Asia Research Institute
Working Paper Series No. 144

The Mask-play Election: Generals, Politicians and Voters at Thailand's 2007 Poll

Pasuk Phongpaichit
Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

Chris Baker
Independent Scholar

chrispasuk@gmail.com

September 2010

The **ARI Working Paper Series** is published electronically by the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore.

Note: The views expressed in each paper are those of the author or authors of the paper. They do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of the Asia Research Institute, its Editorial Committee or of the National University of Singapore.

Citations of this electronic publication should be made in the following manner: Author, "Title," ARI Working Paper, No. #, Date, www.nus.ari.edu.sg/pub/wps.htm. For instance, Smith, John, "Ethnic Relations in Singapore," ARI Working Paper, No. 1, June 2003, www.ari.nus.edu.sg/pub/wps.htm.

Asia Research Institute
National University of Singapore
469A Tower Block #10-01,
Bukit Timah Road,
Singapore 259770
Tel: (65) 6516 3810
Fax: (65) 6779 1428
Website: www.ari.nus.edu.sg
Email: arisec@nus.edu.sg

The Asia Research Institute (ARI) was established as a university-level institute in July 2001 as one of the strategic initiatives of the National University of Singapore (NUS). The mission of the Institute is to provide a world-class focus and resource for research on the Asian region, located at one of its communications hubs. ARI engages the social sciences broadly defined, and especially interdisciplinary frontiers between and beyond disciplines. Through frequent provision of short-term research appointments it seeks to be a place of encounters between the region and the world. Within NUS it works particularly with the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Business, Law and Design, to support conferences, lectures, and graduate study at the highest level.

The Mask-play Election: Generals, Politicians and Voters at Thailand's 2007 Poll[1]

Khon or mask-play is a traditional Thai form of dance-drama that is highly distinctive because it originated from puppetry.[2] The actors do not just play the roles of other people, but imitate puppets—artificial figures manipulated by people behind the scenes. The actors wear puppet-like masks so there are no facial expressions, and they pose and move like puppets. The plays, all taken from the *Ramakian*, the Thai adaptation of the Ramayana, are morality tales of good battling evil. Each play is only a segment of the full story, so the ending is not really an ending, and it is considered inauspicious to perform the final episode.

The 2007 Thai general election had all the procedures and rituals of an election. It was fought among parties, and had the full sequence of scenes from candidate selection through campaigning and polling to counting and announcing a result. But the key players were not present on the election stage. Everybody knew that the real contest was between Thaksin Shinawatra on one side and a coalition of political forced spearheaded by the generals who overthrew him by coup fifteen months earlier on the other.[3]

The coup of September 2006 was carried out for the specific purpose of removing Thaksin Shinawatra from power. The generals promised to restore democracy within a year. They used that time to launch a judicial assault on Thaksin, and rewrite the rules of the political game. They hoped that Thaksin would be discredited by the judicial exposure, and that the new rules would guard against a recurrence of his use of power. Meanwhile Thaksin saw that his best chance to avert the judicial assault was to maintain his political influence.[4] Hence the election of 23 December 2007 was not only the restoration of a parliamentary system, but a trial of strength between Thaksin and the generals over who would control the new government.

This essay divides the drama of the 2007 election into three acts. In the first, set in the sequestered, celestial world of the military elite, the generals agree among themselves that Thaksin's populist politics are the same as the anti-monarchical communist insurgency that they fought in earlier episodes of the story. Opposing these politics is thus a matter of "national security" and it is their duty to use public funds and public servants to influence the result of the election. The act forewarns that the drama will end in battle.

The second act focuses on the politicians. Though banned from politics and in exile, Thaksin remains closely engaged in Thai politics, in part as a means to avert the judicial assault on himself and his family. With the generals and Thaksin now positioned off-stage to either side manipulating the strings and levers, politicians pirouette from one side of the stage to the

[1] Thanks to Kevin Hewison, Duncan McCargo, Marc Askew, and ARI's reader for comments on earlier drafts.

[2] Some historians argue that the puppet and human versions developed in parallel, exchanging features. See Mattani 1993: 6–10.

[3] This coalition included disgruntled bureaucrats, royalists, and large sections of the urban middle class. For various interpretations of this coalition, see the essays in Connors and Hewison (2008).

[4] At a later stage, after his self-exile to England in August 2008, he told Reuters, "Politically motivated cases must be resolved by political means." http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-35542120080918 (accessed 9 October 2008)

other, clustering into groups and then scattering apart, peering into the heavens to gauge which side has the gods on its side and will win. Even as battle is joined, the scene is so confused that is difficult to decide which side many of the pireouetting politicians are on.

The final act focuses on the voters. Despite efforts to rewrite the rules and manipulate the politicians in order to block Thaksin's return to influence, the voters return an election result consistent with trends evident since 2001. The support for Thaksin's camp falls from the heights of 2005 back to a level rather similar to 2001, but is still enough to form a government. The Democrats poll far better than in recent elections, but the new parties conjured up after the coup fail miserably. The generals have lost. But, of course, this is only one episode in a longer story.

ACT I: THE GENERALS IN THEIR HEAVEN

The coup of 2006 brought the military back to the center of Thailand's political stage after an absence of fourteen years. The Council of National Security (CNS, the coup group's official vehicle) installed General Surayud Chulanont, a former army head and now a privy councilor, as prime minister; hand-picked a new legislature; set up an Assets Scrutiny Committee to pursue Thaksin for corruption by legal process; and then retired into the wings to steer events from a little distance. By early 2007, their main focus was on managing the return to parliamentary democracy. According to internal documents, the coup leaders believed Thaksin's populist politics represented a bid to seize the state and overthrow the monarchy—analogous to the communist insurgency of thirty years earlier—and hence the generals had a right and duty to deploy public money and public resources in opposition.

The Script

General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, who had led the coup, and who remained army chief and head of the CNS until his retirement on 30 September 2007, spearheaded the planning for the return of parliament. The thinking of his group was revealed in two documents that were made public on pro-Thaksin websites in the run-up to the election.[5] The first document outlined a public relations plan to oppose the People Power Party (PPP, the reincarnation of the Thai Rak Thai party, TRT, which had been dissolved for electoral malpractice) by placing stories in government media to portray the party as anti-monarchical and to deter voters from

[5] Obviously, this origin raises doubts over the documents' credibility, yet there are reasons to take them seriously. Army sources initially insisted the documents were fake, and later changed to claims they had been doctored. A committee of the Election Commission (ECT) examined the documents and ruled that the CNS "had failed to act neutrally."[5] General Surayud Chulanont noted tellingly that he saw "nothing in them [the documents] other than the CNS's normal operations" (*Bangkok Post*, 25 October 2007). General Sonthi tacitly admitted the validity of the document by stating that the plans described were "intended to guide the public down the right path to democracy" (*Bangkok Post*, 1 December 2007). Also, most of the measures outlined in the document were clearly implemented between the revelation and the election. The translations and summaries presented in this paper are our own work, based on the original documents.

giving it their support.[6] Samak Sundaravej, the PPP leader, publicly protested against this military interference in the election.

The second leaked document excited less controversy[7] but is more wide-ranging. It contains the transcript of a meeting held inside army headquarters on 21 September 2007 for General Sonthi to deliver a farewell speech.[8] All the army brass from battalion commanders upwards were invited to attend. Sonthi was preceded on the podium by the commander of the First Army who spoke about the abolition of the monarchy in the French and Russian revolutions, alluded to the Maoists' intention to remove the monarchy in Nepal, and reminded the audience of the army's success in defeating the Thai communists twenty years earlier. He then traced the politics of former communists who participated in current democratic politics.

> Whether in the pre-war era, the Cold War era, or the era of capitalist democracy, their activist struggle to win over the people has not changed at all…. They have not lost their inclinations or ideology…. They win over the people through elections in order to take state power and have the ability to make changes they want at an appropriate time. One party, that was founded on 14 July 1998 [the foundation date of Thai Rak Thai], with a secret organization of this group in the background, is a mix of capitalism and populism…. The populist policies were not created by the politicians who have a foundation in politics, but by the people that we encouraged to contest under democracy [meaning activists allowed to return from the jungle].

Populism, he went on, was simply a way to win over the people. Ordinary people who had been duped by populism were a "red zone," the term for communist-dominated areas during the insurgency by the Communist Party of Thailand. A "war for the people" was still in progress.

> It is our duty, as soldiers of the king, to understand these matters, to understand the war for the people, both in the era of the Cold War and the era of populism…. So all of us must contest with them to win the grassroots back for the king…. Our most important aim is that all the masses in the territory must be ours.

---

[6] This document is on the header of the Information Department (*phanaek phatipat khaosan*), numbered 0003.4/480, dated 14 September 2007. These stories would paint PPP members as anti-monarchical, suggest that the party planned to move to a presidential system, and warn that a vote for PPP would be useless because its leader would be removed on corruption charges and the party's victory would only provoke another coup (*Bangkok Post*, 24 October 2007). Among the specific proposal were: "create news to attack the old power … spread rumours about the connections between TRT, Singapore, PPP, and the trend towards presidential rule … spread rumours that Thaksin paid foreign media to run articles attacking the institution."

[7] When he first raised the issue, Samak mentioned both documents, but in the subsequent controversy, including the scrutiny by the ECT, only the first document seems to have been involved. Possibly this was because the second document, with its fuller analysis, focus on the monarchy, and extensive action plan, was potentially much more controversial—in short, too hot to handle.

[8] The document has the header of the army's Policy and Planning Division, and is numbered 0402/513, dated 26 September 2007.

General Sonthi then took the stage. He noted that the army already had several programs, operated by the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), to win support from "merchants, the wealthy, and prominent businessmen," but a new strategy was needed to address the broader target of "the people." He then outlined the approach. First, soldiers had to be clever, disciplined, and virtuous to be worthy of people's admiration. Second, the officer elite had to use all opportunities of contacts with civilian bureaucrats to attach them as allies. Third, bureaucrats in various ministries should be encouraged to draw up long-term plans and stick to their implementation in order to shut out the populist schemes of politicians. Fourth, in the provinces, "*kamnan* [subdistrict heads], village heads, and local government bodies must be in our hands." In addition, army personnel should take over duties such as suppressing drugs, controlling illegal migration, combating drought and flood, and alleviating poverty. The ISOC chief in each province should spearhead this policy, mobilizing help from reservists and former cadet school students.

The document concludes that "the army's task from now on is to win over the people at every level and in every area to turn to support the army, and be loyal to nation, religion and king. This is the duty of every soldier." One key part of this strategy was headlined as *lak sam ko tit*, the "principle of three grips." General Sonthi had deployed this approach earlier against insurgents in the deep south, and adapted it for use in the "war for the people" after the 2006 coup. The plan was "to get a grip on the territory, get a grip on the people, and get a grip on enemies or opponents" (Wassana 2008: 307). The document ends with a proposal, endorsed by General Sonthi's signature, to pass this message down the chain of command.

Before this document became public, there were signs that the strategy was already being implemented. In July 2007, government abrogated quinquennial elections for *kamnan* and village headmen, instead allowing these office-holders to remain until retirement (*Bangkok Post*, 21 September 2007). On 15 October 2007, Sonthi—who had now retired and become deputy prime minister overseeing security—ordered ISOC to "support democracy" by sending troops "to be close to the people" (*Bangkok Post*, 16 October 2007). In the very last days of the government, the coup-appointed parliament passed an Internal Security Act which clarified the powers of ISOC and created an ISOC structure reaching down into the provinces. Prior to the election, leaflets alleging the pro-Thaksin party aimed to overthrow the monarchy were distributed in the northeast (McCargo 2008: 344–5).

Mise en scène

In any mask-play performance, the scene prior to the battle has a standard form. The soldiers stride around the stage, glaring fiercely, stamping loudly, waving their swords, and roaring. But somehow this time, the display seemed less intimidating.

Both speakers at Sonthi's farewell meeting stated that populist politicians were a larger problem for national security than the insurgency in the far south or any external threat. By imagining they were fighting a covert revolutionary movement lurking behind electoral politics and intent on overthrowing the monarchy, the generals licensed the use of the military's resources of men and money to combat this threat.

Shortly after the coup, the CNS earmarked a budget of 55.6 billion baht and a special force of 13,625 men to root out support for Thaksin and his TRT party in its core areas of the upper north and northeast (*Matichon*, 28 December 2006). Early in their military careers, Surayud, Sonthi, and other members of CNS had been involved in the fight against the CPT. This anti-

Thaksin drive in the rural areas bears obvious affinities to the campaigns to wean villages away from support for the CPT in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The army command parceled out a budget for "occupational training courses" in every village, and targeted their attentions on the *hua khanaen*, the vote-brokers who were the foundations of electoral politics (Wassana 2008: 307).

But the effectiveness was much lower than in the anti-communist era. Over the intervening years, access to television and experience with national and local elections had provided mass political education. According to some reports, villagers in the northeast resented "the constant presence of security officials in most meetings and gatherings in communities," and bridled at soldiers presuming to give them instructions about politics.[9]

The first stage of restoring electoral politics came with a referendum on a new constitution held on 19 August 2007. The CNS was determined that the charter draft should be accepted, preferably by a high margin. A large budget was allocated for publicity. The booklet with the new draft, distributed to every household, was printed with a cover in yellow, a color strongly associated with the king. Posters urged voters, "Love the King. Care about the King. Vote in the referendum. Accept the 2007 draft charter" (*Bangkok Post*, 12 July 2007). ISOC coordinated the campaign, sending a huge force to contact households door-by-door to ensure they were not "tricked."[10] According to one report attributed to a source inside the CNS, the junta used 50,000 troops and a budget of 10 billion baht (*Nation*, 22 August 2007). The CNS resisted calls to lift martial law before the referendum. Martial law had been imposed after the coup and remained in force in 36 of the 72 provinces, including most of the north and northeast (*Nation*, 9 June 2007).

Besides putting large resources behind their own campaign, the generals also attempted to disrupt any campaign to reject the charter. While an act was being drafted to govern this first-ever referendum in Thailand, General Surayud mentioned that the law might ban all opposition campaigning (*Nation*, 3 July 2007). In the event, opposition was allowed, but the law included provisions against "misleading" publicity, and CNS spokesmen drew public attention to these provisions. These veiled threats were complemented with early action against two high-profile opponents. In Chiang Mai, Thaksin's hometown, police arrested a prominent NGO worker, Sombat Boon-ngam-anong, after he gave a speech advocating a "no" vote in the referendum (*Bangkok Post*, 12 August 2007). In Bangkok, police raided the office of Prateep Ungsongtham Hata, a well-known slum activist and prominent opponent of the coup, seizing various campaign materials including posters announcing, "It's not illegal to vote against the draft constitution" (*Nation*, 29 July 2007). Also in the capital, the Interior Ministry warned taxi drivers that putting pro-rejection stickers on their vehicles might be against the Motor Vehicles Act (*Nation*, 10 August 2007). Taxis had earlier carried political campaign material without attracting this sort of threat.

---

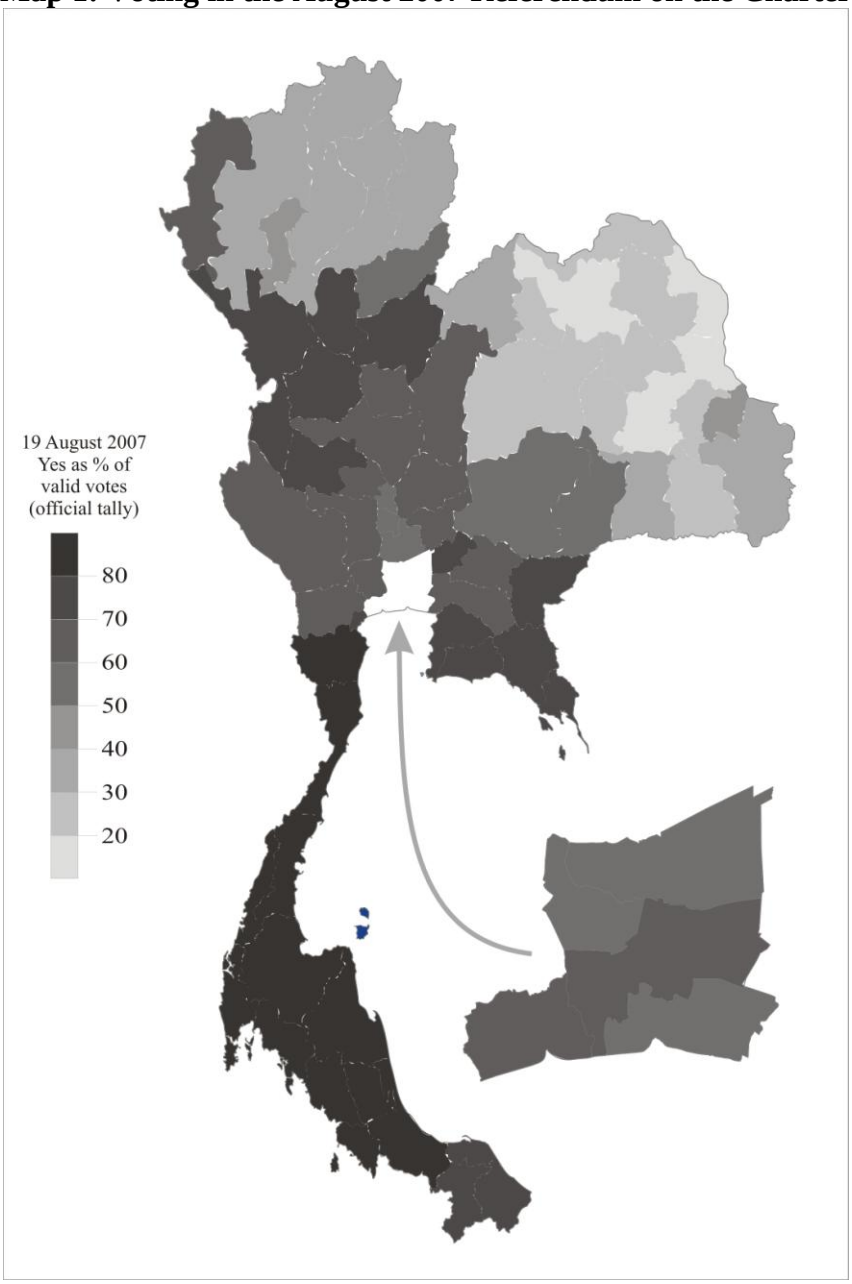
[9] "… in the run-up to the referendum there had been movements by the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) and the various arms of the Interior Ministry: calls for meetings among heads of sub-districts and villages, villagers' pledging ceremonies for democracy development, the democracy development volunteers project, the prime minister's official visit, seminars of community leaders, opinion surveys, publicity brochures by the provincial authorities and the ISOC, meetings and seminars organized by various agencies which receive funding from the government, and local politicians' campaigns. All these were claimed to be done to persuade the people to exercise their right in the referendum, but were in fact propaganda to vote in favor of the draft constitution." (Sarayut 2007)

[10] *Bangkok Post* (July 31, 2007) reported that ISOC mobilized 700,000 staff for this campaign. The figure appears too high, but probably indicates it was a massive effort.

General Sonthi ordered every army unit commander to push for the charter's acceptance (*Nation*, 7 July 2007). As the poll approached, he "instructed around 400,000 armed forces members and police officers," who were subordinates of CNS members, to vote in favor of the constitution draft. He also wanted the cabinet to "urge" state officials to vote in favor (*Bangkok Post*, 31 July 2007). In the north, another CNS member, General Saprang Kalyanamit gave 100,000 baht to every district officer to campaign for the charter (*Bangkok Post*, 13 September 2007). To encourage people to return to their place of electoral registration on polling day, the government halved train fares and provided free trips on inter-provincial buses.

With these efforts, the CNS was confident of a favorable result. An army poll predicted that 70 percent would vote to accept the draft (*Bangkok Post*, 22 August 2007). General Sonthi stated, "From a preliminary survey, 90 percent of constituencies will vote in favour of the charter" (*Nation*, August 5, 2007).

Map 1: Voting in the August 2007 Referendum on the Charter



The result was a disappointment for the generals. The charter was approved, but by a much lower margin than they had expected. The valid votes split 58 percent in favor and 42 percent against. Of the 72 provinces, 24 voted against the draft, mostly in the upper north and northeast, the two strongholds of Thaksin's support, and the two prime targets of the junta's political campaigning (see Map 1). In the capital, where the generals hoped for a propaganda victory, the result was close to the national average. Tellingly, many people had lied to the opinion polls, including to the exit pollsters on referendum day. The army commanders of the north and northeast regions both gave public interviews similar to those of defeated candidates, regretting their failure and analyzing their errors (*Bangkok Post* and *Nation*, 21 August 2007). General Montri Sanghkhasap, the head of ISOC (and hence the chief campaign manager), blamed the defeat directly on the failure to spend enough money (*Nation*, 22 August 2007).

The referendum result raised large doubts about the likely result of the election which would restore parliament four months later. However, General Montri's conviction that the failure was a function of money pointed the way forwards. The general stated, "Poverty is a root cause of all problems…. If we can fix it, people are likely to swing to us." Thaksin had promised to eradicate Thailand's remaining poverty in a handful of years. General Montri brought the deadline down to a handful of months (*Bangkok Post*, 22 August 2007). Sonthi "hurled the army into 'getting a grip' even more tightly than before, and increased efforts to discredit Thaksin and PPP with issues over the institution [of monarchy]" (Wassana 2008, 307–8). The CNS adjusted the area under martial law, lifting it in many provinces, but retaining it in all or part of 35 provinces, including most of the northeast and upper north (*Nation*, 6 September 2007).

Leading Back to Democracy

General Sonthi was uncertain whether to direct this crucial scene of the mask-play from behind the curtain, or whether to step forward onto the stage.

In July 2007, reports appeared that General Sonthi was planning to enter politics after his retirement from the army and probably lead a party to contest the elections. An aide explained, "It's not about prolonging the stay in power. It is about keeping Mr Thaksin away" (*Bangkok Post*, 11 July 2007). Shortly after, Kajit Habananda announced plans to launch a party named Rak Chat (love the nation).[11] Kajit was president and CEO of One-Two-Go, a budget airline. Much earlier, he had been involved in politics himself. He explained the need for a new party by saying "a lot of my supporters are businessmen, who feel their lives are dependent upon the stability of politics" (*Nation*, 25 August 2007). In early August, General Panlop Pinmanee announced that he had joined Rak Chat, urged other soldiers to join, and called on Sonthi to take the leadership. General Panlop, recently retired, had had a long career in ISOC, including a prominent role in the final stages of overcoming the CPT in the northeast. Panlop was reported to be preparing for Sonthi to stand in Lopburi, a garrison town where Sonthi had spent part of his military career (*Bangkok Post*, 11 July 2007). Sonthi refused to confirm or deny his political ambition, stating he would make an announcement on his retirement.

[11] At this stage all political activity was banned under an order imposed immediately after the coup. Any new party formation had to wait until that ban was lifted, which happened after the referendum result in late August.

Yet Sonthi's actions betrayed him. He was lobbying for financial support from businessmen (*Bangkok Post*, 11 July 2007). He publicly floated the idea of issuing an amnesty to some of the banned TRT politicians (*Bangkok Post*, 4 June 2007); a similar selective amnesty had been used to construct a pro-military party after the 1991 coup. He called a meeting of labor activists and workers, entertained them lavishly at the Army Club, and expressed support for the downtrodden.[12] In the 1980s, politically ambitious generals had organized support from labor. Sonthi was playing military-led party formation by the history book.

Two events probably changed Sonthi's plans. First, the referendum result showed that the army was far from certain of being able to obtain a safe election victory. In Lopburi, where he was planning to stand, the referendum result was no better than the national average. Second, on 16 September, a One-Two-Go plane crashed on landing in Phuket, killing 90 people and bringing accusations of pilot error and corporate mismanagement. The plans for the Rak Chat Party disappeared.

Shortly after, Sonthi's political decline was explained in terms of fate. During the contest for promotion to army commander in 2006, Sonthi had consulted a Chiang Mai astrologer and medium, Warin Buaviratlert, who channeled the spirit of Kewalan, a deceased Himalayan rishi. Warin discovered that Sonthi was the reincarnation of a general under King Taksin, who rescued Siam after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. Warin told Sonthi that this meant he was destined to "save the nation." Warin predicted that Sonthi would rise to the army commander post, and performed some ceremonies to make this even more certain. Warin also predicted the 2006 coup, divined it would succeed, and identified 19 September as an auspicious day (Wassana 2008: 132). After these prophesies, Warin became the favored sage of the CNS. Kajit, promoter of the failed Rak Chat party, was also a follower. When Kajit's project crumbled, Warin launched a Rak Chat *Thai* Party in Chiang Mai. But around the time of the referendum result and the Phuket plane crash, Warin divined that the fate of the CNS had entered a difficult phase, and that the fate of Sonthi was especially vexed. In November, other members of the CNS including Air Chief Marshal Chalit Phukphasuk, Admiral Sathiraphan Keyanon, and Sasini, wife of General Winai Phattiyakul, attended Warin's Hall of the Reverend Rishi Kewalan in Chiang Mai for a *suep chata* (fate extending) rite in which they sat under a three-legged arch decorated with banana plants, sugarcane, coconut fronds, bunches of bananas, gourds, candles, incense sticks, and offerings of food while learned monks from sixteen *wat* in the city chanted for two hours. General Sonthi did not attend because his fate was deemed beyond rescue (*Matichon Sutsapda* 1423, 23 November 2007: 14–6; *Sayam Rat Sapda Wijan* 55, 9, 23–9 November 2007: 11).

On retirement, Sonthi stood down as head of CNS and announced he had no intention of entering politics. However his aide, General Boonrawd Somthat confirmed there was still an "old plan" for Sonthi to become a deputy prime minister and defense minister if a Democrat-led government could be engineered after the election (Wassana 2008: 309–10).

A week after retirement, Sonthi was made a deputy prime minister overseeing security matters including the Interior Ministry, the Election Commission, and labor affairs. In this role, he paid no attention to the southern insurgency or any external security issues, but

[12] "Speaking softly, the CNS chief tried to show how much he truly empathised with the plight of hard-working labourers and impoverished farmers in rural areas. He told of his experiences in the past, when he was a young man who had to supplement his income by working in a company on the side." *Bangkok Post*, 9 August 2007.

focused entirely on the upcoming election. He visited the election commissioners and ordered them to be strict about enforcing election laws and preventing vote buying. He instructed ISOC to "promote the democratic process" by sending "troops to position close to people all across the country" (*Bangkok Post*, 16 October 2007). He "order[ed] the Interior Ministry to use its grassroots mechanisms to prevent politicians loyal to ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra returning to politics after the election" (*Bangkok Post*, 13 October 2007).

A few days before the polls, an audio clip appeared on the web in which the commander of a Bangkok army unit ordered his men to vote for Democrat candidates, including specifying their candidate numbers (*Bangkok Post*, 24 and 27 December 2007). According to Wassana (2008: 309), all unit commanders had received orders to carry out this task. The army chief excused the commander on grounds that "I know that was done in good faith, not because any relative ran as a candidate" (*Bangkok Post*, 27 December 2007). An army officer in Chiang Rai told the poll-monitoring NGO Anfrel that soldiers there had been instructed to vote for the Chat Thai candidate (Anfrel 2008: 30).

Immediately prior to the general election, General Prem Tinsulanond was asked about the army's stance after the poll. He replied with the usual mantra about soldiers remaining neutral. When pressed by a reporter whether the army would stand aside if Thaksin's supporters swept to victory, he let slip, "I wouldn't go as far as to say that" (*Matichon*, 21 December 2007).

ACT II: THE DANCE OF THE POLITICIANS

After the 2006 coup, Thaksin remained abroad throughout the period up to the general election. Although he was thus absent from the political stage, he remained an influential force in the background. His supporters in the electorate, and the loyalists in his party, wanted him to remain involved. Thaksin also needed political influence to bolster his judicial defense. As the election approached, the politicians trooped back onto the political stage. On one wing, the Thaksin-loyalists regrouped in the People Power Party. On the other, were the Democrats and Chat Thai party, the two opposition parties in the old parliament, with the generals hovering protectively in the background. But many other politicians were milling around the centre of the stage. Many had earlier supported Thaksin because that was the way to gain access to power rather than because of any deeper loyalty. To block Thaksin, the generals needed to convince enough of such politicians that Thaksin was now a spent force and that they should align themselves with a Democrat-led coalition.

From TRT to PPP

In the military's script, the TRT party was supposed to crumble. The leader had been banished from the stage and was supposed to fade from memory. Grassroots supporters were supposed to quail when the soldiers roared. Old political allies were supposed to flock to the shelter of the military. But Thaksin and other TRT leaders countered this strategy by open defiance.

After the coup, only a handful of Thaksin's close associates fled overseas.[13] Most remained in Thailand and some TRT leaders kept up constant criticism of the new government. Chaturon Chaisaeng, who was elected as official party leader, fronted this criticism. On 30 May 2007, the party was dissolved by the Constitutional Tribunal for malpractice at the failed 2006 election, and all 111 members of the party's executive board were banned from politics for five years. Chaturon greeted the verdict with a defiant speech. Six weeks later, Chaturon, Sudarat Keyuraphan, and Yaowapha Wongsawat (Thaksin's sister) launched a campaign to reject the constitution draft in the referendum. If the military hoped that the coup, party dissolution, ban, and other acts of intimidation would silence the TRT, they were disappointed.

Thaksin stayed in exile, buying a house in suburban London. He hired three US public relations and lobbying companies to manage his international image,[14] and later added Lord Timothy Bell, a former Saatchi's advertising executive who had served as Margaret Thatcher's PR man. These professionals constructed an image of Thaksin as a brave democrat overthrown by old-fashioned soldiers who were desperately attempting to frame their innocent client with corruption charges.[15] Thaksin maintained a presence in the international media by giving regular interviews; traveling to Hong Kong, Singapore, and China to make business deals or play golf with political leaders; and by giving lectures at universities in Russia and Japan. In July 2007, he bought Manchester City football club for £81.6 million (around 56 billion baht). The deal drew extensive media coverage in Thailand. Thaksin appeared on the terraces during the telecast of matches. Three Thai players were drafted to train at the club. A week before the election, the club manager, Sven Eriksson, visited Thailand.

Thaksin kept in touch with his support base in other ways. Videotaped statements were regularly placed on websites and circulated by other means. A telephone interview was networked through community radio stations. During the election campaign, plans were laid to circulate a VCD to every household in the northeast. Several websites were created by Thaksin's team or by supporters. The most prominent, hi-thaksin.net, was a highly professional web-magazine carrying news, feature articles, attacks on the CNS and its associates, and leaked documents. The site positioned Thaksin as the latest casualty in the troubled history of Thailand's democracy, and hence as the heir of the heroes and heroines of 1932, 1973–6, and 1992.

In late July 2007, the ex-TRT loyalists took over the People Power Party (PPP), a small party that had been formed in 1998 and had fielded a handful of candidates in previous elections. The party's logo was changed to resemble that of TRT,[16] and the headquarters was moved

[13] The most important were Yongyuth Thiyapairat, Newin Chidchob, and Noppadon Pattama. Phrommin Lertsuridej and Phumtham Vejjayachai disappeared from view. Thanong Bidya went to study and lecture in Japan.

[14] Barbour, Griffith and Rogers; Edelman; and Baker Botts. The latter was hired to "develop and implement a strategic approach to the various international legal and political issues that confront Dr Thaksin as a result of the coup of September 19" (*Nation*, 20 September 2007). The fee to Edelmann was US$ 3000,000 for the first six months of 2007 (www.fara.gov/docs/3634-Exhibit-AB-20070125-4.pdf).

[15] See for example, Thaksin's elegant statement on the one-year anniversary of the coup, *Bangkok Post*, 19 September 2007.

[16] The old logo was a T (ท) while the new one was a P (พ). These are respectively the initials of Thaksin and his wife Pojaman.

into TRT's old premises (owned by Pojaman Shinawatra), so there was little subterfuge about this change of shell. General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh later reported that he was approached to become leader but declined (*Nation*, 23 August 2007). Thaksin's choice fell on Samak Sundaravej, an experienced parliamentarian and old right-wing ranter who had retired from national politics after his Prachakon Thai party fell apart in 1997, and had retired again after a spell as Bangkok mayor (2000–4). Probably Thaksin needed an outsider to avoid favoring any one of the constituent factions in TRT/PPP, and needed a senior figure to stand up against his enemies. In his early political career, Samak had been close to the palace and army, and had represented the military-dominated constituency of Dusit as an MP, so possibly he also appealed to Thaksin as an intermediary. He had earlier enjoyed strong support in Bangkok, winning the mayoralty in 2000 with a record poll, so Thaksin may also have hoped he would divert some of the Democrats' electoral resources to defending an area they might have taken for granted. Upcountry he was either unknown or positively disliked. At his first public appearance on a PPP platform in the northeast, over three-quarters of the audience left as soon as he got up to speak. But PPP spokesmen reported that "We have done a survey," and judged that he was more asset than liability (*Nation*, 2 August 2007).

There was little attempt to veil his role. Sudarat told the press that Thaksin had phoned Samak directly to secure his agreement to become the party leader (*Nation*, 1 August 2007). Samak announced, "I will be a nominee of Thaksin" (*Bangkok Post*, 25 August 2007).[17] He donned the mask.

As one of the 111 banned politicians, Thaksin could not be seen to take any part in the election campaign. However, the PPP's campaign platform was announced as a reiteration and extension of Thaksin's policies (*Bangkok Post*, 30 November 2007), and was publicized on posters and other materials which reproduced TRT's highly recognizable style. Seventy prospective candidates traveled together to meet Thaksin in London, and several others went individually. Thaksin relocated to Hong Kong in order to be more accessible for such visits. He intervened by phone to settle difficulties over the choice of candidates. At election rallies, PPP speakers constantly referred to Thaksin. Supporters held up placards bearing the message "Vote Samak, get Thaksin" (*Bangkok Post*, 13 October 2007).

In confirmation of this election as a mask-play, a PPP candidate in Chiang Mai campaigned with a partner wearing an outsize mask of Thaksin's face (*Nation*, 13 November 2007).

Democrat Party

The party with the best chance of blocking a Thaksinite return was the Democrats. Over the prior decade, as the economic and cultural gap between urban and rural Thailand gaped wider, the Democrats had clearly identified themselves with the urban, "modern" segment by recruiting technocrats and professionals as party members and MP candidates. Its electoral base became concentrated in the capital and the southern region which is more urbanized

[17] Samak later denied this statement, perhaps in fear that he might be faulted under the election law, and diverted attention to another occasion when he queried, "What's wrong with being a nominee?" But his initial position was much more straightforward.

(and largely wealthier) than other regions.[18] Moreover, the rise of a southerner, Chuan Leekpai, to head the party and lead two governments over the 1990s had created a strong, emotional identification with the party in the south (Askew 2008). But with the growing importance of media and the politics of image, the identification with the south and the capital were a limiting factor in the agrarian heartland. Several old Democrat stalwarts in the north and northeast no longer felt comfortable in the party and drifted away. In the elections of 2001 and 2005, the Democrat Party's scattered pockets of support in the north, centre, and northeast had atrophied. Among small businessmen and villagers, the Democrat-led government of 1997–2001 was remembered for complying with the IMF's approach to the 1997 crisis and seeming unsympathetic to the pain inflicted on the Thai population. After Chuan resigned the leadership in 2001, in part to overcome this resentment, the party faced a succession problem. A colorless party stalwart was installed and then removed after a weak showing at the 2005 poll, allowing Chuan's anointed successor, Abhisit Vejjajiva, to take over. Abhisit's assets of youth (born 1964), good looks, and foreign education (Eton and Oxford) further identified the Democrats as a modern and sophisticated party that was perhaps irrelevant to the agrarian heartland.

On the approach of the 2007 poll, the Democrats were moderately successful in raising funds from the business community in the capital. But, as Abhisit noted,[19] since the carnage of the 1997 crisis, Thailand had relatively few big businessmen prepared to make political donations. The party devoted these funds primarily to media campaigns emphasizing its campaign platform of expanding education and modernizing infrastructure. But in this election, campaign messages were of little importance because most electors understood that the overriding national issue was the masked struggle between Thaksin and his opponents, rather than any details of policy.

The results of the failed 2006 polls[20] showed that support for Thaksin and TRT had begun to weaken in the main provincial urban centers of the north, center, and especially the northeast. In their attempts to win seats beyond the south and the city, the Democrats concentrated on the northeast. The party took in Kraisak Choonhavan and Somkiat Phongphaibun. Kraisak's father, the former prime minister Chatichai, had built his electoral base in Khorat, and Kraisak had won election to the senate from the province in 2000. Somkiat was a lecturer in a local university and an activist in NGO campaigns. The Democrat leadership visited Khorat and other northeastern urban centers in mid October to find more candidates and establish some party presence (*Nation*, 14 October 2007).

Other than this project in Khorat, the Democrats made little concerted effort in the north, center, or northeast.

[18] The society of the south developed from old-established port-towns. The economy is based on plantations, mining, and tourism rather than small-scale agriculture. The three Muslim-majority provinces of the far south are among the poorest in the country, but the average GDP per head in the remainder of the region in 2009 was 102,841 baht compared to 45,661 in the northeast and 71,105 in the northeast (GPP tables from www.nesdb.go.th, accessd 23 August 2010).

[19] In conversation at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand.

[20] Thaksin called a general election in April 2006. The opposition parties staged a boycott. According to the constitution, for the election to be valid, all seats had to be filled and any unopposed candidate had to poll at least 20 percent of the electorate. The courts invalidated the poll on grounds of malpractice perpetrated by the TRT in its attempt to fufil these conditions. This judgment resulted in TRT being disbanded.

Chart Thai Party

Alone among the parties of the provincial bosses, Chart Thai had resisted being absorbed into Thai Rak Thai in the early 2000s. Thaksin brought Chart Thai into his government in 2001 as a coalition partner, but in 2005, riding the height of his popularity, Thaksin announced he would not continue this arrangement, in the hope of forcing parts of Chart Thai to defect to Thai Rak Thai. Some did, but Chart Thai's leader, Banharn Silpa-archa, held out. He had built some image for Chat Thai as the party for the rice farmers of the central region and he was expert in the face-to-face politics of political alliances. At the 2005 poll, Chart Thai hung onto 25 seats, above most predictions. By remaining independent prior to the 2007 poll, Banharn even harbored hopes of returning to the premiership as a compromise candidate. Meanwhile he kept options open by avoiding any firm public commitment not to join a PPP coalition (McCargo 2008: 343).

At the 2005 elections, the Democrats and Chart Thai had won 121 seats between them. Even doubling that performance would not deliver a majority. To prevent a victory by the Thaksin loyalists, the generals needed to lure away significant numbers of the politicians who had joined Thaksin's grand alliance. Given their relatively modest funds and the party's effort to project itself as "clean," the Democrats could play only a limited role in jockeying for the allegiance of any "good" electoral candidates that became available. Chart Thai's resources were also limited, especially since the Thaksin government had cancelled one of Banharn's most lucrative concessions. The generals needed another party vehicle.

Conjuring Up New Parties

Between 2000 and 2005, Thaksin had collected into Thai Rak Thai virtually all the important politicians other than those in the Democrats' base in the south and in Chart Thai's base around Suphanburi. These can be broadly classified into two groups. The first were those parties and factions whose leaders had joined Thai Rak Thai party before the first election victory in 2001 and were seen as being very loyal to Thaksin personally. These included the northern faction organized by his sister Yaowapha, a Bangkok group associated with Sudarat Keyaruphan, most MPs from the northeast, and a smaller grouping around Chaturon Chaisaeng.

The second group contained fractions that had joined later, after TRT's dominant position in parliament had been established in 2001. Mostly these were groupings that had played the coalition politics of the 1990s by staying independent of the big parties and bargaining for a subsidiary role in each successive coalition. TRT's massive victory in 2001, winning two seats short of an absolute majority, signaled that the conditions of political bargaining had changed. In order to negotiate for inclusion in the cabinet, these small parties would need to be *inside* TRT even though that meant a sacrifice in their freedom to maneuver. Snoh Thienthong merged his Pracharaj group into TRT shortly before the 2001 election. So did Suwit Khunkitti with some surviving remnants of the Social Action Party. Immediately after the 2001 poll result, Phinit Charusombat's Seritham Party and the Buriram and Chonburi factions of Chart Thai merged into TRT. The remnants of Chavalit Yongchaiyudh's New Aspiration Party and of Suwat Liptapanlop's Chat Phatthana held out longer but were finally merged in 2003. The Paknam faction of Wattana Asavaheme, and other stragglers like Suchart Tancharoen, joined TRT shortly before the 2005 election.

During Thaksin's long decline—from the Shin Corp sale in January 2006 to the dissolution of TRT in May 2007—most of the early loyalists stuck with the party and its leader. But many of the late adherents pulled away. Again, Snoh was at the head of the pack. In the run-down to the 2006 election, he staged a public row with Thaksin and withdrew his faction from TRT, heaping abuse and allegations of malpractice on Thaksin's head. Others took a quieter route, but in the same direction.

In late 2006 and early 2007, several of these groups re-emerged onto the political stage. A ban on all political activity was still in place but the process of recombining these groups into new parties began with the formation of informal alliances. Snoh announced that his Pracharaj group was still in business, and that the controversial businessman, Prachai Liaophairat,[21] had become a member and financier. Somsak Thepsuthin, perhaps the most prominent early Thaksin loyalist to desert TRT, announced a new grouping named Matchima, or "Middle Path."[22] Suwat Liptapanlop and Phinit Charusombat combined their followings into an alliance under the name Samanchan, "Reconciliation," and later brought Suwit Khunkitti into the group.[23] Several of the intellectuals and technocrats who had been drafted into the TRT machine formed a grouping called "Bangkok 50." The prominent members included Surakiart Sathirathai, who had been foreign minister, and Suranand Vejjajiva, who had been a government spokesman. Another group which assembled under the name Ruam Jai Thai ("Thai Unity") included Somkid Jatusripitak, Thaksin's former economic policy maker, and several refugees from Mahachon,[24] a splinter from the Democrats which failed totally at the 2005 poll. Finally there were smaller groups formed around Wattana Asavahame (the Paknam faction), Suchart Tancharoen (Rim Nam), Pichate Satirachaval (Santiparp),[25] and the Khunphluem family (Chonburi).

[21] Prachai was the biggest bankrupt of the 1997 crisis, buried under 3 billion baht of obligations to some 500 different lenders. He fought a vituperative battle to hold onto his TPI petrochemical empire, but was eventually evicted from the board and from his office by court action. He still tried to fight back by nationalist raging and by attempts to get political assistance. When spurned by Thaksin, he turned hostile.

[22] This name was possibly a reference to the king's emphasis on a middle path in his idea of a Sufficiency Economy. As such, it signaled Somsak's clear break with Thaksin. The party was registered under the name Matchima Thippathai, but here this is reduced to Matchima for simplicity.

[23] This name was probably also a signal. The word had become a favorite of army theorists' talking about the military role in internal security. It had been applied to the military's role in handling demonstrations, and to the task of overcoming the insurgency in the south. Most significantly, it had appeared in the generals' justification of the 2006 coup—to reconcile social and political divisions after Thaksin's rule.

[24] The most prominent was Pradit Phataraprasit.

[25] Santiparp, founded in 2006 by ex-TRT members, aspired to be a party for Muslims.

After the referendum result, the scheduling of elections for December, and the lifting of the ban on political activity, there was a rush to convert these groupings into political parties. General Sonthi tried to orchestrate a grand alliance under a new name, Pheua Phaendin, "For the Motherland," which he had coined himself (*Nation*, 10 January 2009). In early September, the Matchima and Pracharaj groups announced they would merge. Two weeks later, they were joined by Samanchan, the Paknam faction, and a few others under the Pheua Phaendin banner. Supachai Panitchpakdi, a former Democrat minister who had become the head of UNCTAD, was invited to become leader.

This grand alliance survived intact for about forty-eight hours. Prachai objected to inviting Supachai on grounds he had cooperated with the IMF in the 1997 crisis to the detriment of Prachai and other Thai firms (*Nation*, 16, 17 and 18 September 2007). Snoh insisted that the alliance run under the name of Pracharaj, and clearly hoped to become leader, but others knew his public image would hurt the grouping. Suwat withdrew immediately and took the remnants of Chart Phatthana to team up with the Ruam Jai Thai group.[26] The Samanchan group announced that it planned to defect to Chart Thai, and Pracharaj-Matchima also peeled away. By the time the Pheua Phaendin Party was officially launched on 29 September, Suwit Khunkitti was the only faction leader left. In the next week, the alliance of Matchima and Pracharaj fell apart. The military made one last attempt to unite the factions: on 18 October, Admiral Bannawit Kengrian persuaded Pracharaj, Matchima, and Ruam Jai Thai to attend a meeting, but it failed to achieve anything (*Nation*, 21 October 2007).[27]

Instead of one dominant alliance which might be able to lure other factions and attract "good" candidates, there were now four proto-parties of uncertain potential.

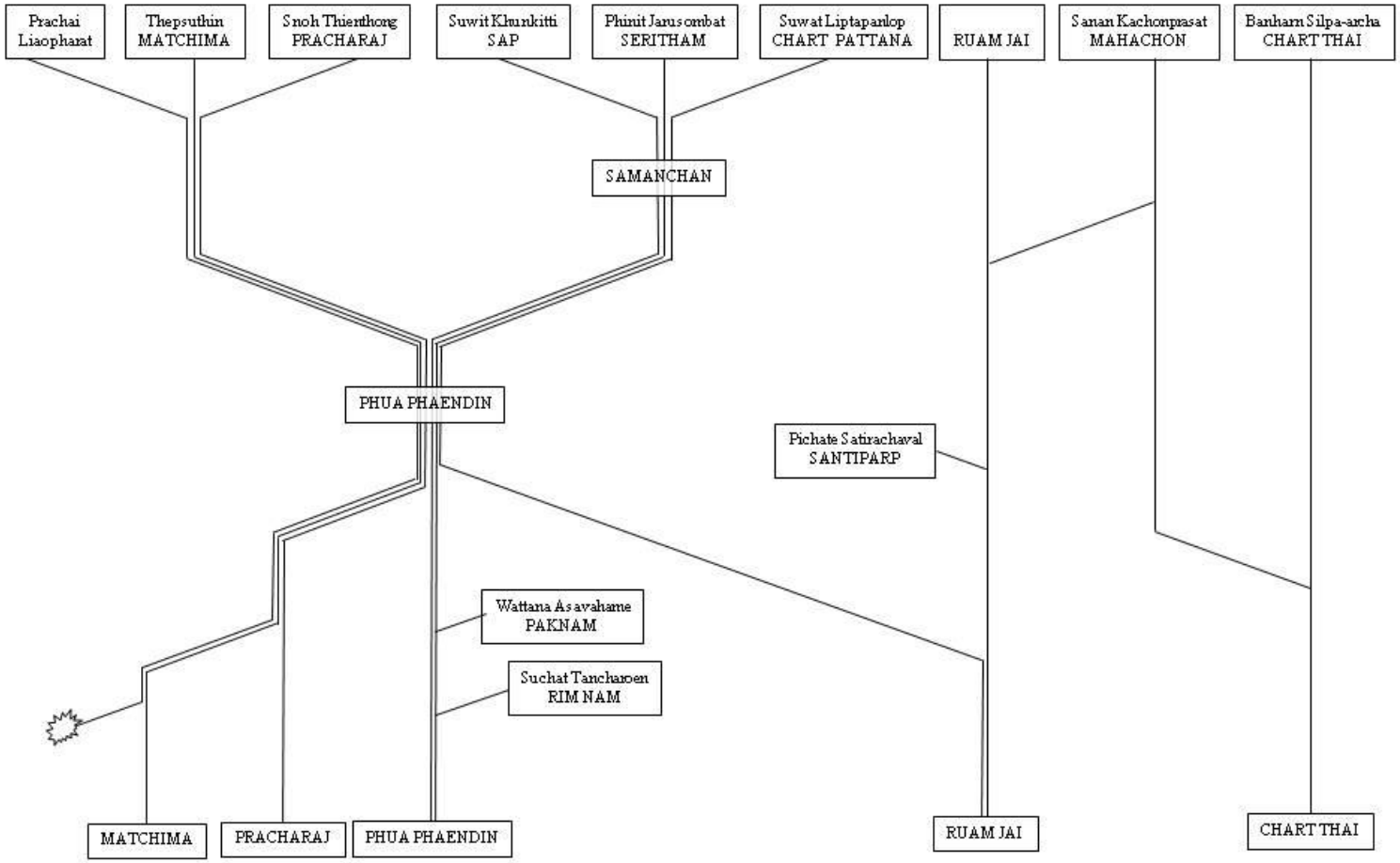
The military continued to cultivate Pheua Phaendin as its electoral spearhead. General Panlop Pinmanee, the former ISOC head who had been involved in the abortive Rak Chat project, surfaced as an "adviser" of the Pheua Phaendin Party in mid October (*Nation*, 18 October 2007). The Pheua Phaendin leader, Suwit Khunkitti seemed a good candidate for luring former MPs away from PPP. He hailed from Khon Kaen, the principal town of the northeast. He had been seventh on TRT's party-list slate in 2001 and had served as a minister throughout Thaksin's first term and thus had credibility with former TRT members. He had distanced himself from TRT after being dropped from the cabinet in August 2005 and thus had escaped the political ban imposed on TRT executives. He had a better image than Snoh, and a higher profile than the leaders of Matchima or Ruam Jai Thai. The key people in Matchima and Ruam Jai Thai were under the political ban and hence forced to work behind the scenes, while putting up their wives as the party leaders.[28] The generals saw Suwit as a candidate for the premiership.

[26] The party was subsequently called Ruam Jai Thai Chat Phatthana, but for simplicity that is reduced to Ruam Jai Thai.

[27] Three weeks after its foundation, Pheua Phaendin held an event grandly dubbed as the annual party assembly in Bangkok. The assembled crowd ate the lunch provided and promptly left, leaving the press to take pictures of Suwit talking to a near empty hall. The generals' renewed attempt to unite the four parties came immediately after thus fiasco.

[28] Anongwan, wife of Somsak Thepsuthin in Matchima; and Poonpirom, wife of Suwat Liptapanlop, in Ruam Jai Thai.

Figure 1: Factional Alliances and Splits, mid 2007



But fragmentation into four parties created a bidding war to attract "good" candidates, pushing up the prices. Candidates claimed their own resources were exhausted by two elections over the prior three years, and insisted parties must pay heavily for their allegiance. Press reports detailed that the going rate for a sure-fire candidate had risen from 30 million to 40 million baht (*Bangkok Post*, 3 October 2007). Banharn complained about this inflation. Prachai Liaophairat probably helped to push up the price by boasting, "I can match any amount of money supplied by former prime minister Thaksin" (*Nation*, 16 September 2007). He later complained of being hoodwinked by middlemen who inflated the value of candidates they brought into his party (*Bangkok Post*, 12 December 2007).

Pheua Phaendin was more active and more generous in approaching candidates than other new parties (*Bangkok Post*, 10 October 2007). According to *The Nation* (16 November 2007), "a group of military figures is said to be financially backing the party," Wattana Asavahame confirmed his membership.[29] Suchart Tancharoen, who had stayed on the sidelines of the earlier alliance-making, moved his Rim Nam faction into Pheua Phaendin. Sophon Phetsawang, a veteran Buriram MP, and several others shifted from Matchima to Pheua Phaendin as the deadline for election candidacies approached.

The other new parties had much less momentum. Snoh's Pracharaj attracted no sparkling candidates and chose Korn Tapparangsi, who had retired from politics several years earlier, as leader. Ruam Jai Thai elected as leader General Chettha Thanajaro, a retired army commander who had offered his services to several of the prospective parties over the prior three months. Matchima was briefly boosted by the accession of the free-spending Prachai, but shortly before the election, Prachai was convicted for share manipulation and forced to withdraw.[30]

On the one hand, the four new parties included several ex-members of TRT. On the other, they were under heavy pressure from the generals to form an anti-Thaksin coalition. In practice, they were in a position to jump either way.

[29] The press also reported that a "veteran" (meaning Wattana) was rumored to have raised money for the party by selling land in Bangkok's Chinatown and shares in a casino at the Thai-Cambodian border (*Nation*, 16 November 2007). Wattana may have had special reasons for this generosity. A long-running trial in which he was accused of abusing power as a minister to profit from a land deal associated with the scandal-ridden Khlong Dan waste-disposal project was nearing its conclusion. On the eve of the verdict in July 2008 he went into hiding, and was located at a casino he part-owned at the Thai-Cambodian border. He was sentenced in absence to ten years in jail.

[30] Prachai crashed in splendid style. He stormed out of Pracharaj, followed by Snoh's quip that he was "a beginner at kindergarten level" in politics (*Nation*, 7 October 2007). He was elected leader of Matchima, and compiled an exhaustive policy platform of 42 points, announced in full-page press ads, including a version in pidgin English for the English-language press. At party rallies, he insisted on reading the 42 points twice over before telling the audience, "If you want to be rich and want to have a better life, you must vote for us" (*Nation*, 16 October 2007). He dubbed himself as "Uncle Prachai," and had a long video made of his life achievements. He claimed the stars showed he was the only leader with an astrological permutation capable of defeating Thaksin. In the third week prior to the poll, he was sentenced to three years in jail for share manipulation, and then a further month for contempt after he publicly criticized the verdict. He resigned as head and member of the party, but then tried to retract his resignations a few hours later, without success. (*Bangkok Post*, 5 and 8 December 2007).

The Last Ditch

In late October, the press leaked results of an internal PPP poll which gave the party a clear majority of around 250 of the 480 seats (*Bangkok Post*, 30 October 2007). In November, an ISOC poll raised the estimate to 280 PPP seats against 125 for the Democrats (*Bangkok Post*, 16 November 2007), and a Special Branch poll showed PPP winning 219 (*Bangkok Post*, 28 November 2007).[31] All of these polls showed Pheua Phaendin and the other new parties winning very few seats. Grasping at straws, General Sonthi noted the polls still showed many people were still undecided, and urged the soldiers to "get a grip" on the people even tighter to win over this "swing" vote (*Bangkok Post*, 12 December 2007; Wassana 2008: 309).

In the center stage, the actors stand swiveling their necks from right to left, and left to right. In the wings, the puppet-masters pull the strings desperately.

ACT III: VOTERS HAVE THE STAGE

In addition to the generals' efforts to promote puppet parties, the CNS's team of charter-writers and law-drafters revised the format and rules of the election in ways expected to prejudice the chances of PPP. Yet the contest was decided by the voters. The polls delivered a result consistent with electoral trends from 2001 onwards.

The Rules

The 2007 constitution and related laws and regulations made several major changes in the election system. As before, seats were split into territorial constituencies and a proportional vote by party ("party list"). The number of territorial constituencies remained constant at 400. Whereas since 2001, all these constituencies had been single-member, the new rules returned to the old system of multi-member constituencies with 90 returning three members, 63 returning two, and 4 a single MP. The change was justified on grounds that larger constituencies discouraged vote-buying (*Matichon*, 19 April 2007). In reality, the change was more likely made because a multi-member system militates against strong parties.

On the party list, the number of seats was reduced from 100 to 80, and in place of a national vote, the country was divided into eight regions, each returning ten members. Under the old system, electors virtually voted for the prime minister as in a presidential system, and the drafters of the new charter considered this inappropriate in a parliamentary system. Thaksin had often boasted of the number of TRT's party-list votes to justify his actions.[32]

Under the 1997 constitution, the counting for each constituency took place at one central place. Under the 2007 system, counting was returned to the individual polling stations. Ostensibly this change was made to avoid theft or tampering with ballot boxes in transit, though this had not obviously been a problem at any election since 1997. In practice it made

[31] The fact that ISOC and the police conducted election polls was very telling. The police claimed they needed to know where there were tight contests that might become violent.

[32] In the 1997 constitution, a candidate for the party list had to secure at least 5 percent of total votes cast to be elected. In the 2007 constitution, this provision was removed. At the 2007 poll, five candidates (four Pheua Phaendin, one Pracharaj) were elected to the house under the party-list system with less than 5 percent of total votes cast.

it possible to examine the results at the local level, and hence confirm any contract to deliver votes for money or any other inducement.

The penalties for malpractice, including vote buying, were made more stringent than before. The Election Commission published strict rules for campaigning that outlawed almost every conventional type of Thai campaign practice including registration parades, billboards, mass postering, rallies, rowdy campaign trucks, and spots on radio and television.[33]

The European Union offered to send a team to monitor the poll. The government reacted to this proposal as if were an invasion of sovereignty on par with a colonial gunboat incident—suggesting some sensitivity about the government's own involvement in influencing the election result. The Election Commission smoothed over this controversy by inviting the NGO, Asian Network for Free Elections (Anfrel), to send a team.

Anfrel (2008: 19) recorded that "the campaigning was more muted than in previous elections." In the capital, the billboards, posters, and rallies were on par with previous occasions, but beyond the capital, the campaign was very quiet. In part this was a result of the ECT's strict rules. Candidates were nervous of being disqualified for technical infringements. In addition, it was a function of tight funding. Vote buying seemed more limited, or at least better concealed. Complaints were heard that cash was paid by the parties to vote-brokers (*hua khanaen*) but not distributed lower down the chain. One of Thaksin's closest lieutenants, Yongyuth Tiyapairat, was caught on video in advance of the election making payments to village heads and district officers from Chiang Rai. He and his sister were later disqualified as a result. Anfrel (2008: 27) was told that some *hua khanaen* were paid in advance for disbursement to individual electors only after the promised result was achieved; because counting again took place at the individual polling station, the result could be checked at this level.

The only major concern that Anfrel expressed over the conduct of the poll was the "presence of unauthorized individuals"—village heads, district officials, police, and army—at the polling booths (Anfrel 2008: 42). Other observers noted "heavy surveillance by security forces, including daily monitoring of vote canvasers and the secondment of police to oversee the work of provincial electoral commissions" (Connors 2008: 484). In Buriram, village heads and kamnans were "invited … to spend the night before the election enjoying military hospitality" (McCargo 2008: 338).

Electoral Trends Since 2001

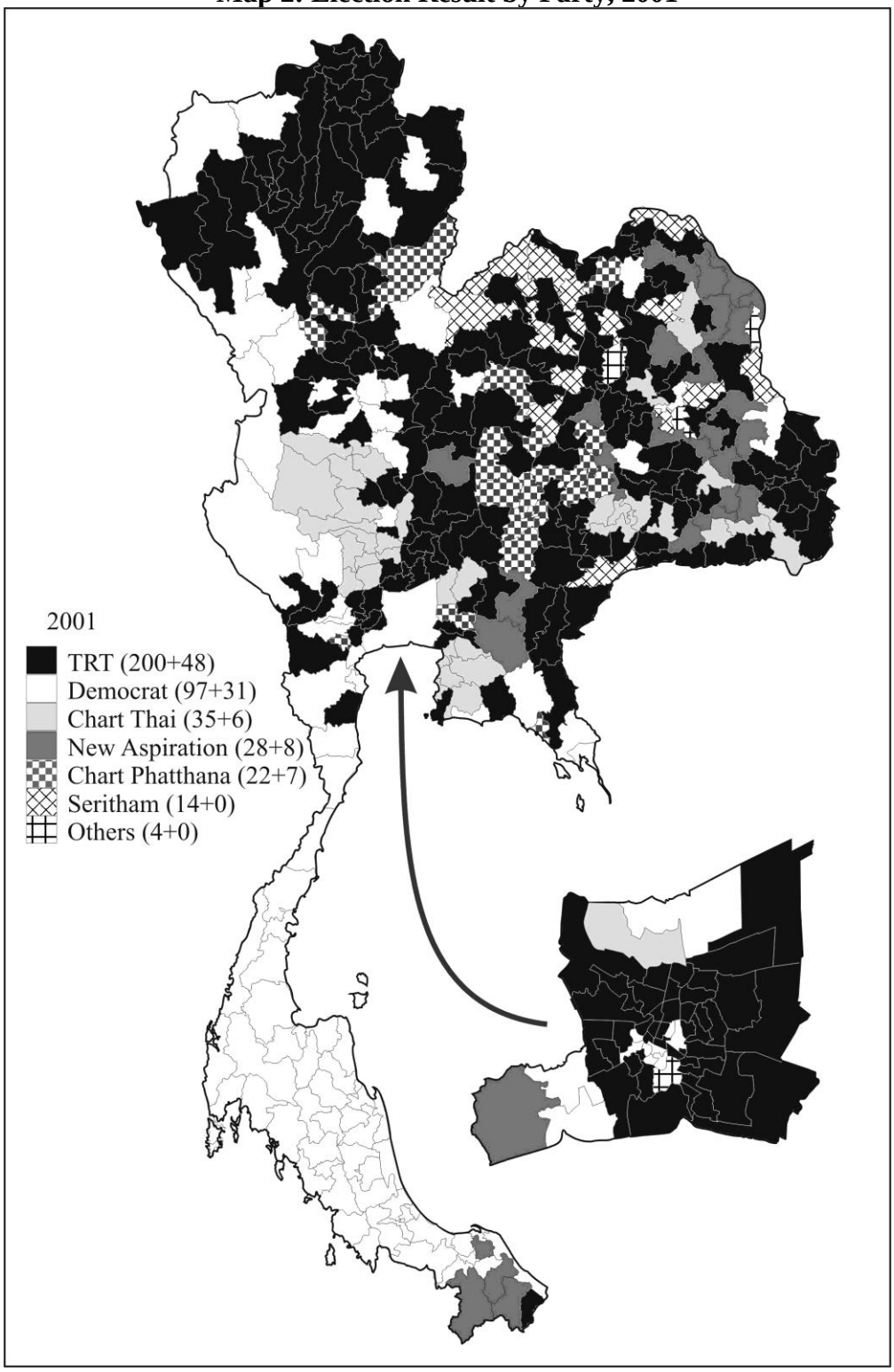
The spatial pattern of voting for the main parties has evolved over the three elections since 2001. In 2001, Thai Rak Thai won overwhelmingly in the upper north, Thaksin's home area, and in the penumbra of the capital, an area with a large number of migrant workers. The Democrats took the south,[34] inner Bangkok, the western fringe, and part of the eastern seaboard. Chart Thai was solid in and around Banharn's base of Suphanburi. Through the

[33] Under the rules, displays would only be allowed in specific places; number and size of posters was limited; public addresses would only be allowed at forums overseen by the ECT; radio and TV spots had to be submitted to the ECT to schedule their airtime; decoration of campaign trucks was closely regulated; and so on.

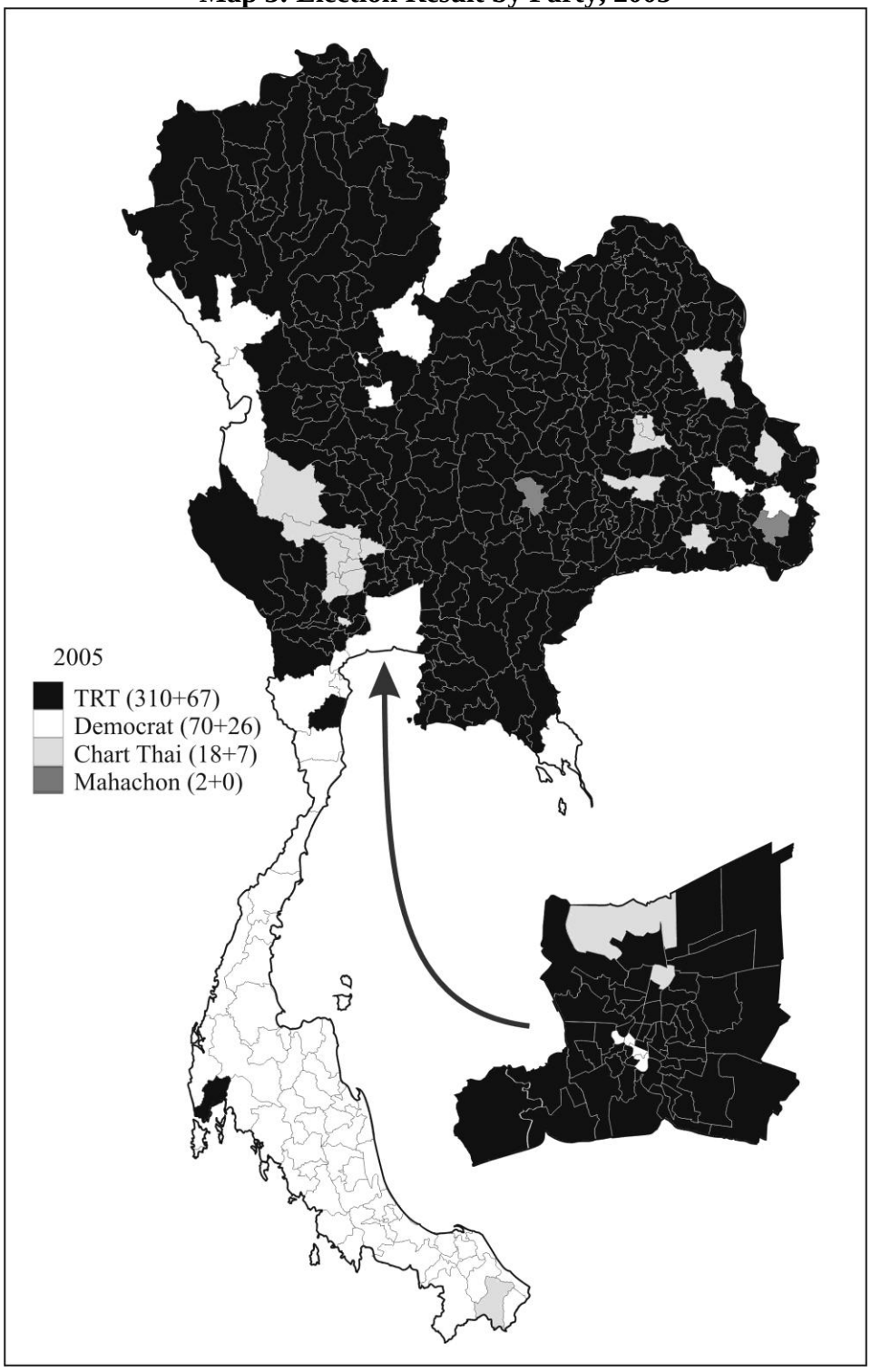
[34] In the troubled, Muslim-majority far south, electoral allegiances have been highly opportunistic, with no long-term allegiances.

center, lower north, and northeast, the pattern was mixed; to a large extent, voters chose a candidate for personal rather than party reasons, and the resulting pattern of party victories depended on the candidates' choice of party affiliation. Chart Thai had allied factions in Chonburi and Buriram, while New Aspiration, Seritham, and Chart Phatthana had islands of support around their leader's home bases. The agrarian heartland of the lower north, center, and northeast was a checkerboard of party allegiances (see Map 2).

Map 2: Election Result by Party, 2001



Map 3: Election Result by Party, 2005



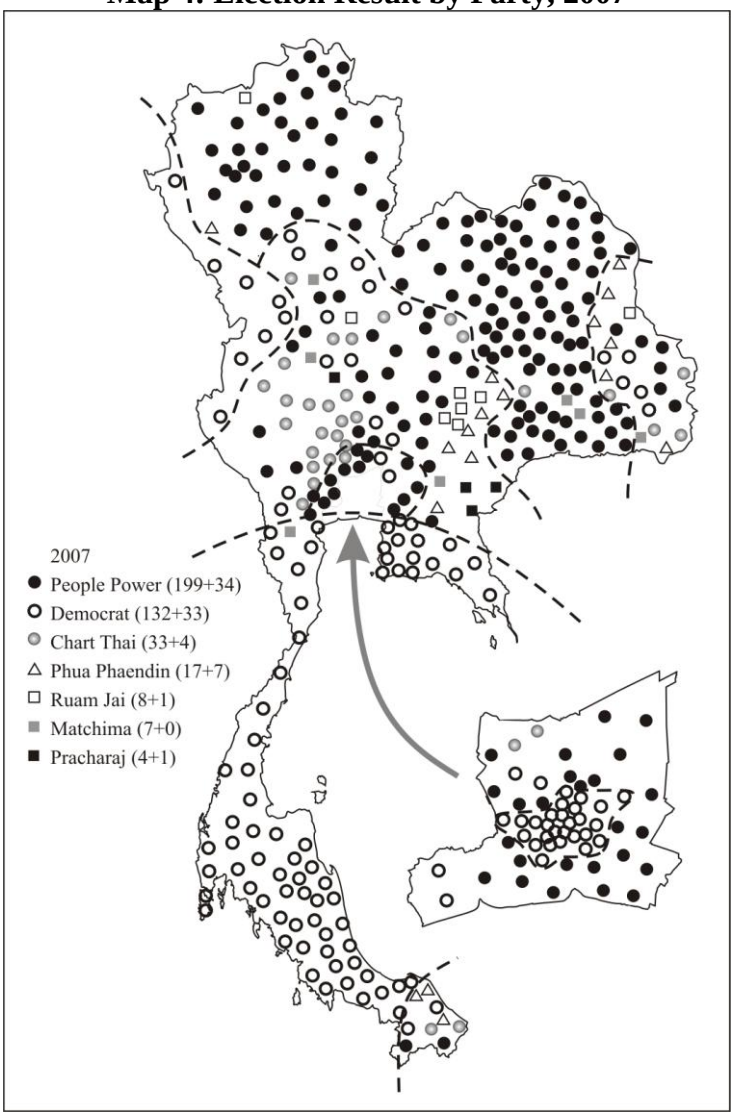
By the 2005 poll, the TRT had absorbed all the minor parties except Chart Thai, and Thaksin's personal popularity had soared. TRT dominated throughout the north, center, and northeast. Chart Thai was reduced to Banharn's base in Suphanburi. The Democrats remained solid in the south, but were severely cut back in the capital, the western hills, and the eastern seaboard. The electoral map had become sharply divided by an east-west line drawn roughly through the capital, the TRT dominating to the north and east of the line, and the Democrats to the south (see Map 3).

The opposition parties boycotted the 2006 poll, so the pattern of party victories is meaningless. But the figures show that voting had become more polarized as Thaksin became more controversial and embattled. In the core northeast and upper north, the absolute numbers voting for TRT increased between 2005 and 2006. In most other areas, they declined, especially in the capital, the eastern seaboard, and in the bigger urban centers of the northeast. In other words, the division visible on the 2005 map had become even more sharply defined.

The 2007 Result

At the 2007 poll, PPP won 36.6 percent of the vote in the constituency polls, and 199 of the 400 seats.[35] On the party list, PPP won 41.1 percent of the vote, and 34 of the 80 seats. This gave PPP a total of 233 seats, just eight short of an absolute majority. This result was rather close to TRT's showing in 2001.

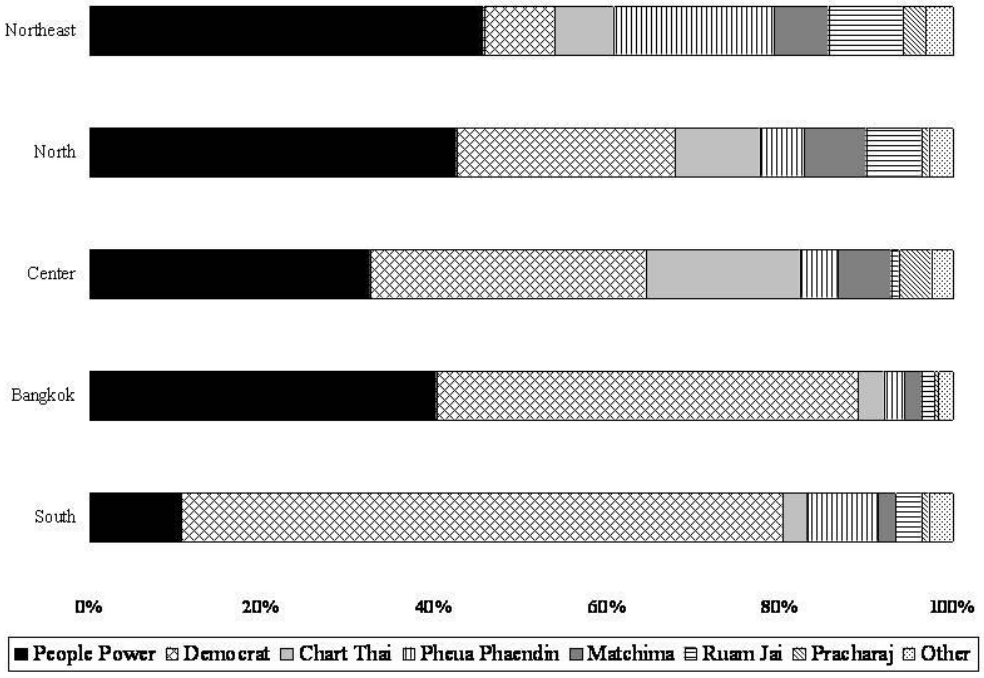
Map 4: Election Result by Party, 2007



[35] All the data for the results come from the ECT website via a link labeled "Sarup khomun sathiti kan chai sitthi luektang so so 2550," which downloads a file archive, mp50_report.rar (accessed 26 July 2008).

The geographical pattern, however, was much more clearly defined than in 2001 (see Map 4). The dashed lines on the 2007 map do not denote any official boundary, but have been drawn to clarify the spatial pattern of parties.[36] The PPP's victory was overwhelming in the upper north, the central part of the northeast, and the penumbra of the capital. The Democrats won an overwhelming victory in the south, the inner city, the western hills, and the eastern seaboard.[37] Chart Thai was confined to its base around Suphanburi. Voting was more regionalized than at any prior election.

Figure 2: Constituency Voting by Party by Region, 2007



[36] As most constituencies were multi-member, it is not possible to produce a shaded map as for 2001 and 2005. Each dot represents an MP. The dots have been placed within the constituency boundaries, but the boundaries are not shown.

[37] The Democrats had always had some hold in the eastern seaboard, but this result was remarkable, especially in Chonburi. In 2005, Somchai Khunphluem (Kamnan Bo) had delivered the area for TRT. In 2006 he disappeared, shortly before verdicts on a corruption case and murder charge. His three sons led the PPP campaign, but did not have the same standing as their father. Besides, the area houses many navy personnel who voted against PPP. Only a few months later, in elections for the Pattaya municipality and the Chonburi Provincial Administrative Organization, the Khunphluem sons won overwhelmingly. With the large budgets now wielded by local government bodies, these posts are now in some ways more attractive than a parliamentary seat. (Information from Chaiyon Praditsil and Olarn Thinbangtieo of Burapha University)

None of the new parties fared well, winning only 36 constituency seats between them, far less than the 50 or 60 that the CNS hoped to garner for Pheua Phaendin alone. Pracharaj was virtually limited to Snoh Thienthong's barony in Sa Kaeo province, and Ruam Jai Thai to Suwat Liptapanlop's home province of Khorat.

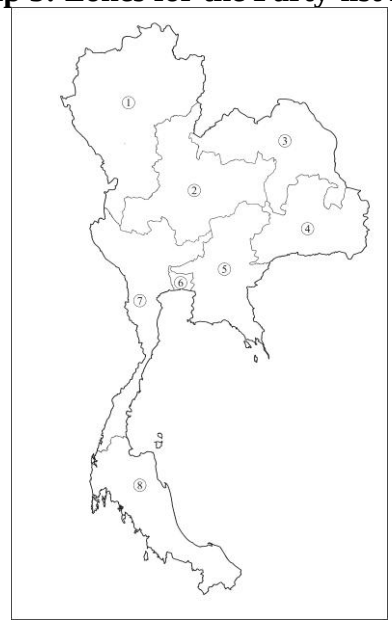
Strikingly, through much of the central plain, lower north, and far northeast, there was no strong party tendency at all. In these regions, no single party carried the electorate. Party allegiance in adjacent constituencies varied widely. Many multi-member constituencies returned candidates of two or three different parties. Voters seem to have returned to local and personal choices, and party allegiances were often opportunistic.

Table 1: Full Result, 2007

	Bang-kok	Center	North	North east	South	Sub total	Party list	Total 26 Dec	Total 29 Jan
PPP	9	39	47	102	2	199	34	233	233
Democrat	27	35	16	5	49	132	33	165	164
Chart Thai	0	18	6	7	2	33	4	37	34
Pheua Phaendin	0	1	1	12	3	17	7	24	24
Matchima	0	2	2	3	0	7		7	11
Ruam Jai Thai	0	0	2	6	0	8	1	9	9
Pracharaj	0	3	1	0	0	4	1	5	5
Total	36	98	75	135	56	400	80	480	480

Source: *Matichon*, 26 December 2007; ECT.
Note: All but the final column show the results declared after completion of the counts on 26 December. Subsequently the ECT disqualified 28 candidates and held re-polls within a 30-day deadline. The final column shows the adjusted result after these re-polls.

Map 5: Zones for the Party-list Poll



On the party list, the PPP polled 12.3 million votes, 41.1 percent of the total, and took 34 of the 80 seats. This was again roughly similar to TRT's result in 2001 (11.6 million votes, 41 percent of the total, 48 of 100 seats), and significantly less than the 19 million and 16 million in the two intervening polls. The regional pattern followed the constituency vote. PPP won most party-list seats in the north and northeast (zones 1 to 4); the Democrats dominated in the capital and south (zones 6 to 8); while in zone 5 containing much of the central region the ten seats were shared among five parties. The new parties again fared poorly overall, though Pheua Phaendin managed to take the last seat in seven of the eight zones.

Table 2: Party-List Result, 2007

	Zones								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Seats									
PPP	5	5	7	6	3	4	3	1	34
Democrat	4	3	2	2	4	5	5	8	33
Pheua Phaendin	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	7
Chart Thai		1		1			2		4
Ruam Jai Thai					1				1
Pracharaj					1				1
Total	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	80
Percent of valid votes									
PPP	49.6	45.9	66.2	57.2	34.2	41.4	28.8	8.3	41.1
Democrat	35.5	33.4	14.5	19.1	39.8	50.6	47.2	80.2	40.4
Pheua Phaendin	3.7	6.3	9.4	9.7	5.3	2.3	2.3	4.1	5.3
Chart Thai	1.7	5.0	1.4	3.0	3.1	1.7	14.4	1.5	4.0
Ruam Jai Thai	1.6	3.2	2.4	1.8	7.1	0.6	1.3	1.6	2.5
Pracharaj	0.0	2.1	1.4	1.5	4.8	0.5	0.0	0.7	1.4
Matchima	2.1	1.8	1.1	2.3	1.4	1.2	1.6	0.5	1.5
Other parties	5.7	2.2	3.6	5.3	4.3	1.7	4.4	3.2	3.8

Source: ECT

Table 3: Party-List Votes, 2001 to 2007 (millions)

	2001	2005	2006	2007
TRT/PPP	11.6	19.0	16.2	12.3
Democrat	7.5	7.2		12.1
Chart Thai	1.5	2.1		1.2
Others	7.8	2.7		4.7
Total valid votes	28.4	31.0	27.0	30.3

Note: In 2006, all parties except TRT boycotted the poll. The difference between TRT and the total were spoilt votes and abstentions. The election was cancelled so there was no official result.

For the Democrats, this was the party's best election result in over thirty years in terms of the proportion of seats won in the house.[38] Compared to the previous two elections under the 1997 constitution, the Democrats won more constituency seats (165 against 128 and 96).

[38] In April 1976, the Democrats won 114 out of 279 seats, 41 percent of the total, compared to 33 percent of constituency seats on this occasion. Its next best showing had been 31 percent of seats in 1996. See the table in Askew 2008: 49.

They increased their number of votes, especially in Bangkok and the central region. But the striking difference was on the party list where the Democrat poll increased from 7 to 12 million, and trailed PPP by less than 200,000 votes, compared to 12 million in 2005.

Table 4: Comparing Constituency and Party-List Voting, 2007

`	constituency		party list	
	votes	percent	valid votes	percent
Electorate	44,002,593	100.0	44,002,593	100.0
Turnout	32,775,868	74.5	32,792,246	74.5
Spoilt	837,775	2.6	1,823,436	5.6
No vote	1,499,707	4.6	935,306	2.9
Valid votes cast				
PPP	26,683,450	36.6	12,338,903	41.1
Democrat	22,128,334	30.3	12,148,504	40.4
Chart Thai	6,486,553	8.9	1,213,532	4.0
Pheua Phaendin	6,647,193	9.1	1,596,500	5.3
Matchima	3,912,330	5.4	450,382	1.5
Ruam Jai Thai	3,482,904	4.8	740,461	2.5
Pracharaj	1,675,205	2.3	408,851	1.4
Other	1,935,235	2.7	1,136,365	3.8
Total	72,951,204	100.0	30,033,498	100.0

Note: Because voters in multiple constituencies have as many votes as there are seats for that constituency, the number of votes is larger than the turnout.

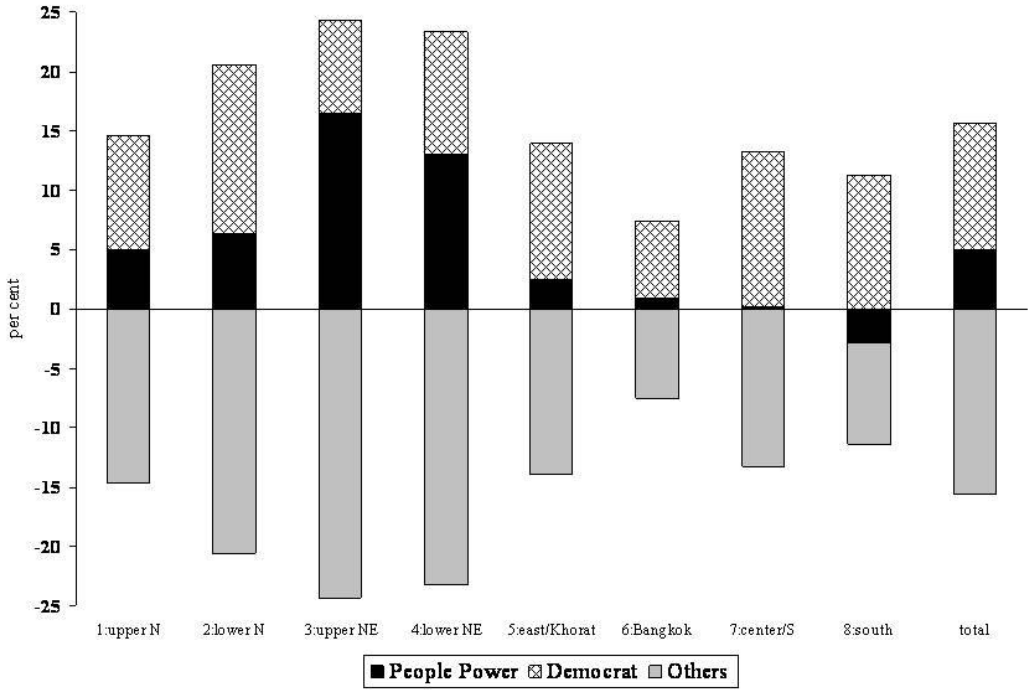
Why did the Democrats fare better on the party list than on the constituency vote? Many electors cast their constituency vote based on a personal evaluation of the candidate, but on the party list show their preference for a national party or party leader. In all three elections under this system of two votes, there was a net shift towards the two larger parties between the constituency vote and the party-list vote. In 2001 and especially in 2005, this shift overwhelmingly benefited Thaksin, reflecting his massive personal popularity at that time.[39] In the 2007 poll, the shift to the two larger parties was even greater than in the two prior elections, probably reflecting the underlying polarization. A net 15.6 percent of the electors cast their constituency vote for a minor party, but their party-list vote for either PPP or the Democrats.[40] Over two-thirds of these net transfers went to the Democrats, and less than a third to PPP (see Fig 3).[41]

[39] Because of the changes in polling rules, the results are not directly compatible, but in 2005 there was net transfer of around 8 percent of all constituency votes from all parties (including the Democrats) to TRT.

[40] This calculation is indicative rather than exact. Constituency-level or even province-level data are not available. This calculation was done by aggregating the votes of the constituencies in each of the party-list zones. In each multiple-member constituency, the vote-total for each party was divided by the number of seats. The resulting figures were adjusted again to eliminate the slight difference between the number of spoilt and abstention votes on the two respective polls.

[41] How to interpret Figure 3: In Region 1 (see Map 5), a net 14.6 percent of voters chose a minor party (i.e., not PPP or Democrats) on the constituency poll, but not on the party-list poll; 5 percent instead voted for PPP, and 9.6 percent for the Democrats on the party-list poll. Note that some of these transfers would be "part-votes," someone who split their multi-member constituency votes across different parties, but had only one party-list vote.

Figure 3: Transfer of Votes between Constituency and Party-list Polls



The numbers of these transfers were especially high in the lower north and northeast (zones 2, 3 and 4). In the northeast (zones 3, 4), the net transfer favored PPP. Over half of those who selected one of the new parties on the constituency poll, voted for a different party on the party list. Pheua Phaendin in particular garnered around 18 percent of the constituency poll in these two zones, but only 9 percent on the party list.

Outside the northeast, these transfers favored the Democrats more than PPP, even in the north (zones 1, 2), where Democrats seem to have picked up many party-list votes from electors who chose a Chart Thai candidate at the constituency poll. In the capital and central regions (zones 5, 6, 7), almost all the net transfers accrued to the Democrats.

This pattern suggests four things. First, the charter-writers had introduced this zoned polling to prevent a "presidential-style" national poll, and their strategy seems to have worked. In each zone, party posters featured a party-list slate of ten candidates, many of whom were relatively little known. Voters did not have the simple option of voting "for Thaksin" on the party list, and this probably prejudiced TRT's showing.[42] Second, while the new parties had been able to attract some moderately good constituency candidates in some areas, they did not have a strong enough image or reason-for-being to attract party-list votes. Third, while the Democrat Party could match PPP on the party list, it did not have the candidates to repeat this performance at the constituency polls. This reflected the decay of the Democrats' party organization beyond its heartlands in the capital and the south. In the northeast, the Democrats secured only 8 percent of total votes in the constituency polls (see Figure 2).

[42] Information from Duncan McCargo who witnessed the election in the northeast.

Fourth, Thaksin's ability to draw party-list votes on the basis of his personal popularity had considerably diminished since 2005. Possibly this was due to the switch of parties (from TRT to PPP), and the more limited campaigning. But largely it does seem to reflect a real change in allegiance, especially in the capital, the central region, and the lower north.

The Coalition

The electorate had destroyed the generals' plans. As Wassana (2008: 310) notes, despite "the agreements between the CNS heads and the leaders of various parties and factions not to join a PPP coalition government, and even CNS's outlay of tens and hundreds of million baht to help their election campaigns," the result made it virtually impossible to deny PPP a first chance to form the government. A coalition of all other parties would have had a majority of only four in parliament.

Immediately after the result was announced, there was some concern that the ECT might attempt to adjust the result through disqualifications as it accepted 352 complaints of poll fraud for investigation (*Nation*, 25 December 2007). The ECT had power to disqualify candidates and hold re-polls, but was bound to approve 95 percent of seats within 30 days to allow the parliament to convene. Any further scrutiny of malpractice beyond this 30-day period would be handled by the courts. In the event, the ECT disqualified 28 candidates, with no evident bias for or against any party. The net result of the re-runs left the PPP's number of seats unchanged, while reducing the Democrats by one and Chart Thai by two in favor of the new parties (see Table 1).

After some negotiation, all parties except the Democrats agreed to join a PPP-led coalition, effectively re-uniting the scattered parts of Thaksin's grand alliance. The selection of the new cabinet betrayed Thaksin's over-arching influence. The key posts, especially those with any bearing on the judicial proceedings against him, went to faithful loyalists.[43] His personal lawyer, Noppadon Pattama, became foreign minister, and promptly restored Thaksin's official passport. Sompong Amornwiwat, a long-standing ally from his home town of Chiang Mai, became justice minister, and promptly sidelined several officials working on cases concerning Thaksin, including the whole team on possibly the most sensitive case (concerning SC Asset). Chaloem Yubamrung, whose association with Thaksin went back twenty years to the award of the concessions that laid the foundation of Thaksin's wealth (Pasuk and Baker 2009: 45), became interior minister and immediately removed hostile officials, including the chief of police. Somchai Wongsawat, Thaksin's brother-in-law, became a deputy premier and education minister. Jakrapob Penkair, who had been government spokesman and a vocal supporter of Thaksin since the coup, became deputy premier overseeing media. Surapong Seubwongleee, one of the former student activists who had been part of Thaksin's policy team, became finance minister. Yongyuth Tiyapairat, another personal favorite from Chiang Rai, became speaker of the house.[44]

[43] The same had been true of the 2001 cabinet (Pasuk and Baker 2009: 92–3).

[44] Many of these did not last very long. Yongyuth was disqualified for vote-buying; Jakrapob resigned to face a lese majeste charge; Noppadon resigned over Thai-Cambodia elections; Surapong was dropped when Samak was replaced by Somchai in September 2008, while Chaloem was down-graded to the health portfolio at the same time.

The day after the government was formed, Thaksin's wife Pojaman returned to Thailand. Three weeks later, Thaksin himself returned, showily touching his forehead to the motherland for the benefit of photographers at Bangkok airport.

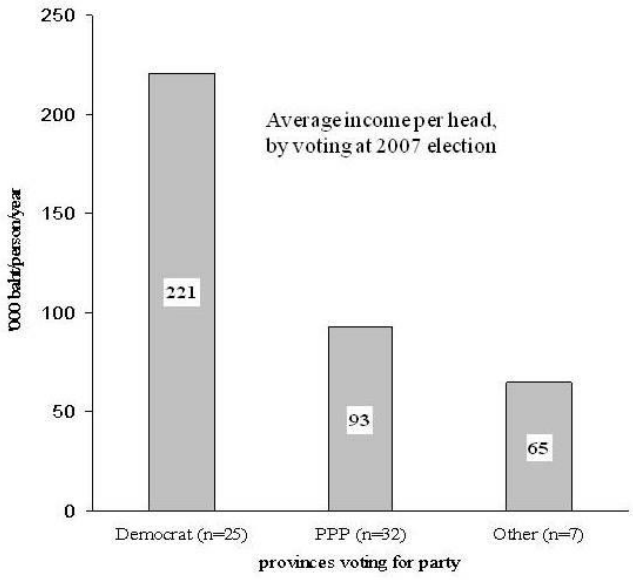
CONCLUSION

Over the decade from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, Thai voting behavior changed dramatically. In the old pattern, the personal standing and personal networks of the candidate were paramount; pyramids of *hua khanaen* vote-brokers acted as intermediaries between the candidate and the voter; and money played a major role at all levels of this system. This system did not completely disappear, but became far less important than it was. In the four elections from 2001 onwards, party clearly became more important in voter choice, and a two-party system had begun to emerge.

Several reasons lay behind the change. The 1997 constitution shifted from multi-member to single-member constituencies to encourage the emergence of a two-party system. The introduction of elections for the Senate, for village officers, and for a range of new decentralized local government bodies increased the frequency of going to the polls. In the more intimate arena of local government in particular, electors could more easily see the potential of their vote to bring real material benefits. Thaksin and his political advisors tumbled this new awareness in the electorate, and successfully channeled it into support for the Thai Rak Thai Party in 2001. After Thaksin delivered on his electoral promises of 2001, especially the promise of a universal health scheme, more people were aware of the potential value of the vote in national polls.[45]

As a result, in the polls since 2001, voting has been more party-based, more regionalized, and more clearly underpinned by social divisions.

Figure 4: Average Income per Head by Province, by Voting at 2007 Election



[45] For discussions of voting behavior, see Walker (2008) and Somchai (2008).

It is difficult to analyze the social factors determining Thai voting patterns as there are no exit polls linking socioeconomic data with party choice. But some simple analysis can be done with data that are available (see Figure 4). At the 2007 poll, average per capita income in provinces which elected Democrat Party candidates was 221,000 baht, compared to 93,000 baht in provinces which elected PPP candidates—a difference of 2.4 times.[46] Removing Bangkok from the calculation does not greatly affect the result. The Democrat provinces still had average income 1.7 times that of PPP provinces. Crude income figures may be a poor gauge of the true quality of life. However, using the UNDP's Human Achievement Index, which ranks provinces on health, education, and other key development indicators, the division is still stark. Most Democrat-voting provinces came in the top half of the ranking, with an average position of 22nd (out of 76 provinces). Most PPP-voting provinces came in the bottom half of the ranking, with an average position of 45th. Again, removing Bangkok from the analysis changes this a bit but not much. In the provinces which voted Democrat, there are around twice as many doctors per head of population as in the provinces which voted PPP, and on average children stay at school for about a year and a half longer. In the PPP-voting provinces, a far larger proportion of schools are rated as of poor quality. All the provinces which still have significant child nutrition voted PPP.[47]

Voting has also become distinctly regionalized. Since the early 1990s, the south (excluding the Muslim far south) and the capital have become the key electoral bases of the Democrats. Against the background of the 1985–95 economic boom, the Democrats positioned themselves as the party for the modern, urban middle class by recruiting a new cadre of technocrats and professionals as MPs and ministers, and by putting its policy emphasis on economic growth and education. This stance had appeal in the capital and also in the south where the society has long been focused on port towns and the economy oriented to mines, tourism, and plantations—very distinct from the rice-growing, village-based pattern of the other regions. The south's identification with the Democrats was cemented after a southerner, Chuan Leekpai, became the party leader in the early 1990s. As Marc Askew (2008) describes in detail for the Democrats in the south, this loyalty has become a part of regional identity, beyond transactional benefits and personalities.

In the elections of the 2000s, a similar regional identification with the pro-Thaksin parties has emerged in the upper north and the northeast. Here those voting pro-Thaksin were not only the less well-off but all ranks of society. As David Streckfuss (2010) has argued, this identification goes beyond material calculations to cultural identities. Historically, the upper north and the northeast were separate polities which were incorporated within the Bangkok-focused Thai state in the nineteenth century. The line on Map 4 dividing the central region from the PPP-voting areas in the far north and northeast very closely tracks the boundary between people that Bangkok identified as "Thai" and "Lao" until the late nineteenth century. Since then, the northeast has intermittently shown its resentment of Bangkok domination through millenarian revolts, Lao separatism, and support for communist insurgency. The upper north has pointedly conserved much of its cultural distinctiveness. The upper north is also Thaksin's birthplace, and the site of his family's political stronghold.

[46] The calculations use the 2007 Gross Provincial Product estimates made by the National Economic and Social Development Board, available through www.nesdb.go.th. A province is considered to have voted for a party if that party won a simple plurality of the seats in the province (more seats than any other party).

[47] All these findings are taken from UNDP, *Thailand Human Development Report 2009: Human Security: Today and Tomorrow*.

The rise of Thaksin was not only a spectacular individual career but also signified a major deepening of participation in electoral politics among the mass of the population. When a coalition of forces then chose to eject Thaksin not within the rules of electoral politics but by overthrowing electoral politics, it set up a delicate link between support or opposition to Thaksin on one hand and support or opposition to democracy on the other.

The anti-Thaksin coalition laid claim to legitimacy on a basis quite different from success within the rules of electoral politics (McCargo 2005, 2008). The coup generals told themselves they were still fighting the "specter of communism," now resurrected in the guise of populist electoral politics, and still a threat to the future of the monarchy. This analysis made the army's involvement in electoral politics a matter of "national security," indeed, the most important issue of national security, surpassing the insurgency in the far south, border problems, and international terrorism.

However this legitimacy had only a limited writ. Support for the coup was always in a minority, and declined rapidly as the ineptitude of the generals became apparent. Besides, due to the highly globalized state of its economy, Thailand had to heed international opinion on the acceptability of its political arrangements and quickly restore electoral politics. Hence the mask-play election—ostensibly an election with all the proper forms and ritual, but in reality an attempt to launder the coup by handing on power to the generals' chosen successors. The military invested heavily in placing new puppets on the political stage, and pulling the strings firmly so that these puppets would dominate the stage. General Sonthi felt justified in using public funds and state personnel to influence the election result, though he regularly announced that his aim was to make the election "free and fair." On the other side, PPP acted as a normal party though all were aware that its true leadership was elsewhere. Thaksin knew that political influence was his best recourse against judicial assault. He invested money in the campaign, but also maintained his own public profile so it could it be used as an asset in the election campaign.

For the fourth time in succession, the electorate delivered a margin of victory to PPP/TRT which exceeded that gained by any other party in Thai parliamentary history. Despite the return to the multi-member system, PPP performed on par with TRT in 2001, only narrowly missing an absolute majority. Despite the CNS's commitment of public money and state personnel, it could not prevent the emergence of a PPP-led government.

Thus the mask-play battle ended with a clear victory and defeat. But this episode is only one segment of a much longer drama. The contestants in the mask play moved on to new battlefields—on the streets, in the law courts, and in brash new political media. The four general elections of the 2000s (and many local government polls) have shown that the mass electorate understands the potential of the franchise and is determined and consistent in its choice. Old centers of power are frightened by this development, and conjure up specters of communism and anti-monarchism to rally support. This refusal to accept the popular will results in essays in subterfuge and illusion, including this mask-play election, as the violent clashes on Bangkok streets in the following episodes of the saga.

REFERENCES

Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL). 2008. *Thailand: Restoring Democracy. Elections to the House of Representatives December 2007*. Bangkok: ANFREL, March.

Askew, Marc. 2008. *Performing Political Identity: The Democrat Party in Southern Thailand.* Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

Connors, Michael K. 2008. "Thailand: Four Elections and a Coup." *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 62, 4, December.

Conners, Michael K. and Kevin Hewison, eds. 2008. *Special Issue: Thailand's "Good Cou": The Fall of Thaksin, the Mi.litary and Democracy, Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 38, 1, February.

Mattani Mojdara Rutnin. 1993. *Dance, Drama, and Theatre in Thailand.* Tokyo: Toyo Bunko.

McCargo, Duncan. 2005. "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand." *The Pacific Review* 18, 4: 499–519.

McCargo, Duncan. 2008. "Thailand: state of anxiety." In *Southeast Asian Affairs 2008*, eds. Daljit Singh and Tin Maung Maung Than. Singapore: ISEAS.

Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker. 2009. *Thaksin*. 2nd edition. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

Sarayut Tangprasert. 2007. "Isan People: Defeated even before the Referendum." *Prachatai* (English), August 25.

Somchai Phatharathananunth. 2008. "The Thai Rak Thai Party and Elections in North-eastern Thailand." *Journal of Contemporary Asia,* 38, 1, February: 106–23.

Streckfuss, David. 2010. "The Spring of Thailand's Ethnic Discontent." *Wall Street Journal*, 24 May.

Walker, Andrew. 2008. "The Rural Constitution and the Everyday Politics of Elections in Northern Thailand." *Journal of Contemporary Asia,* 38, 1, February: 84–105.

Wassana Nanuam. 2008. *Lap long phrang: pathiwat prasat sai* [Secrecy, Deception, Camouflage: The Sandcastle Coup]. Bangkok: Matichon.