

***The Political Institution of the Democrat Party :
Thailand's Oldest Political Party, After the Coup,
22 May 2014***

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were as follows : the status adaptation and political institution of the Democrat Party to examine this party as a political institution by Samuel P. Huntington theory after the coup in Thailand, on May 22, 2014. The study was a qualitative research by the instruments used were documentary research and in – depth interview. The study uses data collection from primary documents and leader interviews with three keymen of the party as well as Mr Abhisit Vejjajiva, the current leader of the Democrat Party; as leader of the second largest party, he was appointed the Prime Minister of Thailand on 17 December 2008. Major research findings indicated the party has a high level of political institutionalization the results of these Huntington's analyses showed that 1. The Democrat Party has been the second largest party in Thailand since the 21st century. It is still very popular with many Thai. 2. The Democrat party shows a high level of adaptability. Through some creative politics, it was able to ensure its existence during and after the coup. 3. As of 2019, it was Thailand's oldest political party, having existed for 73 years. 4. The Democrat party has good organizational structure. 5. The Democrat party is autonomous and has a high level of dedication of party members. Based on the major findings, further research for the political platform and the general success of the Democrat Party was needed.

Keywords: Thailand, The Democrat Party, political institution

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Introduction

I'll start with some general information on Thai politics have become predictably cyclical over the past decade. An anti-establishment political party gets elected, that party gets purged, the military installs a caretaker government pending elections, the military rewrites the election rules to ensure its desired result, elections are held again—and an anti-establishment party wins again.(Bremmer, 2016) The Democrat Party Thailand's Oldest Political Party has found winning elections in modern times to be its biggest challenge, with the party last winning a plurality of the vote 26 years ago. Since decisively losing the 2001 election to Thaksin Shinawatra after losing popular support due to its management of the IMF. The country's oldest party boycotted the 2006 election, (Head, 2019) decisively lost in 2011 and boycotted another poll in 2014. the Democrat Party won some 11.4 million popular votes in the 2011 election under the leadership of Abhisit Vejjajiva, (Panyaarvudh, 2019) The March 24 election will be the first since the military seized power in 2014, an intervention that unseated a Pheu Thai-led administration headed by Yingluck Shinawatra, sister of exiled former premier Thaksin Shinawatra but in the 2019 managed to secure only fourth position with 3.9 million votes, tipped to win just 55 seats. The Democrats, who marked their 73rd anniversary last month, failed to secure a single seat in Bangkok their traditional stronghold losing to Phalang Pracharat and Future Forward (Panyaarvudh, 2019). In the South, another normally dependable Democrat bastion, Phalang Pracharat and Bhumjaithai swept up votes in several constituencies.

Research objectives

The purposes of this study were as follows: the status adaptation and political institution of the Democrat Party to examine this party as a political institution by Samuel P. Huntington's theory after the coup in Thailand, on May 22, 2014.

Methodology

the instrumental

The study was a qualitative research by the instruments used were documentary research and in-depth interviews. I'm interviewed three party leaders on several occasions. :

1. Former Democrat party leader Mr.Abhisit Vejjajiva
2. Former Democrat party deputy leader Mr. Jurin Laksanawisit
3. Former Democrat party secretariat Mr.Juti Krairerk

This research uses the theory of Political Institutionalization by Samuel P. Huntington

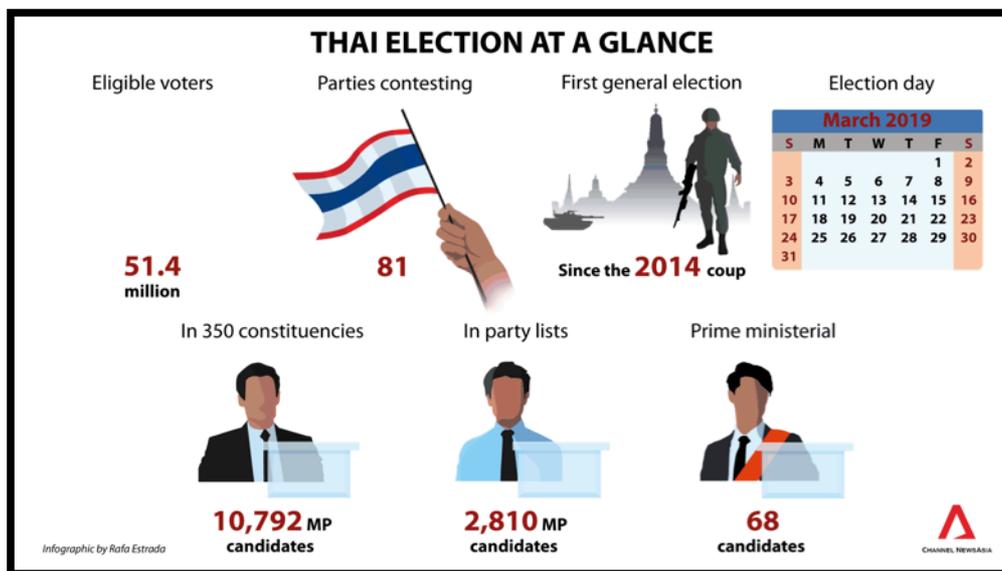
Contents /Results

According to Samuel P. Huntington's theory in his book "Political Order in Changing Societies" (New Haven and London : Yale University Press, 1968).

He proposed to use as an index to measure the level of development into institutionalization.:

1.Scope of Support : The institution has a large number of members and comes from various social groups. Will be an expression of cooperation and support from the public in a wide range Political institutions are highly stable. If any institution has a small number of members and closes narrowly, only in one group or any class of society also shows the lack of support from the wider population Which will result in the instability of political institutions and low development. The Democrat Party still with only 6.2 million voters in the South, the Democrat Party would lack sufficient support to win an election. (Phakdeewanich, 2018) By contrast, the political power base of Pheu Thai in the North and Northeast registered 24.9 million voters at the 2011 election. The media and the online public have been describing the Democrats’ loss with the term, “Extinct Democrats.” In Bangkok area.

However, the South remains important to the successful re-emergence of democracy in Thailand, which can only happen if the Democrat Party shows determination in persuading its constituents that democratic culture and power transitions are the way forward rather than accepting military interventions. Titipol Phakdeewanich said



Figures 1 : Thailand latest election 2019

source : <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/thailand-election-voters-polls-military-rule-democratic-11373892>

2. Level of Institutionalization. There are factors that are considered in the following levels of measurement.

2.1 Adaptability means interesting that Democrat Party is conservative, pro-monarchy and establishment, backed by the military and most of the Bangkok-based elite. The party hasn’t won a general election in two decades and only came to power in a parliamentary vote in 2008 after the previous ruling party was dissolved by the courts. (Kurlantzick, 2013) Nowadays the Democrat Party has changed from ideological political parties by considering the need to work politically creatively with a new method example the Democrat Party is only one party in Thai politics which the election for leaders and executives party. The thing is the Democrat Party has been facing a crisis in its party structure for a decade now. Last year, the party

introduced “New Dem”, a group of 21 young party members led by Parit – former party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva’s nephew (Panyaarvudh, 2019) with the hope of acting as a bridge to engage with the 8 million first-time voters. However, this group failed to meet the aim. The party really needs to build a connection with young voters, as they are growing up and will become a part of future politics. I wondered how the oldest party would be able to end the long-held perception that it has always made compromises with the military at a time when the new generation is concerned about the future of democracy in Thailand.

2.1.2 Chronological Age. Huntington’s viewed that if the political institutions were in continuous and long-standing political activities would show the ability to adapt in other words, that political institutions have regulations and methods to respond and solve problems that occur very well. (Huntington, 1968) the Democrat Party is a Thai political party. The oldest party in Thailand, the Democrat Party was founded by Khuang Aphaiwong on 6 April 1946, as a conservative and royalist party, following the January 1946 elections. Early members included royalists opposed to Pridi Phanomyong and former Seri Thai underground resistance members. (Heilprin, 2009) The party competed against the parties affiliated with Pridi Phanomyong and the Progressive Party of brothers Seni and Kukrit Pramoj. In the January 1946 elections, the Pridi-led coalition had won a majority in parliament. it was founded as a conservative and royalist party, and now upholds a conservative-liberal.

2.1.3 Generation of Elite. After suffering a great loss in the March 24 election which caused Abhisit Vejjajiva to resign as party leader, the 73-year-old party is now at a crossroads as it has to choose its new leader, restore its confidence and decide whether to join other parties to form a coalition government.(Lohatepanont, 2018) After the general election, some Democrats backed Mr. Abhisit when he announced he would not support Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha as a prime minister, but some others have different views but age of the next generation leader of the party is 55-60 years.

Mr. Apirak Kosayodhin (age 58),two-time former Bangkok governor said he has invited "new generation people" to join him to rebuild the party.

Mr. Jurin Laksanawisit (age 63) is among four candidates competing for the top position. The others are former finance minister Mr.Korn Chatikavanij (age 55), and former justice minister Pirapan Salirathavibhaga (age 60)

And from the results of the election of the latest Democrat Party on May15, 2019 is elected Jurin Laksanawisit to be its new leader. Mr Jurin garnered 160 votes from 291 members selected to vote, followed by Pirapan Salirathvibhaga (102), Korn Chatikavanij (19) and Apirak Kosayodhin (10).

His win was widely expected after the party list MP became acting Democrat leader after the resignation of Abhisit Vejjajiva following the party's poor showing in the March 24 election. Mr Jurin entered politics in Phangnga in 1983, but lost his first election. He won election three years later and has never lost since then. (Boyle, 2019) He promised to bring change to the Democrat Party, but also to restore unity after voters ousted their candidates from their Bangkok stronghold.

MIXED DECK FOR PRIZE ROLE			
Leadership Candidates: Strengths and Weaknesses			
			
JURIN LAKSANAVISIT	APIRAK KOSAYODHIN	PIRAPAN SALIRATHAVIBHAGA	KORN CHATIKAVANIJ
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Most senior of all the candidates, having been elected as an MP 11 times and serving as a cabinet minister for five ministries ▶ Has the support of party leader Chaan Lockpai, a former prime minister ▶ Has close ties with key party figures <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lacks a strong international profile (his graduate and post-graduate studies were at Thai universities) ▶ Has little support from the party's rank and file 	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Served two terms as Bangkok governor ▶ Regarded as an outstanding executive ▶ Retains close ties with and is supported by many in and outside the party ▶ Has strong interpersonal skills ▶ Has a strong team of party members on his side, including Sathit Wongnongloy, a former activist in the now-defunct People's Democratic Reform Committee <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Has limited support from current party MPs ▶ Long absence from any of the party's executive posts 	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A six-time former MP and ex-justice minister ▶ Is winning increasing support from key Democrat figures ▶ Independent of internal influence from party figures ▶ Outstanding performances in the field of law ▶ Has vowed to not assume a cabinet post in the event of the Democrat Party joining a coalition government <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Appears isolated from the party and has little attachment to its members ▶ Ministerial performances not widely recognised 	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Retains an image as a pro-reformist pushing for change in the party ▶ Possesses a high profile internationally, having served as a former finance minister with both global and regional recognition ▶ Has a strong background in finance and the stock market <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Has failed to secure significant support from former and incumbent MPs

Figures 2 : New leader of the Democrat party 2019

source : <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/special-reports/1676996/jurin-seen-as-front-runner-to-lead-dems>

2.1.4 Organizations Functions. Political institutions must be able to change or create the main functions of the new institution.(Huntington, 1968) the Democrat Party is able to both the opposition and the government and served at the local government example Bangkok governor which the party won in the area since 2004.

The Democrat party has created political leaders and Thai political standards on many issues. The 73-year-old Democrat Party suffered a huge loss in the polls. It failed to secure a single seat in its Bangkok stronghold, losing votes to Phalang Pracharat and Future Forward. In the South, another normally dependable Democrat bastion, Phalang Pracharat and Bhumjaithai took several constituencies. Observers believe Abhisit's resignation as leader after the dismal outcome could pave the way for the Democrats to join a Phalang Pracharat-led coalition.

2.2 Complexity. According to studies, the Democrat Party it has been found that the management structure of the party placing a command line rotation of the management team by internal election and good efficiency.

However, Huntington considers that institutions or organizations will be able to face problems and operate smoothly, the Democrat Party able to operate structure is placed on each side. Establishment of a working group and faced with friction or political problems for a period of time It should be considered that the party is complex in organizing the organization. Because effective political institutions need to divide sub-units by doing specific duties In order to suit the complex social condition. The Democrat party has adjusted the management structure to be flexible and adapt to the post-coup situation without violating the dictatorial government's order Abhisit Vejjajiva said "We give the party members the opportunity to join or reject work with the dictatorial government which is not considered a party resolution or a party's regulation" (Head, 2019)

In facts a lot of party members joined the process created by the junta government.



Figures 3 : New DEM of the Democrat party 2019
 source : <https://thestandard.com/>

2.3 Autonomy. The ability of political institutions to make decisions on their own policies Without being overwhelmed or under the influence of other organizations outside the party From the study, it was found that the Democrat Party had a relatively high level of political independence. The Democrat party no one is the owner of the party members are very independent in making decisions or voting on issues but must respect the party resolution. (Kurlantzick, 2013)The party lost their seats to new parties, particularly PPRP and FFP. Surprisingly, the party could not win any constituency seats in Bangkok. As a result, Abhisit Vejjajiva resigned as the head of the party after the poll ended. It is time for the DP to learn from its previous standpoints, ideologies and actions in Thai politics in the past two decades. Currently, the party executives will run the party after the election.

2.4 Coherence Huntington's viewed that unity It is an important condition for every institution and includes consistent opinions, especially on issues related to the scope of authority(Huntington, 1968). Because activities in every organization must have conflicts that cannot be avoided. Conflict resolution can be done peacefully in order to achieve the organization's goals. And encourage political institutions to become more stable. The party's voter base is traditionally concentrated in southern Thailand and in Bangkok, where the party relies on the support from the capital's aristocratic, meritocratic, and educated middle and upper classes. In the 1990s, under the leadership of Chuan Leekpai, a native of Trang Province, the Democrats quickly became the dominant party in southern Thailand. The influences of provincial politicians from the south into the party created considerable tension with the party's Bangkok establishment. Chuan's "Mr. Clean" image, however, made him personally popular with Democrat Party supporters throughout Thailand, and so the party managed to stay cohesive under his leadership. (Boyle, 2019) The first Chuan government (1992–1995) fell when members of the cabinet were implicated in profiting from the Sor Phor Kor 4-01 land project documents distributed in Phuket Province. Chuan was again premier from 1997 to 2001, in the midst of the 1997 Asian financial crisis and its aftermath. The party lost a landslide election victory to Thaksin Shinawatra's populist Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party, winning 128 seats compared to the TRT's 248 in the 2001 general election. After the election in 2001,Thaksin Shinawatra

the leader of Thai Rak Thai Party, became prime minister. New Aspiration Party has joined the government. Shortly thereafter. The New Aspiration Party was merged with the Thai Rak Thai Party. Mostly to join Thai Rak Thai party (the governing party) with Gen. Chavalit Yongchaiyudh except Lieutenant Colonel Thita Rangsitpol Manitkul, WRTA Member of the Parliament and Deputy Secretary of the party. Offset to the Democrat Party (Thailand) (Opposition Party) remains the only MPs moving from the opposition party government. During her tenure as a member of the House of Representatives.

Huntington's viewed to the institution of the political party which is the final goal to create a political party that is the main institution in the country administration Political parties will act as power users instead of people.



Figures 4 : Game of seats 2019

source : <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/politics/1674208/pheu-thai-govt-hope-on-ropes>

Conclusion

Major research findings indicated the Democrat Party has a high level of political and strong Institutionalization. Political parties that are highly political institutions Must provide opportunities for people, the general public to enter political parties and up to play a leading role in political parties equally and equally Means that the party with high institutions will have the process of recruiting party members to become political leaders of the party.

In Fact. The Democrat Party are popular with middle-class voters and have strong support in the south and Bangkok. They enjoy backing from conservative elites and the military's top brass, though having struggled to win over the poor the majority of Thai voters. The Democrat Party have since launched a series of populist programs to broaden support.

However, with all of the above mentioned, it leads to the conclusion that the Democrat Party is a strong Thai political institution. As much as the Thai political system had ever existed.

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