish interests' and the fear that more inclusive participation may lead to an erosion of internal unity and coherence.

Accordingly, all experts agreed that rank-and-file have little or no influence, whereas in most parties, factions are quite important. Furthermore, respondents agreed that organizational reforms implemented by various parties in the past couple of years in most parties do not go beyond the minimum which is required by law. Efforts to establish sub-national party organizations and to recruit membership are not resulting from the commitment of party leaders to broaden the inclusiveness of intra-party decision-making or to decentralize internal processes along geographical layers of the bureaucratic party organization. Rather, they are reactions partly to legislative enactments and partly to new instruments of election campaigning introduced by the TRT in recent years.

Overall, experts interviewed presented a rather negative view of the state of internal democracy within Thai political parties. In addition, they assessed the prospects for better realization of principles and mechanisms of intra-party democracy as not promising in the near future, partly because of the inability or the lack of political will among party elites to do so, but also partly because of the fact that there has been no demand for this on the side of the rank-and-file and the electorate (see section 4).

2. Party Structure

The basic principles of party organization in Thailand are regulated by the Organic Act on Political Parties of 1998 which was replaced by the revised Organic Act of October 2007. The act's first chapter (Section 8 – 16) regulates the formation and basic organization of political parties. Chapter 2 (section 17-42) regulates party operation. Sections 43 to 90 in chapter 3 deal with party finance and support, including finance, revenues, state subsidies, and expenditures. Chapter four to six contain rules regarding the loss of status, cessation and dissolution of political parties (section 91-98), amalgamation of parties (section 99-103) and penalties against party members and parties which committed offences against the Party Law Party Law, the Election Law or decisions of the Election Commission (section 104-133).

To form a political party, a group of at least 15 Thai citizens not younger than 18 years of age can organize themselves as the founding group of a party (section 8). Political parties are required to adopt a party constitution and to elect an Executive Committee consisting of at least seven members elected from the party's membership. The elected party leader is member of the Executive Committee. The size of the Executive Committee varies widely between parties. For example, in 2005 the executive committees of the three leading political parties consisted of 49 (Democrats), 59 (Chart Thai) and 119 (TRT) members. In September 2008, Pracharaj Party had the smallest EC (5 members), and PPP the largest (33), whereas the general trend points toward a downsizing of EC memberships (see Table 4).[12] While in the Democrat Party, candidates for the Executive Committee are selected by the heads of the party branches, in other parties, they are selected in informal negotiations among factions or the party leader's decision.

Within one year from the date of its formation, a political party must organize membership enrolment and gain not less than 5,000 enrolled members. Furthermore, parties are required to set up at least one party branch in each of the country's regions (Section 26) and to have at least three additional committees: the Candidate Selection Committee, the Policy Committee, and the Committee on Democracy Promotion within the Political Party (section 27).

According to the Party Law, the party convention is the highest forum of the party. It must be held at least once a year, but special conventions can be summoned by a certain quorum of party members. The party leader, members of the Executive Committee and the members of other committees mentioned in section 27 of the Party Law shall be elected by the political party's general meeting (section 28). The quorum for a general meeting must consist of not less than half of the total membership of the Executive Committee, representatives from not less than half of its total branches, and representatives from its membership. The selection of representatives from the membership shall take into account the size of each region's branch membership and the proportion of male and female members (Section 29). But in practice, some parties also invite other party members to the convention. For example, the Democrat Party also includes special delegates in its convention. Theoretically, the special delegates are selected by the members at the party branch level but de facto they are selected by custom, political influence and the party leaders' decision. Delegates at the convention have weighted voting rights with local office holders and party branch chairmen's votes carry less weight than that of MPs.

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[12] The reasons for downsizing of party organizations are not clear. Our interviews suggest that the smaller size of executive committees in some cases is a reaction to new rules of punishment Executive Committee members of political parties which have carried out an act contrary to the Election Law or the Rules or Notifications of the EC. For example, according to at least one Democrat politician, the downsizing owed to fears among the party leadership that, should the DP be in future dissolved, a much smaller number of executives would be sacrificed should the courts rule that the executives must not participate in politics for five years as a penalty.

In addition, the revised Organic Law on Political Parties establishes rules which aim to ensure accountability and transparency of financial activities of political party representatives. Another innovation of the Organic Law is Section 36, which allows 200 party members to launch an impeachment motion against any party executives. This is significant in that it weakens the legal domination of parties by party leaders and the executive committee, incidentally offering disenchanted groupings within parties a chance to make their voices heard.[13]

The organization of party branches mirrors the party organization at the national centre. When a political party establishes a branch, it must set up a branch committee consisting of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Treasurer, Registrar, Spokesman, and other committee members elected at a general meeting of the branch from its members. The branch committee must convene a general meeting once a year (sections 35-37).

Despite efforts to support the institutionalization of more membership-based, bureaucratic party models, a glance at the territorial structure of party organizations demonstrate that the focal point of party activities still is the national centre. Though specified by law, even larger parties often do not have any party branches.

Table 4: Party Organization of Thai Political Parties

	Year founded	No. of Party's Branches			No. of Executive Committee Members*
		2001	2004	2008	2008
Democrat	1946	170	195	194	19
Chart Thai	1974	10	17	14	12
Thai Rak Thai	1998	4	10	--	119 (2005)
People's Power	1998	0	0	0	33
Pua Paendin	2007	--	--	4	50
Ruam Jai Thai Chat Pattana	2007	--	--	0	10
Matchima Thippathai	2007	--	--	0	10
Pracharaj	2006	--	--	5	5
Mahachon	2004	0	31	9	17

Information on executive committees extracted from individual Thai political parties' websites; Thai Political Database, http://www.politicalbase.in.th/index.php; personal communication with party officials * In some cases, figures obtained from individual parties differ from the data provided by the ECT. Source: Siripan 2006; Election Commission of Thailand; Thai Political Database.
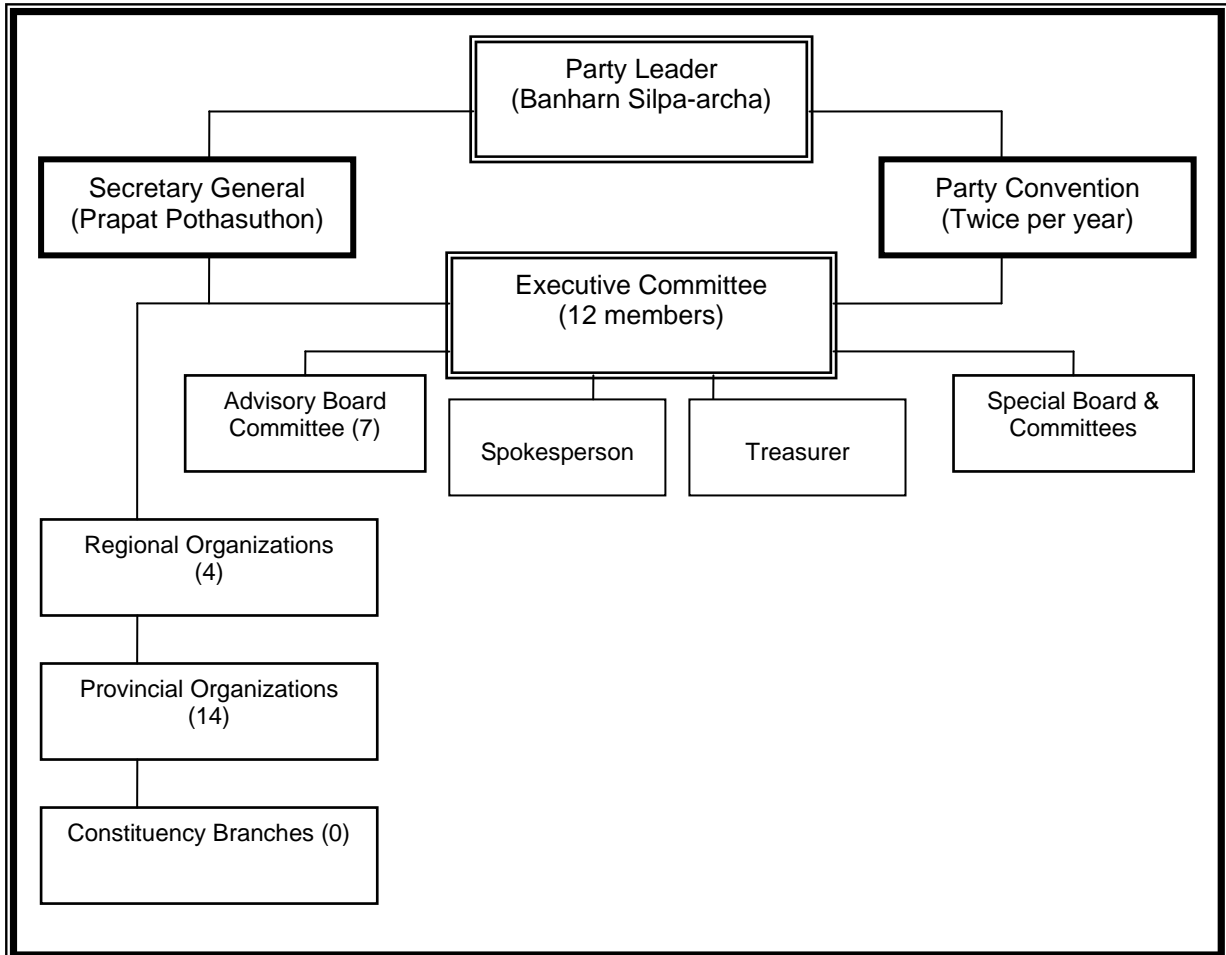
Although the Party Law establishes minimum standards for party organizations, and provides incentives to strengthen the organizational and membership base of political parties, most political parties in Thailand still have a centralized single-layered structure. Most parties have only their headquarters in Bangkok. Some parties claim that they have a few party branches in the regions, but the branches are actually campaigning centres or constituency offices of certain MPs. These party branches do not perform any branch function. In recent years the available data even suggest a trend toward downsizing of the existing organizational structures as the total number of party branches reported to the Election Commission declined from 251 in 2005 to 226 in 2008. Some political parties such as CTP, for instance, hesitate to set up new party branches at the sub-regional level as it is difficult to establish branches in provinces where the party has no MPs. In fact, it is party policy not to organize branches in "MP-less" provinces. Additionally, party leaders seem to worry that if a party

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[13] Pravit, Rojanaphruk, "New Political Game: How the Goalposts Have Moved." *The Nation*, November 3, 2007.

branch is organized by a party MP, the branch would be lost for the party whenever the MP decides to switch to a new party.

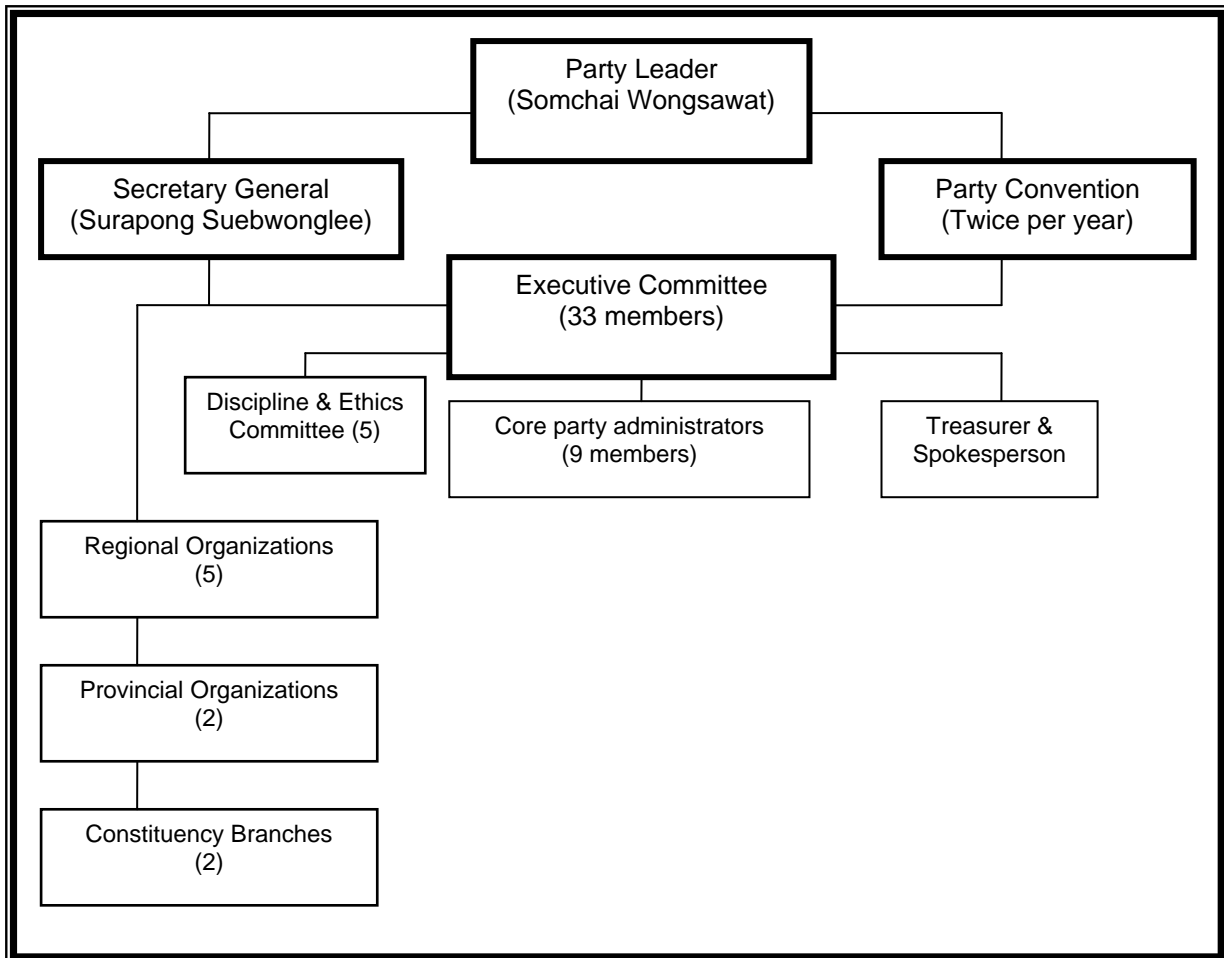The following two figures visualize the organizational structures of two of the major parties in Thailand, Chart Thai and People's Power Party. They illustrate the minimal degree of organizational and territorial differentiation in both parties.

Figure 7a: Organizational Structure of Chart Thai Party

Source: http://www.chartthai.com/ and personal communication.

Figure 7b: Organizational Structure of People's Power Party

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                        ┌──────────────────────────┐
                        │      Party Leader        │
                        │   (Somchai Wongsawat)    │
                        └──────────────────────────┘
         ┌────────────────────────────┐       ┌──────────────────────────┐
         │    Secretary General       │       │     Party Convention     │
         │  (Surapong Suebwonglee)    │       │    (Twice per year)      │
         └────────────────────────────┘       └──────────────────────────┘
                        ┌──────────────────────────┐
                        │   Executive Committee    │
                        │      (33 members)        │
                        └──────────────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐
   │ Discipline & Ethics│ │ Core party administrators│ │   Treasurer &    │
   │  Committee (5)    │  │     (9 members)      │  │   Spokesperson   │
   └──────────────────┘  └──────────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────────┐
   │ Regional Organizations│
   │        (5)        │
   └──────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────────┐
   │ Provincial Organizations│
   │        (2)        │
   └──────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────────┐
   │ Constituency Branches│
   │        (2)        │
   └──────────────────┘
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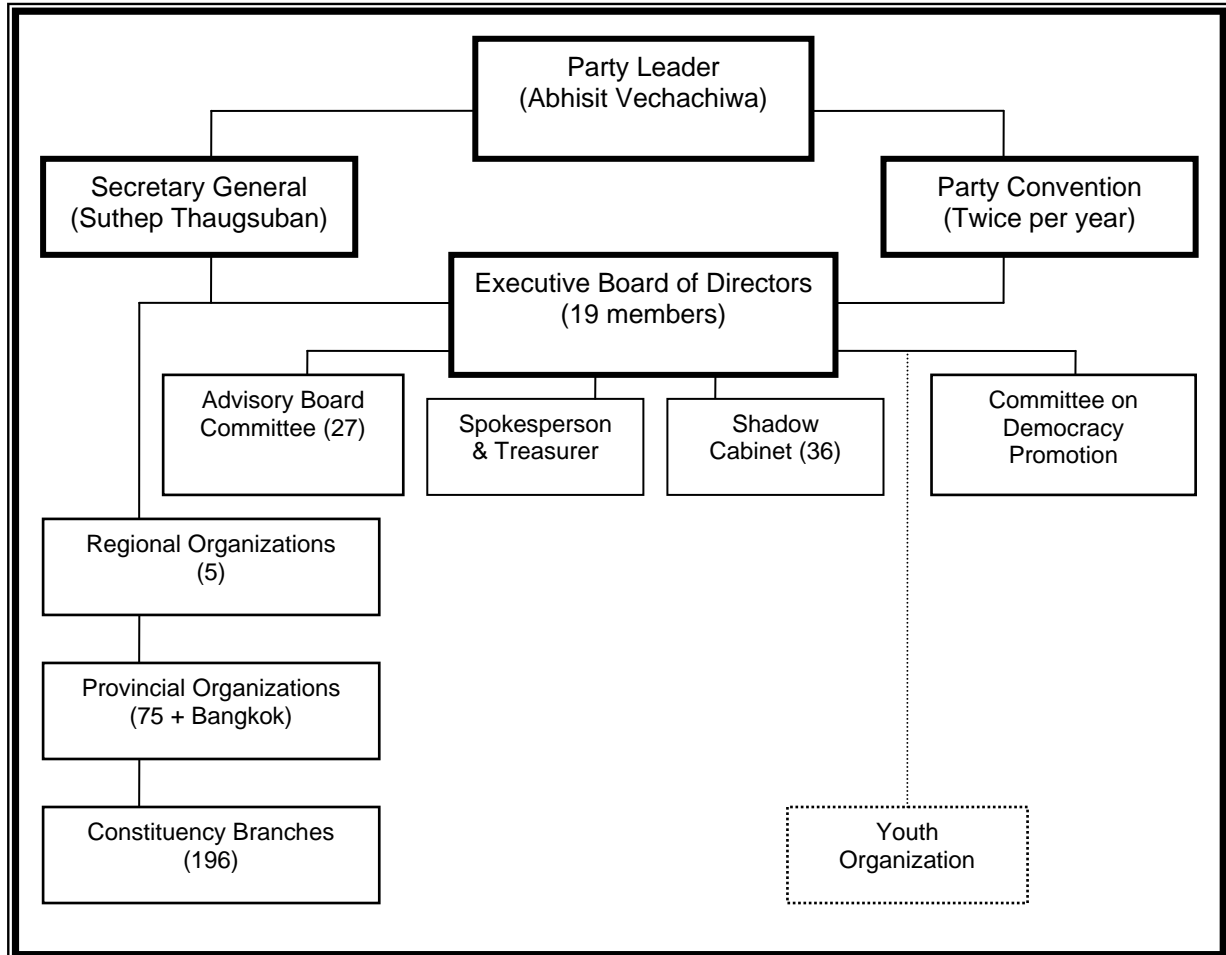Source: http://www.ppp.or.th and personal communication.

The PPP, for example, has only 4 party branches, although it won 233 seats at the district level in the 2007 general election. Furthermore, these branches are not located at the district level but are regional party headquarters. Then there are a total of 97 so-called « coordinating centres » which repent the various teams of a tleast one winning PPP candidate in the various constituencies. These centers work out of the home of the team leader.[14]

An exception is the Democrat Party, which is the only party in Thailand that has really paid attention to develop a structure of local branches. However, party officials admit that many branch offices suffer from resource weakness and have difficulties to fulfil the organizational requirements set by the Election Commission and the party constitution. Owing to a limitation of facilities, funds and qualified personnel, as well as the political apathy of members, the role of these branches often is not very successful. Some party branches are not independent from individual candidates, so when the party selected another candidate in the past, some branches did not accept the official party choice and supported candidates from other parties. Therefore, the national party headquarters in Bangkok is trying to strengthen the autonomy of the party branches from local politicians through financial and infrastructural support for local offices but also by centralization of candidate nomination for local elections.

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[14] So, for example, if there are three candidates in the multimember constituency team, the top financier of the team will have the center at his or her home. Information by anonymous PPP official, Central PPP office, Bangkok (telephone interview), October 20, 2008.

There has even been talk of having Democrat party branches control the nominations of candidates at the national and local levels rather than the current disaggregation of these levels' nominations.[15]

Figure 8: Organizational Structure of Democrat Party

Source: http://www.democrat.or.th and personal communication.

In some parties such as the Democrat and Chart Thai the joint Executive Committee and MPs meeting plays a significant role in intra-party decision making. In case of Chart Thai such meetings are held weekly. Additional informal coordination of party affairs takes place in face-by-face consultations of party leadership, candidates and local MPs and officials.

Additionally, larger political parties usually have various commission or working groups which study particular issues and provide information and recommendations to the parties. The CTP, for instance, has MP working groups covering political, economic, social, educational, rural development and infrastructure affairs. In the case of the DP, there are MP commissions on government policies and administration, including those on, for example, economic, monetary and fiscal affairs and environment.

Strikingly, with all the attempts to support to support the organizational development of political parties since 1997, political parties in Thailand still are 'electoral parties'. They place

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[15] Interview with Mayor Deuntenduang Na Chiang Mai, member of Democrat Party and former MP candidate at the national level, October 16, 2008.

strong emphasis on fielding their candidates in national elections and playing the legislative and executive roles in the political system. Even at the local level, they rarely take a direct part in the election of local councillors. An exception is the election of the governor and the councillors of Bangkok gubernatorial election which in recent years has become a battleground for political parties. As a result, the informal party groupings and the national centre, not the local branches and formal party organs, 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 formulating policy platforms. All important decisions are therefore made by the party leader and/or by the parties' Executive Committee and, in practice, sometimes also by the joint meeting between EC members and MPs. In this light, the development of political parties since 1997 (and before the 2006 coup) can best be described as a process of party centralization without party institutionalization. This has significant consequences for the realization of internal democracy within political parties: with weak internal organization decision-making remains largely informal and is controlled by a limited number of party elites. Ordinary members and party branches hardly have any opportunity to influence their party's decisions.
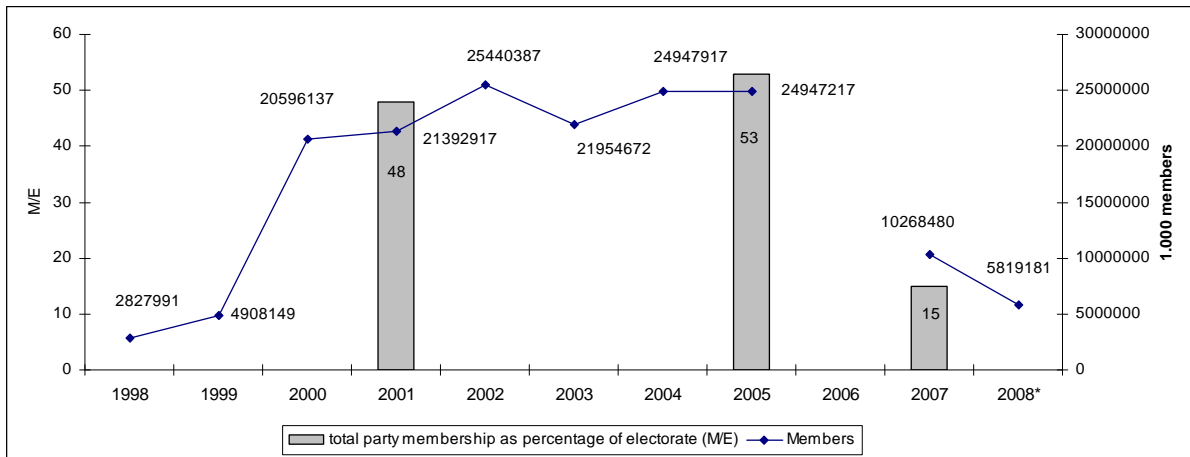
To sum up, most political parties in Thailand have a single-layered and centralized organization in terms of their principle institutions. By and large, parties are focused on the national centre and electoral functions. Although Party Law and party constitutions establish minimum standards for party organizations, emphasizing the role of elections in intra-party decision-making and providing incentives to strengthen the organization and membership base of political parties, de facto the position of party organizations on the ground remains minimal. That said, it is important to note that in most parties, intra-party politics is highly informal. While the formal institutions required by law and party regulations only provide the façade, 'real' intraparty politics takes is unregulated by formal rules and regulations.

3. Membership

Another key objective of the political reforms introduce in 1997 was to force political parties to broaden their membership. For example, the 1997 Party Law and the revised Organic Law on Political Parties of October 2007 specify that a political party must gain at least five thousand members or face dissolution (section 91).

Since 1998, political parties report the number of members to the Election Commission which keeps a national party membership register. Since it is required by law, all political parties claim a certain number of registered members. A quick glance at the raw numbers published by the ECT (based on individual party reports) shows a drastic change over time in party membership until 2005.

Figure 7: Party Membership 1998-2008

* August, 30, 2008; Source: Siripan 2006: 138; Election Commission of Thailand

For example, Thai Rak Thai party claimed that its membership had increased from 6.7 million in 2001 to 14 million in 2004. In the same year, the Democrat Party and Chart Thai each reported a membership of more than 4 million.

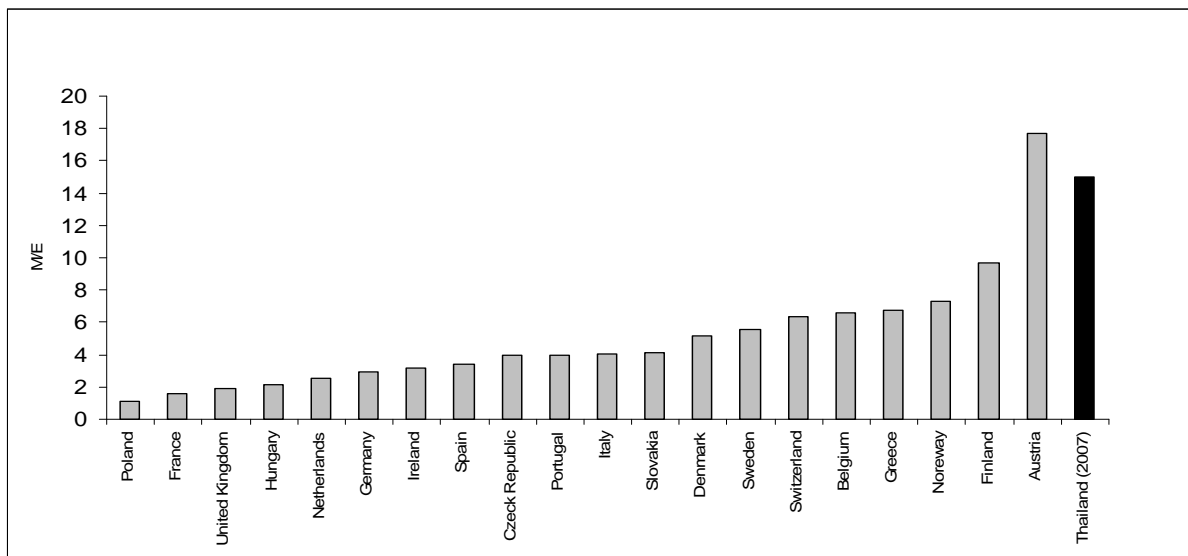Table 5: Membership of Thai Political Parties

	Year founded	Membership		
		2001	**2004**	**2008**
Democrat	1946	3,753,911	4,018,286	2,857,203
Chart Thai	1974	1,781,300	4,041,232	1,112,561
Thai Rak Thai	1998	6,705,004	14,077,711	--
People's Power	1998	0	0	59,709
Pua Paendin	2007	--	--	2,932
Ruam Jai Thai Chat Pattana	2007	--	--	711
Matchima Thippathai	2007	--	--	3,027
Pracharaj	2006	--	--	12,706
Mahachon	2004	--	1,460,095	1,189,015

Source: Siripan 2006; Election Commission of Thailand; Thai Political Database, http://www.politicalbase.in.th/index.php.

The tendency for parties to increase their membership is particularly remarkable when measured relative to the size of the overall national electorate. From the late 1990s until 2001 the total party membership taken as a percentage of the total electorate (M/E ratio) increased to 48 percent.[16] A few months after the 2005 general election, it had reached 53 per cent. Since then political parties have experienced a dramatic decline in the numbers of party members. This trend is paralleled in changes in the M/E ratio which went down from 53 percent to 15 percent.

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[16] The M/E ratio is the conventional measure in party research to calculate national party membership levels. Especially the measure is used for the purpose of historical and cross-national comparisons as it is insensitive to variations of population size between countries and demographic change within nations over time.

Figure 8: Total party membership in 20 European democracies and Thailand (2007)

Source: Election Commission of Thailand; Mair/van Biezen (2001: 9).

Declines in party membership worldwide (at least in relative terms) have been documented since the early 1980s. Despite the recent trend party membership in Thailand appears as solid compared to most European party systems. The high membership level also seems to contradict the widely shared view that mass-bureaucratic political parties, corresponding to Continental European parties with mass memberships do not exist in Thailand.

However, these figures must not be taken face value. Under the 1997 Party Law, political parties did not maintain membership records but simply submitted unsubstantiated numbers to the Election Commission. In practice the ECT could not effectively check the reported numbers. The tendency for political parties to exaggerate their membership levels[17] was exacerbated by the old party law which linked levels of public subvention to levels of party membership. For example, TRT used so-called 'postcard applications' to raise its membership level.[18] Without accurate membership records, the lack of instruments to verifying reported numbers and institutional incentives for political parties to over-reporting, membership reports clearly became meaningless as they did not reflect the true number of party members or supporters.

Under the new organic laws on political parties the requirements for being a party member have been raised. For example, application for membership must now include fingerprints, photo and copies of ID card and household register of the applicant. Political parties have to submit an update of their membership register to the ECT every three months. In addition, the Election Commission has established a sophisticated checking system with the department of local administration. Political parties have to submit an update of their membership register to the ECT every three months. In addition, the Election Commission has established a sophisticated checking system with the department of local administration.

While the recent decline of party membership in Thailand can partly be attributed to the dissolution of the TRT (which meant a sudden loss of about 14 million party members) and the ECT's improved ability to guarantee the accuracy of the official membership numbers and

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[17] This is not a unique characteristic of Thai parties. It has been documented in Western democracies as well.
[18] It is said TRT achieved its impressive number of 14 million party members partly by mailing postcard applications to several million households. In addition, membership cards were handed out to applicants together with cash payments; also new-recruited members received other kinds of benefits. Another method was to simply using information from local household registers to 'fake' membership applications.

the registration process, these developments can not explain the still remarkably high level of party membership. That said other factors should be considered. First, for reasons that are perhaps too complex to go into in detail in this brief survey, there exists a tendency among the intellectuals, academics and the national media in Thailand, to place a particularly positive value on the tradition notion of the 'mass' party. Hence almost all political parties, of whatever hue, claim to be active in the pursuit of members. Members in this sense offer a source of political legitimation to parties. For this reason, parties are likely to claim larger *active* membership than seems in fact to be the case. It is important to note, however, that, political parties in Thailand usually have no intention to recruit members for support in terms of money, volunteer party work, or to broaden their reservoir of potential candidates. Rather, political parties do recruit members to enhance their public image and reputation.

Secondly, and more significant, the notion of party membership remains extremely vague in Thailand. Individuals can join political parties without any extensive prior screening. Only very few party members pay membership contributions. Instead, often political parties and MPs pay individuals to join the party and to attend party meetings. Although technically it is illegal, double or multiple memberships are not uncommon among the rank-and-file. In general, membership only gets relevant during election campaigns. More or less, their role is limited to voting for the political party and its candidates. Extremely low opportunity costs for individuals help to understand why Thai voters are willing to become member of a political party without intention to participate in intra-party decision-making or even to vote for 'their' respective party.[19] In fact, recent cross-national research shows an extremely low level of party identification for Thailand. The data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) survey (module 1), for instance, show that only 20.8 percent of the Thai electorate feels close to any party. The percentage of voters who feel very close to a party, i.e. the core of party activists, is only 2.6 percent (Sheng 2007: 281-2).

4. Representation of women and other social groups

Although all groups in Thai society can join any political party, only a few actually have the ability to influence party politics. According to the law, everyone can be an ordinary member of a party so long as s/he is a Thai by birth, at least 18 years old and not a priest, novice or monk or clergy in a religion. It is worth to mention, however, that there are some legal restrictions in terms of qualification for party offices. Most significantly, the EC and the Constitutional Court / Supreme Court can ban politicians from party politics if found guilty for violation of the Election and Party Laws. In addition, party members who are government officials, officers or employees of state agencies or state enterprises or local governments are banned from holding any position on the Executive Committee or any other office or position in a political party (Party Law section 21).

Furthermore, some special requirements for membership can be added by parties. For instance, a member of the DP must not be an ex-bankrupt or sentenced to imprisonment except in a minor or political offence. The Chart Thai Party requires each member to support the party and follow the party rules. Apart from ordinary membership, some parties have other types of memberships. The *Prachatipat*, for instance, has honorary and affiliated members. The CTP has also special membership. To be a special member in the party requires a special approval by the leader of the party.

Through its affiliated youth organization, the Democrat Party aims to recruit young members who are at least 15 years of age. To reach out for non-affiliated social interests and to overcome communication and information difficulties, the party has also begun to organize so-called People's Assemblies two to three times a year. However, compared to many political

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[19] In past elections, there were many parties that won votes significantly less than their shares of party members, i.e., Chart Thai and Chart Pattana in 2001, and Mahachon (2005, 2007).

parties in the West, Thai political parties lack meaningful organizational affiliation to social movements and do not pay serious intention to the promotion of the participation of politically excluded social interests or groups in party politics. Before 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" (Siripan 2006: 88f.). Instead of strengthening their organizational capacity as interest group representation parties, political parties rely on area representation by individual candidates.

Even though the constitution gives all groups in society equal right to join any party, obviously, all main parties are more influenced by businessmen than by any other groups (Anusorn 1998: 420.). Examples of businessmen-turned-politicians who become both leading members and supporters can be found in all major parties.[20]

Women are a particularly underrepresented group in party politics. Although Thai women were among the first in Asia to gain the franchise (in 1932), during the following seven decades, there was slow improvement in the representation of women, and women's participation party politics continue to remain minimal (Kazuki 2005: 3). There is still little analysis on the participation of women in party politics at various levels of the party organization. Statistics regarding the women ratio in party memberships do not exist. However, internal information of political parties clearly show that women are mostly excluded from governing bodies in political parties. For example, only 13 percent of the political parties' executive committee members are women – with considerable variation between individual parties:

Table 6: Women in Political Parties' Executive Committees

	Executive Committee Members		
	Male	Female	Total
Democrat	17	2	19
Pua Paendin	44	6	50
Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana (RJTCP)	10	0	10
Chat Thai (CTP)	11	1	12
Matchimatippathai	8	2	10
Palang Prachachon (PPP)	27	6	33
Pracharaj	4	1	5
Total	121	18	139

Source: Internal information of each political party; Thai Political Database, http://www.politicalbase.in.th/index.php; political parties' websites and personal communication.

Furthermore, women legislators are markedly absent from provincial and local assemblies (Kazuki 2005: 5). In addition, female MPs focus much of their legislative activity on issues of traditional interest. According to Kazuki, "nearly 65 percent of the members of the House Committee on Children, Youth, Women and the Aged consisted of women (as of 20 April, 2003), areas where women have traditionally borne disproportionate responsibility. Further, women constitute 24-29 percent of committees such as Tourism, Public Health, and Social welfare. It is only in such "soft issue" or traditional "women's committees" that women held committee chairs.

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[20] In 2005, 76 out of 119 members of TRT's Executive Committee, 25 out of 49 in the Democrat Party 26 out of 59 in CTP had a business background (Siripan 2006b: 113).

To sum up, political parties in Thailand have an impressive mass-membership base according to the raw numbers. However, these data must not be taken as face value. Partly, the data are unreliable, unverified and exaggerate the real membership level. Moreover, party identity among the Thai electorate is weak. The notion of party membership carries a significantly different meaning in Thailand than in Western countries. Furthermore, party membership does not carry with it the same practical relevance for the parties in Thailand as was the case in the heyday of the mass party in Continental Europe. Party leadership neither expect grass-root members to actively participate in intraparty affairs, nor are members obliged to take responsibility and to perform any membership duties.
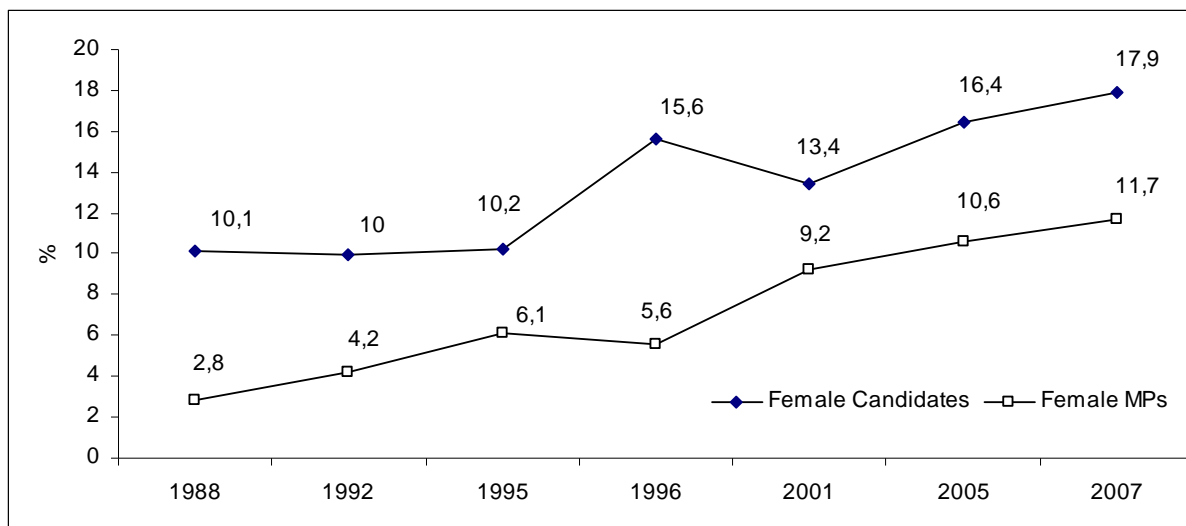
Political parties in Thailand lack well-developed institutions which can link them to organized interests in Thai society. They do not pay serious intention to the promotion of the participation of politically excluded social interests or groups in intraparty politics. In particular, women's participation is underdeveloped. In Kazuki's (2005: 1) words, "the representation of women remains no more than a blip on a political landscape dominated by men."

4. Candidate selection

A major obstacle for women seeking better representation in political parties is the barriers they must overcome to get selected as candidates for public office. As mentioned before, party elites in Thailand prefer a patronage-oriented system of candidate selection with decisions are made by a limited number of elites, typically men. Such a system is not only detrimental to participation of rank-and-file but also largely excludes women.

In fact, Thai political parties are very poor in promoting the participation of women in elections. Analyzing data for the period 1988 to 2007 demonstrates that women are less often nominated for candidate then men. Additionally they are less likely to be nominated for winnable seats in the House of Representatives

Figure 8: Percentage of Female Candidates and Female MPs between 1988 and 2007

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in Parliament, http://www.ipu.org; Kokpol 2002: 294; Election Commission of Thailand.

In general, women candidates receive less support than men from party and faction leaders. Of the few women who mange to attain parliamentary seats or occupy positions in the governing bodies at the governing bodies in political parties, many have family ties to a male

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party or faction leader. Before the 2007 general election, for instance, some TRT faction-created parties fielded women as 'replacement candidates' for those TRT party executives who were banned from active politics.

Table 7: Women candidates by party and election system (2007 general election)

	Party List Candidates				District Candidates			
	Nominated		Elected		Nominated		Elected	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Prachatipat (DP)	65	15	29	4	349	46	113	18
Pua Paendin (PP)	64	16	6	1	300	44	15	2
Rum Jai Thai Chart Pattana (RJTCP)	68	12	1	0	294	30	6	2
Chat Thai (CTP)	61	19	3	1	254	31	29	1
Matchimathippathai	74	6	0	0	317	46	8	3
Palang Prachachon (PPP)	76	4	33	1	361	39	177	22
Pracharaj (RPP)	48	12	1	0	163	20	3	1
Others	533	187	0	0	1282	318	0	0
Total	989	271	73	7	3320	574	351	49

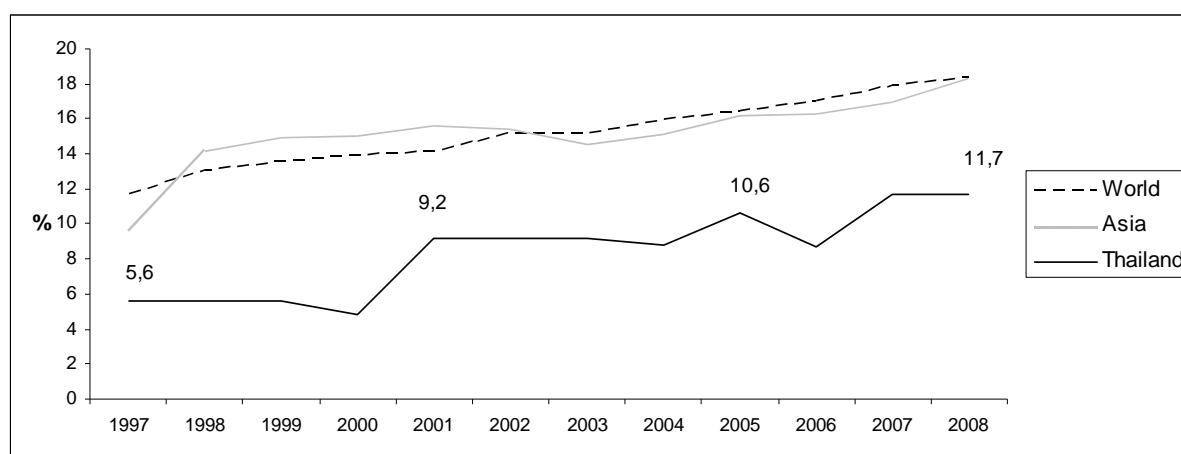Source: Election Commission of Thailand.

One of the reasons for the dismal representation of women in parliament is the lack of election quota systems which are used in other countries for compensating women for structural barriers that prevent fair competition between female and male candidates.

In fact, there are no explicit rules guaranteeing female representation in Thailand. The party law, the electoral system and individual party regulations, respectively, provide no incentives that could motivate political parties to improve representation of women. Public debates and, in some parties, internal discussions about the possibility and desirability of nomination quota or obligatory party quota failed to produce any feasible results.

Under its new leadership since 2005, the Democrat Party has introduced special measures to promote women in party politics. For example, the new party policy requires at least two female committee members in each party branch. Furthermore in the 2007 election, the party had fielded women candidates in all zones of the party list system. There is a debate within the party about a future general party quota for female candidates (so-called 'zipper system'). In other parties, the political will of party leaders to promote women's participation is even less pronounced. Party leaders tend to believe that women are less qualified to stand for election than men because they lack experience and confidence to stand. . For example, the Chart Thai party line seems that "it still is not the proper time in Thai politics to introduce a quota system" because it is difficult to find qualified women. Additionally, it is said that a quota for women candidates would discriminate men.

Additionally the high level of vote-buying and malpractice in Thailand as well as the reliance of candidates on personal support organisations based on networks of vote canvassers, are deterrents to women coming forward as candidates and get elected. Women often do not have sufficient resources or access to the patronage network machinery for election campaigns (Kazuki 2005: 35). Thus, the percentage of women in the lower house of the Thai parliament (11.7%) is well below below the Asian (18.3%) and worldwide (18.4%) averages.

Figure 8: Women MPs in Single or Lower House

In regard to the basic principles of candidate selection, Thai political parties favour nomination of candidates by some kind of party organ, usually an assembly of party representatives, instead of a direct election of candidates by eligible members (for example, primary election). The Democrat Party is the only major party that restricts candidacy to persons who have been members of the party for a specific period of time (e.g., one year) before nomination. In most other parties, members and non-members can be nominated as candidate. However, the new charter, chapter 6, section 101 (3) states that candidates to the Lower House must be registered members "of any and only one political party, for a consecutive period of not less than ninety days [up to the date of an election], *except in a general election following an unexpected House dissolution, in which case he or she is required to have been a registered member of a political party not less than thirty days continuously up to the date of an election*" [italics added].

In order to bring in an adequate number of qualified candidates, political parties rely on different methods, such as nomination, application, invitation and utilizing monetary payment. As far as nomination is concerned, every party usually allows its members to nominate themselves or some other members to run for election. Additionally, it is well documented that most political parties immediately after the dissolution of parliament and in the months before the election search for experienced politicians and high potential candidates that can be 'bought' from other parties (Anusorn 1998; Siripan 2006).

The party selectorate (those within in the party, who can select candidates) consists of different segments of party members. In all parties, the Executive Committee plays a particular important role, at least according to party constitutions. However, there is considerable variation between parties as to what extent the party branches and the party leader are included in the process. Additionally, there are differences between political parties regarding the extent of decentralized of the process along different layers of the party organization.

According to the party law, political parties must delegate the decision over the selection of electoral candidates to the Candidate Selection Committee which is one of the four party committees specified in the party law. However, in practice, selection procedures and criteria tend to vary form one party to another. In most parties, their first round of selection is mainly made by their former and active MPS, but for the Democrat Party, its branches also play an important part in this process. Nevertheless, the final say usually rests with the Executive Committee or the party leader. In the Democrat Party, in the first round of candidate selection process party branches and 'respected members of the party' (i.e. former MPs and cabinet members) come up with lists of possible candidates. In the second phase, proposals

are discussed among members of the party's Candidate Selection Committee. The committee prepares lists for recommendation which are submitted to a search committee within the Executive Committee. Party branches get a chance to react to the Candidate Selection Committee's proposals. However, it is the Executive Committee which has the final say in the fourth and last round of the selection process.

The selection process in other parties tends to be more centralized and informal. In the Chart Thai Party, for instance, the party leadership tends to monopolize the nomination process. By and large, candidate selection occurs in three rounds. In the first round of the selection process, the search for possible candidates is coordinated by senior party members who are in charge of individual regions. Through consultations with local party notables and MPS the senior party member who is in charge of a particular region develops recommendations for the party's search committee. Simultaneously, the party leader directly approaches 'promising' candidates. In case the party has no MP in a particular province or region, the party leader himself takes care of the candidate search.

In the second phase of the process, this regionally decentralized candidate search is recentralized at the level of the national party organization. A search committee of five to ten members screens upcoming applications and recommendations, consults with the party leader and, perhaps, other party members and prepares a preliminary list of nominations. The nomination of individual candidates must be supported by a majority of the committee members. The list of nominees is, then, submitted to the party's Executive Committee. In the third and final round, the EC selects the candidates. In case of disagreement between the party leader and the majority of the committee members, the party leader can veto any committee decision. It is important to note, however, that the party leader can intervene at any stage of the process. Last minute nominations of party candidates who are invited to join the party are not uncommon.

In terms of centralization of candidate selection, Thai Rak Thai used to be the most centralized party. As a consequence of intra-party hegemony of a single political leader, the absence of intra-party factions, the centralization of financial resources needed by candidates to run successfully in the election and the strong emphasize of its election campaign on the image of the party and its leader (Siripan 2006: 23) significantly weakened the autonomy of candidates and intra-party factions and strengthened the party leader's control over the selection process. Thus, Thaksin as party leader successfully monopolized control over the selection process.

The 2007 constitution weakened control of executives over intra-party factions. As such, all of the newly formed parties have factions which are stronger than the intraparty groupings in TRT (and also of course the organizationally distinct Democrat Party). Thus, factions play an important role in the selection of candidates. For example, the five main factions in PPP – Southern Isaan and the Isaan Pattana factions, northern Wang Bua Baan faction, Bangkok and central region faction, and the southern Wadah faction – play some role in the selection of candidates. Another major difference between TRT and PPP seems to be that PPP is unwilling or unable to copy TRT's systematic approach of candidate recruitment.

By and large, the criteria commonly used by the most parties for selecting candidates are political experience, political attitude, closeness to the party leader and affiliation with particular intra-party factions and, last but not least, resources available to individual candidates. For instance, apart from experience as a MP, the Chart Thai give first priority to income and wealth. On the other hand, the Prachitipat tends to put special emphasize on the political attitude of potential candidates. Former MPs with high potential (so-called 'category A candidates') are always in great demand, particularly among parties which aim to have an electoral majority. This was obvious in the case of the Thai Nation Party and the Democrat in the 1990s and in the case of TRT and the People's Power Party since 2001.

To sum up, the pattern of candidate selection in Thai political parties is characterized by the exclusion of ordinary party members; in all political parties the selectorate consists of party elites. However, there is considerable variation in terms of which elites are included in one way. In the Democrat Party, a broad spectre of party elites, including representatives of party branches, MPs, ECs and other senior party members are included (with one vote each). In more factionalized parties such as Pracharaj and Pua Paendin, factions dominate the process. Finally, in leader-centred political parties (CTP, Matchimathippathai TRT), party elites participate in the process but the party leader can intervene at any time and has the final say.

In highly factionalized political parties such as most of the pre-1997 and some of the post-2006 parties, organizational power and authority does not rest in a single place or person. Thus, candidate selection is more decentralized in the sense that factions determine who can / who is selected as candidate. On the other hand, leader-dominated parties also tend to centralize candidate selection. While all political parties recruit candidates at the national as well as at the local level, in all parties in Thailand, it is the national centre that selects electoral candidates. Although the details tend to vary from one party to another, there are at least three common elements which mark the process of candidate selection in Thai political parties: centralization of decision-making authority by the national centre, minimal participation of rank-and-file and dominance of party elites.

5. Policy decisions

As mentioned above, Thai political parties are not policy-seeking parties (based upon Duverger's mass parties). Nor are they issue-oriented, prioritizing well-defined programs. Rather, most Thai parties lean towards being office-seeking. Still, compared with the 1990s, policies gained more relevance in recent election campaigns, though the programmatic profile of most parties is still weak. For example, during the 2005 election campaign the manifesto of the Mahachon Party – built on the legal remnants of the now-defunct Rassadorn Party prior to the 2005 election mostly by discontents from DP, but also by defectors from other parties and academics - called for more welfare reforms to improve the Thai quality of life and lessen income inequality. The Democrat Party tried to develop a sharper profile as liberal democratic alternative to Thai Rak Thai, whereas TRT collected various social democratic, liberal, and populist policies. However, it would be a mistake to view this 'shopping around' for policies as the beginning of a development towards policy-oriented party ideologies in Thailand.

Traditionally, party elites see ideological tightness as a political weakness, not strength, as it restricts the party's options to becoming part of a ruling coalition (Siripan 2006: 166). As a result, political parties have not been programmatically coherent or much concerned with policy formulation. Parties did legitimize government policies through cabinet formation, but did not develop own policies. Thus, the following description from the year 2003 is still accurate:

> '[i]n general, political parties in Thailand are not based on ideology. Party leaders prefer the flexibly to adjust to the immediate interests of voters during the campaign. Consequently, it is often difficult to distinguish the policies of one party form another. Major parties do not differ fundamentally in political and economic programs and ideological orientations. Party switching is also widespread, so even if a party articulates a central ideology, it is unlikely that all party members adhere to that ideology.' (Thornton 2003: 390).

Since most political parties are not organized on the basis of any obvious ideology, their policy platforms in general elections tend to differ more in style than in essence. To attract voters and legitimize themselves, political parties define their role in each general election in accordance with their perception of current popular demands or public issues. Thus, most parties tend to bandwagon on policy trends; react ad hoc and initiate policies according to

the expected attraction a policy might gain form the voters. So, for example, when TRT initiated so-called "populist policies" in 2001-2006, other political parties also started to talk about social welfare, rural development and other pro-poor policies. In light of the previous electoral successes of TRT, almost all of the political party manifestos in 2007 were more "populist" in nature (Anfrel 2008: 20) than in previous elections.

Table 8: Party Policy Platforms in 2007/8 (according to political parties' websites)

Democrat	People's Power	Chart Thai
Politicians must be clean, transparent, and non-corrupt	Accelerating land titling	Debt relief for farmers
Greater decentralization	Upgrading village fund project	Social security for the aged and disabled
Increase free public health care	Free medical treatment and free education up to 12 years.	Greater attention to health and education
Boost spending for rural and urban economy	Encourage ethanol consumption	Community development: for example, more asphalted roads and mass transit systems.
Establishment of an office to solve southern problems which would promote economic development strategies.	To resolve problems in the three southern provinces, promote reconciliation, democracy, and implementation of economic projects	National development: for example, promote reconciliation in the far south.

Although some parties such as PPP, Ruam Jai Thai Chatt Pattana and Mathchimathippatai claim to have policies stances, in reality, their policy platforms appear rather superficial. As for the Democrat Party, party officials point out that Prachatipat it is the only party in Thailand that has a relevant *udomkan* (poorly translated into English as 'ideology')." (Askew 2008: 42). However, the Democrats are better known as spear-bearers for democracy and adherents to a conservative economic policy than for their pro-poor policies. Additionally, party representatives admit that the party's record of effective policy implementation is mixed.

In regard to policy formulation, parties use different instruments to draw up their policy platforms. For example, the Chart Thai under the leadership of Prime Minister Chatichai Chunhavan (1988-91) had its own think-tank called the Baan Pitsanuloke Group. For the TRT, it is said that the party's populist policies, which included farm assistance and urban relief programs, the Village and Urban Revolving Fund, the establishment of the People's Bank and the Bank for Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises, the One Tambon Project, and the 30-Baht Health Scheme were developed by the so-called 'Octoberists' in its ranks, i.e. intellectuals and academics who were members in the student's movement of the 1970s and had joined the Communist underground after the 6 October 1976 massacre. For the Democrat Party, it seems to rely more on its own intellectuals and experts, than on outsiders. In October 2007 the party initiated a series of so-called "People's Assemblies" at the provincial level to reach out with the intra-party policy debate to larger groups of voters. But this form of policy deliberation is obviously of much less relevance than debates with policy experts and among party officials.

6. Coalition Formation Procedures

Traditionally, government formation under Thailand's multiparty system has been marked by a high degree of flexibility in coalition-making. Before 2001, oversized multi-member cabinets of 5 and more parties were the rule. These cabinets tended to be short-lived, with fre-

quent changes in the party composition of coalitions and frequent cabinet reshuffles. It was not before Thaksin that a coalition government served a full four-year parliamentary term. With the 2005 general election, for the first time in Thai history, Thai Rak Thai was being handed a mandate to forma single-party government. Following the general election of December 2007, PPP, Pua Paendin, Pracharaj, Matchima and RJCTP formed a coalition government under the leadership of Prime Minister Samak.

Under the pre-2001 pattern of multiparty cabinets, ministerial posts were allocated among the members of the winning coalition according to the number of MPs they can contribute to a coalition. The numerical strength of a party mostly but also its degree of internal coherence largely determines the party's bargaining power. Since each party receives the number of portfolios proportional to the number of MPs they have, negotiations between political parties tend to fragmentation of chief policy areas into more than one ministry which are than allocated to the delegates of different political parties. This pattern has re-emerged under the post-2006 political balance of powers.

By and large, intraparty coalition formation process is marked by four major elements.

First of all, there are no external institutions that oblige party leaders to seek the approval of their members before entering into coalitions with other parties. Additionally, party constitutions make only little reference to coalitions. Most party constitutions implicitly oblige party leaders to seek the consent of members before entering into a collation. In reality, however, their only is very high consultation between party leaders and a few senior party members.

Second, coalition formation processes are highly exclusive as far as the participation of ordinary party members is concerned. Coalition formation, negotiations, management, and termination are subject to the discretion of party elites.

Third, in terms of decentralization of coalition formation processes between factions, there is much variation between parties. In faction-dominated parties like Pua Paendin, the party leader cannot make or break coalitions without prior consensus among faction leaders. In less factionalized parties such as the Democrat Party, the process is dominated by an inner circle of the party leaders that includes the party leader, the Secretary General and a few other senior members and respected former party leaders. In leader-centred political parties, for example Chart Thai and TRT (before 2006), the party leader has full authority do determine coalition decisions. In Chart Thai, for instance, MPs are given the opportunity to express their opinion. In the end, however, it is the party leader who decides whether the party participate in a coalition government and, perhaps after informal consultation with a few influential party members, who is going to represent the party as minister at the cabinet level.

Fourth, within factionalized political parties, factional politics is a fundamental determinant of the distribution of ministerial posts. Although party leaders decide about the distribution of ministerial portfolios among rival factions, decision making usually involves a series of negotiations among faction leaders. In the past, cabinet seats within factionalized parties were allocated according to a quota system under the control of faction leaders. Ministerial portfolios were allocated between political parties according to the size of each faction and within factions according to the financial and political resources available to individual faction members.

In a recent study (2008) on intra-party factions and the durability of parliaments, cabinets and coalitions in Thailand, Chambers demonstrates that, from 1979 to 2001, Thai factions were more significant than parties as makers and breakers of parliaments, coalitions and cabinets (Chambers 2008). The 1997 reforms helped to strengthen and centralize Thai political parties while diminishing (but not destroying) the power of the often footloose factions. In particular, the reforms guaranteed party stability and discipline for Thai Rak Thai. A principal method by which Thaksin aggregated power was to push mergers with all major political parties except the Democrats and the Chart Thai. This move drastically reduced the number

of parties opposed to TRT. It meant fewer competing parties for Thaksin to worry about. Still, the inclusion of new parties produced more and more Thai Rak Thai factions. The traditional inter-party arena of Thai parliamentary politics had now shifted to the TRT intra-party arena. Thaksin quickly became a master juggler of factional interests. Moreover, the greater number of factions offset the attempts by any one faction to push Thaksin from the helm of Thai Rak Thai. Thaksin's overriding financial and executive control over TRT meant that factions could hardly demand choice cabinet or executive party posts. Indeed, the new constitution itself only allowed for a vastly reduced thirty-six cabinet ministers. Hence, TRT's factions rationally set their sights on more attainable goals. Where before these groups sought key party or cabinet posts, they now sought committee head posts, gaining a share of deputy party leadership positions, securing other party or legislative postings, or ensuring themselves an attractive cut of the budget.[21]

Under Thaksin, there was greater continuity and coherence in the ruling coalition. TRT factions were unable to switch to other parties thanks to the 1997 constitution. Factions no longer possessed the same level of political power that they once had. No longer could they make and break governments. Factions now had to resort to indirect means of challenging the prime minister: not showing up for parliament and thus preventing needed quorums, dragging their heels on parliamentary business, leaking information to the press, and grouping together to oppose Thaksin's own faction Wang Bua Ban.

However, Thailand's 2007 constitution again encourages a de-concentration of political parties, an anti-agglomeration of party leader prowess, and a revival of intra-party factionalism. The 1997 Constitution, like the 2007 Constitution, calls for a mixed electoral system. But under the new constitution, there are more constituency MPs than party list MPs, a decision that spells a loss for party centralization given that party closed list MPs rely on party leadership for their existence. Moreover, the 2007 constitution jettisons the 1997 single member district system in favor of the 1991 constitution's multi-member district system or MMD (Chapter 6, Section 94). MMD (with 400 MPs from 157 multi-seat districts) would be winner-take-all but each voter would only have one vote for one candidate. As there would be approximately 2-3 candidate slots per constituency, parties would tend to reflect this by offering the same number of candidates. This would cause candidates from the same party to compete among themselves instead of uniting against candidates of other parties to ensure party victory. Such intra-party competition, facilitated by MMD, heightens intra-party factionalism, according to Akkapol Sorrasuchart, former deputy Mahachon Party leader.[22]

Furthermore, the multi-member districts will actually be larger than the previous single member districts. Generally, larger constituency size would compel MPs to be more dependent on funds from wealthy party bigwigs. However, since MMD encourages factionalism, this means the intensification of reliance by follower-MPs on faction leaders. Stronger candidates may be satisfied with a certain level of party funding. Weaker candidates, desirous of victory, will turn to factions to leverage their chances of success. Moreover, the drive to win in a larger constituency will mean greater reliance on local vote-canvassing networks which in Thailand have traditionally been controlled by local factions rather than national party structures. MMD means that intra-party factional competition to control vote-canvassing networks will grow in the future. More money will be spent in elections and there could be more attempts to extract the rent necessary from the spoils of office to recoup election losses and pay back supporters.

Regarding party list MPs, the 80 party list MPs are divided into eight regions of 10 party list MPs each. Party lists generally contributed to party-centered voting, thus tending toward as-

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[21] Among TRT's fifteen factions, two were initially dominant. The first, called Wang Bua Ban, centered on the prime minister's sister, MP Yaowapha Wongsawat (as well as Thaksin himself). A second faction, Wang Nam Yen, was led by Thai party veteran Sanoh Tienthong.

[22] Weerayut Chokchaimadon, Kornchanok Raksaseri, "Idea on Multiple-MP Constituency Flayed," *The Nation*, February 10, 2007, http://www.nationmultimedia.com.

sisting larger, more famous and established parties. Having eight regions of lists may intensify regionalism of political parties and factions while diminishing the prospects of any one party using its control over the most populous regions (e.g. Thai Rak Thai's landslides in the Northeast in the 2001 and 2005 elections) to dominate the entirety of the party list vote. n defense of the new charter, drafter Wuthisarn Tanchai has stated that the principle behind the new system was to make the areas represented by the proportional-vote members smaller to force them to work more closely with their constituents.[23] Again, this means reliance on local resources and labor—factions.

As for factions and MPs wishing to leave parties following the commencement of a parliamentary term, the 2007 constitution actually facilitates such a move. In the 1997 constitution, MPs were required to be a member of a political party for 90 days prior to a general election (Section 107 (4). Constituency by-elections (Section 119 [2]), elections following expiration of a parliamentary term, and snap elections called by prime ministers always occurred within this 90-day window. Mere resignation from one's party generally meant termination of MP status as well (See Section 118 [8]). As such, party migration by MPs and their factions was near impossible. And this served to stifle voices of factions while cementing control for party leaders. The new charter unlocks this cage. Section 101 "frees" MPs to migrate to their preferred party following dissolution of parliament which is not the end of the parliamentary term. Meanwhile, chapter 6, section 107 and 108 specify that the time of parliamentary dissolution cannot be briefer than 45 days. If prime ministers did call a snap election, it would provide migration-minded MPs and factions the opportunity to move to another party.

The new charter furthermore reignites the connection between party, faction, and ministerial position. Chapter 6, section 102 mentions those individuals not permitted to be MPs. It is silent on the issue of ministers, implicitly allowing MPs to simultaneously serve as ministers in cabinets. Section 110 of the 1997 constitution explicitly prohibited this, forcing MPs to resign their position before becoming ministers. In addition, chapter 6, Section 124 (4) weakens control of political party executives over Lower House leadership positions. It states that while in office, the President or Vice-Presidents of the House of Representatives cannot be an executive or hold any position in a political party. At the same time, under Chapter 9, section 171, for the first time, prime ministers cannot remain in office for more than two back to back terms (or not longer than 8 years).

Finally, Article 104, for the first time, refuses to allow political parties to merge during a parliamentary term. This article speaks directly to Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's merging of lesser parties into his Thai Rak Thai (TRT) from 2001 to 2005. TRT incorporated Seritham, New Aspiration, Rassadorn, and Chart Pattana into itself during this period. Article 104, by preventing party mergers, keeps wealthier parties from gobbling up weaker parties within a single term. It thus ensures the de-agglomeration of Thai parties.

7. Party Finance

Within the context of intra-party democracy it is also important to ask what the key sources of party funding are. Who controls the allocation of party resources? Is there transparency about sources and allocation of party finances? Is there a correlation between the source of party funding and the control of party agenda? These are important issues for an evolving party system where parties have traditionally been dominated by a small coterie of leaders who control party finances.

In Thailand, there have traditionally been no centralized fund-raising organizations for political party candidates. At the same time there have been no laws to prevent powerful donors

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[23] Mongkol, Bangprapa, "Race to Parliament: New Party List System Defended," *Bangkok Post*, November 7, 2007, http://www.bangkokpost.com.

from contributing however much they want to political parties. Thus, candidates have come to rely on private independent fund-raising and the backing of wealthy elites in order to get elected (Siripan 2006: 95). The result has been that Thai parties have often become the personal fiefs of their financiers.

The 1997 Thai Constitution marked an important transitory step in political funding laws. The reforms strictly regulated party operations and accounting practices in order to enhance transparency and accountability within the party system. A key objective of this new "People's Constitution" was to build stronger, cleaner, more transparent parties. At its inception, the ECT utilized various methods to stem the acceptance of illegal donations by parties, from fines to dissolution.

The 2007 Constitution strengthened the oversight of capacities of courts and monitoring agencies over parties and MPs. At the same time, donation limits to parties became more clearly outlined. The result has been a new organic law on political parties which places parties more tightly under the control of Thailand's Election Commission and judiciary.

Indeed, the new 2007 Organic Law on Political Parties mandates that political party fund-raising activities must be transparent (Section 54) while party revenues may come from the following sources:

(1) fees and political subscriptions as prescribed by the political party's

regulations;

(2) proceeds from the sale of political products or services;

(3) money, property or any other benefit of financial value, derived from the

political party's fund-raising activities;

(4) money, property or any other benefit of financial value, derived from

private donations to the party

(5) revenue derived from the political party's

property;

(6) subsidies from the Fund for Development of Political Parties (Section 53).

Following previous unsuccessful attempts to pass a law on financial support for political parties, the 1998 Party Act for the first time introduced a system of public party finance. This so-called Fund for the Development of Political Parties (FDP) is in the Office of the Election Commission as revolving fund and for expenses in subsidising political parties and other activities with respect to the development of political parties prescribed by the ECT. According to section 75 of the 2007 Party Law, state subsidy for political parties shall be allocated annually to those political parties which have stood candidates at the latest general election of the House of Representatives and have received votes on a party-list basis equivalent to not less than 0.5% of the aggregate of votes cast for all political parties in the party-list election, or have received votes on a constituency basis equivalent to not less than zero 0.5% of the total nationwide votes cast for all candidates in the constituency election (section 73-86).[24] The subsidy is distributed to entitled political parries by allocating

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[24] No one political party shall receive more than half of the total allocation granted in a year. It is worth to mention that the allocation formula used for the distribution of state subsidy in the 1997 Party Law gave more emphasize

1) 40% of the total amount of the subsidy according to the number of votes obtained from an election on a party-list basis

2) 40% of the subsidy according to the number of votes obtained from an election on a constituency basis,

3) 10% of the subsidy according to the number of branches of a political party, and

4) 10% of the subsidy according to the number of active members who paid annual subscription fees, under the rules and procedures prescribed by the EC.

However, the newly introduced system of public party financing is not working well. A first reason for this is the organizational discontinuity of the party system as parties come and go so quickly anyway. A second reason is that the total amount of public funding is much too small to cover party expenses. For example, according to the official numbers published by the Election Commission alone, , the total amount of public subsidies given to various political parties in the period 1998 to 2001 accounted only for 67 percent of the reported total donations alone, not accounting for unreported donations, slush funds and other "black money" (Siripan 2006: 96; ECT 2008). In 2006 (latest year for which figures are available), the total amount of FDP subsidies to political parties was 271 million Baht; at the same time, parties reported 235 million Baht in donations. In 2007, the total amount of reported donations almost doubled to 416.8 million Baht.

It seems clear that the amount of donations recorded by the ECT did not reflect actual contributions, which in reality are certainly far greater than those reported to the ECT. Actually, private funding does not go to parties but to individuals. Traditionally, such funding was raised by both the party leadership as well as factions. However, when Thaksin Shinawatra founded TRT, he also was able to centralize party financing under his personal control. That way, he did not have to worry about having to please factions or worry about any party corruption by those factions.

Regarding private donations to parties, any money, property or other benefits of at least Baht 100,000 shall be classified as donations (Section 54). Section 56 states that donors offering sums of Baht 100,000 or more must be identified. Donations to political parties of more than Baht 5,000 or more must be done publicly (Section 57). The maximum donation limit by a single individual or legal entity is Baht10million per year (Section 59). The maximum tax rebate that can be claimed on political donations is now Baht5,000 per annum for individuals and Baht20,000 per annum for legal entities (Section 61). Where there is a donation to a political party, the party leader must accurately detail the donors' names, and donated money, property or any other benefit of financial value. This announcement must be publicly posted and sent to the ECT(Section 60). Some say that these new finance rules may simply make money politics more transparent in Thailand. Meanwhile, in an attempt to rein in foreign sources of party funding, the following types of people or organizations are forbidden from giving contributions:

(1) an individual or organization not of Thai nationality;

(2) a juristic person registered in the Kingdom consisting of persons not being of Thai nationality who hold capital shares

(3) a Thai organization or juristic person receiving capital or supporting money from a foreign country, having an objective to carry out any activity for the benefit of persons not being of Thai nationality (Section 69).

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to the number of elected MPs and the size of membership, whereas the percentage of subsidies was allocated according to number of votes obtained from party list election and constituency elections, and the number of party branches was significantly smaller.

Moreover, no government unit or state enterprise is allowed to donate funds to parties (Section 71). And, in an attempt to reduce the power of coalition leaders to turn electoral success into a source of party funds, Section 68 forbids the prime minister and Cabinet members from using their position to raise funds for a candidate or political party. As such, these leaders will have to increasingly rely on contributions from intra-party groupings. All in all, the organic law on parties decentralizes party finance in Thailand to the level of greater intra-party factional control.[25] Meanwhile, in the 2007 Organic Law on Election of MPs and Senators, Section 80 requires that ballot counting henceforth take place at polling stations themselves rather than in a central vote-counting location as specified under the 1997 constitution. The change could strengthen faction-linked vote canvassers who can then find out "whether voters who took money for their vote actually voted for the candidate who paid them."[26]

Thailand's 2007 Party Law obligates parties to use their expenses for political activities or nomination purposes as follows:

(1) developing political party personnel

(2) administering political parties and their branches

(3) electoral expenditures

(4) expenses for the promotion of democracy in the political party

(5) expenses in developing political knowledge among the general public

(6) other expenses as prescribed by the Election Commission (Section 87).

Aside from expenses, no political party or MP shall give money or other benefits of financial value to a person, juristic person, or group of persons unless it is an ECT-approved customary gift (Section 89). Moreover, such persons shall not request gifts from political parties or MPs (Section 90).

The 2007 constitution emphasizes political party responsibility over finances and maintaining orderly access for audit checks by the state. As such, under the 2007 organic law on political parties, executive committees and branch committees of parties are required to maintain political party accounts (at their respective levels) accessible to the ECT (Section 44). These party accounts consist of journals showing revenue (received or expended), donations, the ledger, and an account showing assets and liabilities (Section 45). In addition there must be supporting documentation. The account must at least show all sources of party revenue, including donations, state subsidies, other funding sources, and how these funds were expended. Each year parties are audited and certified by an authorized auditor even if the party holds no parliamentary seats (Section 46). The auditor then presents financial reports to the party's general meeting every April (Section 47). All members of a party executive committee (including the party leader) must meanwhile submit their accounts to the ECT, revealing all financial assets and liabilities (Section 49). The organic law further states that party executive committees must allocate expenses for the election of Lower House members of Parliament. This allocation occurs as follows. For party list candidates, the allocation is made collectively according to the number of party list candidates submitted by the party to the Election Commission. For constituency candidates, expenses shall be individually allocated (Section 52).

Ultimately then it is Thailand's Election Commission which today controls the allocation of party resources. Through regular audits and required statements, the ECT has acquired a

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[25] Pravit, Rojanaphruk, "New Political Game: How the Goalposts Have Moved." *The Nation*, November 3, 2007, http://www.nationmultimedia.com.
[26] Pravit, Rojanaphruk, "Organic Laws Give Rise to Controversies," *The Nation*, November 2, 2007, http://www.nationmultimedia.com.

stronger hand in monitoring and influencing party funding activities. And given the arsenal of penalties at the ECT's disposal, parties have become much more amenable to revealing their internal financial activities while there has been a growth in transparency about the sources and allocation of party finances.

Among the DP, PPP, and CTP, DP has perhaps been the most open: the party's financial statements are on its website.   With the ECT policing political parties, executive committees have become essential to the allocation of party resources as well since the ECT sends FDP moneys to parties from the top down---through the party leadership. However given the new limits on political party donations (Baht 10 million per annum under Section 59 of the 2007 Organic Law on Political Parties), one person cannot dominate parties as much as they once might have. These new rules about limits on donations to political parties effectively prevent „big money" donors from controlling party agendas."[27]   This significantly marks a change from wealthy contributors controlling party agendas as they once might have done. Still, there are always surreptitious illegal donations, and it is a tough order to halt all of these. As such, the ECT will find it difficult to keep financially influential bigwigs from exerting their will on party objectives. The clearest example is Thaksin Shinawatra, who has continued to exert influence on the PPP—even from abroad.

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[27] Interview with Mayor Deuntenduang Na Chiang Mai, member of Democrat Party and former MP candidate at the national level, October 16, 2008.