การเลือกตั้งทั่วไปของประเทศไทยปี 2550 กับการสื่อสารการเมือง

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บทคัดย่อ

  การเลือกตั้งทางการเมืองในประเทศไทยที่ผ่านมามีประวัติที่นับว่าสั้นและบางครั้งไม่สง่างามนัก ซึ่งมักสรุป กันว่าเป็นเพราะการเลือกตั้งเหล่านั้น ส่วนใหญ่มีผลมาจากความภักดีของแต่ละภูมิภาคหรือโดยการซื้อเสียง ในรูปแบบใดรูปแบบหนึ่ง ดังนั้น ผลที่ตามมาซึ่งได้แก่ ความพยายามที่จะทำให้การเลือกตั้งเป็นไปอย่างมืออาชีพ โดยการปลูกฝังอุดมการณ์ การสร้างจำนวนสมาชิกพรรค และการใช้การสื่อสารในการหาเสียงเลือกตั้งที่ซับซ้อน ต่างๆ ไม่เป็นผลสำเร็จ อย่างไรก็ดี จากผลการเลือกตั้งจริงในการเลือกตั้งทั่วไปปี 2550 ยังไม่เป็นที่แน่ชัดว่า ข้อเท็จ จริงต่างๆ จะสนับสนุนข้อสรุปข้างต้น บทความนี้ได้ศึกษาจากข้อมูลที่มีอยู่เพื่อค้นหาในระดับหนึ่งว่าทำไมประชาชน ไปลงคะแนนเสียงและลงคะแนนเสียงอย่างไร การวิเคราะห์นี้พบว่า ความจงรักภักดีของแต่ละภูมิภาคมีอยู่จริงและ มีหลายระดับ โดยวัดจากจำนวนคะแนนเสียงในแต่ละกลุ่มจังหวัดตามที่คณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้งกำหนด (8 กลุ่ม 157 เขต) โดยในหลายจังหวัดผู้ลงคะแนนเสียงเลือกผู้สมัครจากพรรคเดียวกันทั้งทีมโดยไม่มีพรรคอื่นเข้ามาแทรกเลย นอกจากนี้ ยังพบข้อมูลประชากรศาสตร์ สังคมศาสตร์ และเศรษฐศาสตร์บางตัว มีความสัมพันธ์กับการลงคะแนน เสียงเลือกตั้ง ซึ่งสะท้อนถึงนโยบายของพรรคการเมืองและการสื่อสารของแต่ละพรรคไปยังผู้มีสิทธิ์ออกเสียง เลือกตั้งโดยผ่านสื่อต่างๆ กัน ผลการศึกษาและข้อเสนอแนะในเบื้องต้นของบทความนี้จะนำไปสู่การนำการสื่อสาร การเมืองไปใช้ประโยชน์ในอนาคต อันเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการตลาดด้านการเมืองในประเทศไทย

คำสำคัญ: การพัฒนาภูมิภาค, การเลือกตั้งทั่วไป, ประชาธิปไตย, ประเทศไทย, อุดมการณ์

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The Thai General Election of 2007 and Political Communications

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Abstract

Political elections in Thailand have had a comparatively short and often undignified history. It is often concluded that a substantial proportion of such elections are decided by regional loyalties or by vote-buying in one form or another. Consequently, attempts to professionalise electioneering through the injection of ideology, the creation of mass membership parties and the use of sophisticated campaign communications are considered to be failures. However, it is not clear that the facts, as measured by the actual election results, would support such a conclusion. This paper examines the results of the 2007 election in the light of available data with a view to determining to some extent how and why people voted. It is found that regional loyalties do exist (to different degrees of significance) as evidenced by the number of votes cast in each provincial group prescribed by The Election Commission of Thailand (8 groups of 157 constituencies). Some socio-demographic and economic data are correlated with voting patterns, which reflects the policies of political parties and their communication messages to eligible voters through various media channels. Conclusions are drawn from the results and some tentative recommendations are made for the future deployment of political communications as part of political marketing in Thailand.

Keywords: democracy, general election, ideology, regional development, Thailand

Introduction

The first General Election in Thailand was held on November 15th, 1933 (2476 B.E.) with 78 elected members of the Parliament, some time after the 1932 revolution that brought down the Absolute Monarchy in Siam. Subsequent elections have been arranged since then, of which the latest one, the 23rd, was held on December 23rd, 2007 (2550 B.E.) with 480 members elected (400 constituency members and 80 party-list members). Rules and regulations regarding processes, qualifications of voters and candidates, together with the governmental body in charge of organizing the general election, were changed or amended so as to operate efficiently and be responsive to the political environment of the country and the modernized democratic countries of the western world.

It is interesting to investigate how the Thai people voted in the 2007 general election. Would the rational choice theory of Downs in early 1957, which stated that significant elements of political life could be explained in terms of voter self-interest (Downs 1957), be an appropriate description or would other variables such as economic, education, cultures, values, opinions, beliefs (traditional or religious), geographical boundaries be more relevant?

In early history, Thai society consisted of only two classes of people, i.e. Chao (nobles) and Prai (commoners and slaves) (Kasetsiri 1995). It was only in the reign of King Rama V that slavery was abolished and the Thai society moved towards the Chao-civil servants-citizen system. Thai students were sent to Europe to undergo Western education and gain experience of the administrative governing system which could then be introduced into country development and help bring about the 1932 political reform (2475 B.E. Thai First Constitution). Owing to inherited norms, values and cultural practices, leadership plays a vital role in Thai families and society. Thai people are taught to respect elderly people and that arguing or expressing opinions may be seen as impolite. Decision-making is usually made by the head of the family or be temple seniors or reputable people in society, which has been replicated in the foundation of hierarchical local administrations throughout the country. These leaders are accepted for being trustworthy in their ideology and expected to bring in wealth and development to the societies where they belong. Strong leaders do have power and connections in both economic and social contexts.

These underlying political beliefs in Thai society have for decades influenced the way that people have voted in elections as reflected in the degree of regionalism preferences. However, a revolution in political communications has taken place since the 2001 election that saw the debut of the Thai Rak Thai party, the first party to attempt to become a mass membership party and to represent a distinctive ideology and manifesto of policies, based in part on an extensive program of focus groups and other forms of research and policy development (Anurit and Bisonyabut, 2005). What difference, if any, has this evolution made? This study aims to explain, to some extent, the voting patterns of the 2007 General Election as far as data are available and to identify the extent to which regional loyalties continue to outweigh ideological elements, if any.

Literature Review

Since the 1932 revolution that overthrew the Absolute Monarchy system, Thailand has experienced sporadic periods of democracy, having 27 prime ministers, 15 constitutions and 23 elections. The latest General Election on December 23rd, 2007 was held about a year after the September 19th, 2006 military takeover of the country's administration and hence abolished the 1997 so-called People's Constitution. Martial law was imposed across the country[1]. Some important political events occurred such as the disbanding of the Thai Rak Thai Party (TRT) by the Constitutional Court, which was reconstituted as the People's Power Party (PPP) and the subsequently banning of 111 former executives of TRT from engaging in political activities for five years by the Constitutional Court too. The 1997 constitution was replaced by the 2007 constitution and a General Election was held on December 23rd, 2007. There were some important changes in the system employed, including changes in the voting system and processes caused by the new Constitution. It redrew the electoral units from 400 constituencies, which then had one elected member each, to be 157 constituencies of not more than 3 members each, for 76 provinces classified into 8 groups. Each group was entitled to have 10 members, totalling 80 as party-list members. So the 2007 General Election provided 480 members (MPEs) compared to 500 in the previous one and party-list members (MPPs) were calculated as a percentage of nationwide voters.

Thai ways of life could influence how Thai people vote, from head of the family to head of the villages, head of the communities (temples, schools, health centres) sub districts, districts and provinces, where decision makings take place. Although western education and life style that came into Thailand as evidently in the reign of King Rama VI, followed by the 1932 political revolution in the reign of King Rama VII, still traditional cultures were important in the making of Thai democracy.

Thailand used to be governed by Field Marshal Sarit (1957-1962), the Prime Minister, whose traditional style of leadership, *nakleng* (strong and walk the talk style), reshaped participation in the villages. By linking the national to the local, particularly in the distribution of resources and roles in the political parties, *nakleng* shaped contemporary Thai Democracy in terms of wealth and *barami* (charisma). However the TRT's policy approach tried to change that by increasing education and decentralizing politics (albeit this was a long-term project that could not be completed). Grassroots policies were designed to increase participation at the local political level and these were offered to the country as a whole, which had the effect of reducing provincial or regional level loyalties in many cases. In order to gain maximum support and eventually come to power as a single party, TRT included a diverse coalition of interests, including NGOs, labour unions, pro-globalization businesspeople and many others. Inevitably, contradictions among the different elements led to some leaving the coalition

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[1]Martial law is permanently in place in various parts of Thailand, notably in the border provinces and provinces where many migrant workers are licensed to live and work. Generally, the provisions of martial law are not put into practice but remain available to military leaders at their discretion.

over the years. As a result the regional and class-based nature of TRT and its successors became more important.

Awareness of middle class participation in politics has become apparent since the emergence of the May 1992 mobile phone group, who were part of protests against the military coup and junta rule in that period. Possession of a mobile phone at that time was regarded as a status symbol due to the high price of phone sets. The Thai middle class group was seen as newly rich bureaucrats, entrepreneurs and intellectuals with western-style education. As the political culture evolved, it drew largely on rural traditions of participation, phudi-style leadership (nobility-led) and democratic ideals from abroad emerged. The middle class groups, urbanites, as described by James Ockey, played the key role in managing a transitional style of leadership. The 1992 uprising led to political reforms, particularly in the areas of vote buying and corruption. Education became viewed as the best, long-term solution to vote buying (Ockey 2005). It is interesting to investigate the relationship between vote-casting and an educational variable such as the number of classrooms per province corresponding to the same timeframe of the 2007 General Election.

Voting patterns can also be observed by Michael Nelson's report on the results of 2007 General Election in Chachoengsao province. He pointed out that with Multi-Member Constituency (MMC) system, intra-party competition appeared to be minimal in the province itself and in most other provinces in Thailand (Nelson, 2009). Voters in Chachoengsao, Suphan Buri and Sa Kaew were often loyal to local leaders and competing candidates would search for willing canvassers in each village who would also lobby local leaders as well as individuals. This is compared to the preferable situation in which voters make decisions based on evaluation of policies, performance of incumbent representatives and scrutiny of the overall environment. Nelson (2009) further observed that discussion and information flows within families and among peers should also contribute to the formation of opinions and subsequently may influence voting decisions. Other social bonds may also be important, while new forms of mass communication also have a role to play. Modern mass media such as internet and satellite TV have made information available to rural voters to a much greater extent than before. Similarly, visible political events and genuine redistribution of resources have also helped expand the flow of political communications.

Understanding why and how Thai people vote should lead to better and more efficient management of political communications, including communications both from message senders to message receivers and vice versa. Few studies on factors influencing voting behaviour for members of the House of Representatives have been conducted. When studies have been published, they have tended to focus more on the need for independent institutions responsible for organizing transparent countrywide elections and led to the establishment of the Election Commission of Thailand (ECT), according to the 1997 constitutional mandate. The study concerned also touched on the ideological characteristics of members of the House of Representatives and the development of democracy but paid less attention to the management of political communications (Roongvisai, 1998).

In the past, Thai voters tended to pay attention to personalities rather than policies. In 2001 and 2005, the victories of the TRT proved that easy-to-understand political agenda seemed to gain more support from voters. The party maintained a balance between the mass media (above the line) and extra activities (below the line). Messages which appeared to be complex were not communicated through television and radio but were communicated through exhibitions and seminars. The issues of identifying the effectiveness of different media and methods in political campaign have been addressed extensively (Anurit and Bisonyabut 2005).

Regarding loyalty, when communication channels became more available and easier access to the villages, through the new media and technology, such as more feature of the mobile phone, both voices and non-voice facilities, satellite TV and internet usages, party policies can be broadcasted to reach the voters at a lower cost, at least to some extent. This has both positive and negative impact on the voter's decision, either to remain loyal to individual candidate of his preference no matter whichever party the candidate belongs to. Loyalty is reflected when the candidates are re-elected.

Another factor that influences voting intentions is the level of political participation as revealed by the study of Wongchaisuwans (1998) on middle class political participation. This classified electoral participation as one type of political participation. This group of voters would, it was concluded, vote for a party based on its overall contribution to the nation, the nature of the individual candidate concerned and the identity of likely overall winners or members of the ruling coalition.

Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E.2550 (2007)

The relevant provisions of the 2007 Constitution are as follows.

Section 93: The House of Representatives consists of 480 members, 400 from the election on a constituency basis and 80 from the election on a party-list basis.

According to the Electoral Commission of Thailand (ECT) announcement dated October 17th, 2007, the country's population was 62,828,706, using average of 157,071 people per member, hence the total number of members for all 76 provinces was set at 400 members to be elected, with 1-3 members for each constituency (Multi-Member Constituency System).

For party-list members, the same 76 provinces were divided into eight electoral groups, each group was entitled to ten members, with one ballot for one party-list. The percentages were calculated from the voters of each electoral group, not from the whole country.

Political Parties Active in the 2007 Election

Political parties tend to be ephemeral in Thailand, since they have risen and fallen in line with the interests of regional groupings and have had little interest in enunciating a clear line of ideology or policy. The Communist Party of Thailand has long been suppressed and restrictions on trades (labour) unions have made it impossible for a large-scale socialist or workers' interest party to be established. The longest lasting party, the Democrat Party, which has survived so many scares that it is referred to as the 'Cockroaches,' has traditionally been a home for

technocrat social conservatives. It has rarely expressed any form of ideologically-based policy position beyond expressions of its own technical competence and probity. Neither the ethnic Malay Muslims in the southern provinces nor the ethnic Chinese prevalent throughout the country have established political parties to represent their interests. The principal parties that contested the 2007 general election are as follows[2].

People's Power Party (PPP)

Originally created on November 9th, 1998 as TRT, its disbandment led to many members recreating the party as PPP at the end of July 2007. The PPP was then in turn disbanded on December 2nd, 2008 on the pretext of electoral misconduct when Mr. Somchai Wongsawad was the 26th Prime Minister. The majority of members then moved to the newly created Phuea Thai Party, except for the Newin faction which moved to the Bhumjaithai party for its own interests. PPP stood on a pro-poor, redistributional policy manifesto that was also pro-business and open to globalisation. Policies enacted under the TRT administration significantly changed the political discourse among Thai voters and politicians.

Democrat Party (DEM)

This is the oldest party in Thailand and was founded on April 6th, 1946, with Major Khuang Aphaiwong as its first party leader and M.R.[3] Kukrit Pramoj its first Secretary General. Through its more than 60 years of existence, the party has been led by prominent leaders and four of them have served as

Prime Minister, namely Major Khuang Aphaiwong, M.R. Seni Pramoj, Mr. Chuan Leekpai and, since December 15th, 2008, Mr. Abhisit Vejjajiva. Its manifesto was based to a considerable extent on condemning PPP policies as 'populist' and 'immoral,' although it also adopted some of those policies under different names.

Matchima Party (MAT)

Originally having Mr. Prachai Liewpairat as its party leader, on Feb.24th, 2008, Mrs.Anongwan Tepsutin took over. The party was disbanded on December 2nd, 2008. It had no recognizable ideological stance other than to copy 'populist' TRT policies with a view to obtaining votes from former TRT voters.

Ruamjaithai Party (RJT)

This was established in September 2007 and had many members from the group of former minister Mr.Suwat Liptapanlop and Mr. Pradit Pattaraprasit as Secretary General. The first party leader was General Chetta Tanajaro, who later resigned in December 2008, because he voted for Police General Pracha Promnok against Mr.Abhisit in a power struggle for influence. The Thai United People's Development Party was based more on regional loyalties and personal patronage than a distinctive ideological position.

Charthaipatana Party (CT)

Created on April 18th, 2008 to take in 15 members from the Chart Thai Party that had been disbanded, with Mr. Chumpol Silpa-acha as its party leader, the

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[2]Small parties that did not have any members elected are not included here because of space constraints.
[3]M.R. is an abbreviation for a royally-appointed title.

Chart Thai party had a strong base in the Suphan Buri province and its vicinity. The original party had a long history of geographical loyalty and patronage and, after the by-election on January 11th, 2009, it added 10 more members to the House of Representatives for a total of 25.

Pracharat Party (PR)

This was established on January 10th, 2006 by Mr.Sanoh Tientong after he resigned from TRT. The 'Royal People's Party' combined nationalism with social and economic conservatism.

Phue Pan Din Party (PPD)

This was established on October 2nd, 2007 with Mr.Suvit Khunkitti as its first party leader. Since April 20th, 2009, Mr. Chanchai Chairungroeng has become party leader and the party has three ministerial positions in the current coalition government. There was an important event on December 15th, 2008 when Police General Pracha Promnok competed against Mr.Abhisit for the prime minister post in a battle for personal influence and status. PPD has little discernible ideological content beyond the message of monarchy, language and Buddhism which it is obligatory for all political parties to support publicly.

Methodology

The research conducted for this paper consists of two parts. The first part was a series of in-depth face-to-face interviews with individuals with detailed knowledge of the research subject. The list of respondents in this part of the research was as follows:

    1) Election Commission of Thailand (ECT)

      • Specialist

    • Department of Public Relations

      - Executives and officers

    • Department of Political Affairs and Referenda

      - Division of Accounting, Finance and Assets Inspection

      - Executives and officers

    2) Secretariat Office, The Office of the House of Representatives

    • Library information officer

    3) Private advertising companies

    • Siamentis Co., Ltd.

    • Matchbox Co., Ltd.

Interviews were conducted as part of a larger doctoral program of research. Extensive notes were taken during the interviews for subsequent transcription and analysis. Content analysis techniques were employed to help determine relevant points emerging from the transcripts and these were then used to inform the quantitative analysis and to provide contextual information to support the discussion that follows. The overall purpose of the interviewing was to determine the means by which candidates and members were able to use communications strategies and did use those strategies in developing rapport with voters and constituents.

This part of study mainly explored the rules and regulations of the ECT, particularly as regards the campaign budgets of the political parties (party-list) and the MP candidates, the expenditures categories and the type of media allowed or not allowed to be used. Meanwhile, some advertising agencies planned sophisticated media mix plans and campaigns, while others restricted themselves to the printing as instructed. However, expert opinions were obtained

so as to give insight and explanation for the qualitative analysis. The current research paper has arisen from this broader approach.

The quantitative analysis involved data provided by the Electoral Commission of Thailand and made available as a free download. The data were provided in MS Excel files and in the Thai language. For the purpose of this research, the data were translated into English and converted for use with the SPSS program. Standard precautions were taken to ensure the accuracy of the data. Statistical tests were used in the analysis and are used in a standard fashion. Additional variables were added from various editions of Pocket Thailand in Figures for the purpose of enhancing the analysis. Obtaining the precisely desired variables in Thailand is difficult owing to the limitations of technical capacity. Consequently, proxy variables are used in some cases. For example, to approximate the extent to which people are educated in a province, the variable number of classrooms is used and calculated as an average per person. Similarly, the number of hospital beds per person is used as a proxy for social and economic development. This method is not ideal, since it can never be certain that the proxy variable accurately measures what it is hoped to be measured. However, the method is widely used in quantitative analysis in the social sciences and must be considered valid because of this.

Analysis

Thailand is divided into 76 provinces for administrative purposes and the level of income and development within those provinces varies significantly depending on climatic, geographic and

Table 1　Basic Statistics for Eight Regions of Thailand

Region[4]	Number of provinces	Mean population per province	Mean GPP per capita	Mean patient beds	Mean classrooms
1	11	692,004.1	64,979.6	1,511.0	5,111.1
2	9	831,302.3	61,003.4	1,587.6	6,401.1
3	10	797,514.9	36,181.1	1,043.3	6,133.4
4	6	1,330,932.2	32,791.7	1,731.7	10,509.0
5	10	789,278.6	245,645.1	1,806.2	5,726.9
6	3	2,622,459.7	308,076.3	11,931.3	8,327.3
7	15	522,321.9	159,174.8	1,243.4	3,643.4
8	12	666,062.2	100,534.7	1,314.0	6,012.8

source: author's calculations.

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[4] Region 1 consists of: Mae Hong Son, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Phayao, Nan, Phrae, Lampang, Lamphun, Sukhothai, Tak and Kamphaeng Phet. Region 2 consists of Uttaradit, Pitsanulok, Phichit, Nakhon Sawan, Uthai Thani, Lop Buri, Petchabun, Chaiyaphum and Khon Kaen. Region 3 consists of Amnat Charoen, Mukdahan, Sakon Nakhon, Kalasin, Maha Sarakham, Nong Khai, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Udon Thani and Loei. Region 4 consists of: Buri Ram, Surin, Si Sa Ket, Ubon Ratchathani, Yasothon and Roi Et. Region 5 consists of: Sa Kaeo, Nakhon Ratchasima, Pathum Thani, Nakhon Nayok, Prachin Buri, Chachoengsao, Chon Buri, Rayong, Chanthaburi and Trat. Region 6 consists of: Bangkok, Nonthaburi and Samut Prakan. Region 7 consists of: Ranong, Chumphon, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi, Samut Songkhram, Samut Sakhon, Nakhon Pathom, Kanchanaburi, Suphan Buri, Chai Nat, Sing Buri, Ang Thong, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya and Saraburi. Region 8 consists of: Surat Thani, Phangnga, Phuket, Krabi, Nakorn Si Thammarat, Trang, Phatthalung, Satun, Songkhla, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat.

institutional factors. The poorest provinces, for example, are in the north eastern region known as Isan which is located over a large salt pan that reduces the fertility of the land. The northern region is based on forested mountains with limited agricultural land and is also comparatively poor, especially compared with the central region around the River Chao Phraya which has land so fertile and well-irrigated that multiple rice harvests per year are possible. The central region also includes Bangkok and its vicinity and, as the home for all major economic, political, religious and cultural institutions, the capital city fulfils the functions of a primate city. It is certainly true, as the table below indicates, that there is considerable variation among the different regions of the country. Overall, PPP won the most votes, with 36.6% of constituency votes (26,293,456) for 233 seats and 39.6% of proportional votes. Second was the DEM party which won 30.3% of constituency votes (21,745,696) for 165 seats but actually received more proportional votes (39.63%).

It is clear from Table 1 above that there are significant differences in terms of income and life opportunities between the eight regions of Thailand. Many of these are of historical duration and linked to

the factors mentioned above; others are of more recent construction and relate to the nature of capitalist development in Thailand over the past fifty years.

It is also clear that the distribution of MPEs across the country by party membership is also uneven, with some parties confined more or less to a single region and others to certain parts of the Kingdom. This may be seen in Table 2 below.

Every one of the parties indicates some degree of regionalism in terms of votes cast and seats won. Even PPP, which is the major party aimed at obtaining mass support across the country, received considerably less support in regions 5-8 than it did in 1-4. The opposite situation is evident for the DEM party. The question arises, therefore, as to whether this is caused by demographic details or regionalism loyalties. This may be evaluated, initially, through cross-tabulating

It is clear that the figures for MPEs and MPPs are reasonably well correlated with each other. This is not surprising since, if the basic premise that people tend to vote according to ideological reasons in line with demographic variables which vary predictably according to region, then reasons for voting will remain the same. Some of the smaller parties do seem

Table 2 Number of MPEs per Region

Region (Total MPE)	DEM	PPP	RJT	PPD	CT	MAT	PR
1 (50)	9	37	1	1	1	1	0
2 (50)	7	31	1	0	9	1	1
3 (50)	1	45	1	3	0	0	0
4 (51)	4	32	0	4	5	6	0
5 (50)	17	16	5	6	2	1	3
6 (49)	29	20	0	0	0	0	0
7 (48)	19	16	0	0	11	2	0
8 (52)	45	2	0	3	2	0	0
Total (400)	**131**	**199**	**8**	**17**	**30**	**11**	**4**

source: author's calculations.

The total number of MPPs as a result of the election is included in the table 3.

Table 3 Number of MPPs per Region

Region (Total MPP)	DEM	PPP	RJT	PPD	CT	MAT	PR
1 (10)	4	5	0	1	0	0	0
2 (10)	3	5	0	1	1	0	0
3 (10)	2	7	0	1	0	0	0
4 (10)	2	6	0	1	1	0	0
5 (10)	4	3	1	1	0	0	1
6 (10)	5	4	0	1	0	0	0
7 (10)	5	3	0	0	2	0	0
8 (10)	8	1	0	1	0	0	0
Total (80)	**33**	**34**	**1**	**7**	**4**	**0**	**1**

source: author's calculations.

Table 4 Bivariate Correlations of Economic Variables and Number of MPEs

MPE/MPP	DEM	PPP	RJT	PPD	CT	MAT	PR
Minimum Wages	0.311**	0.0116	0.048	0.021	-0.066	-.0.178	-0.020
GPP per capita	0.257**	-0.076	-0.072	-0.072	-0.069	-0.136	-0.057
Patient beds	0.831**	0.371**	0.080	0.047	-0.043	-0.023	-0.034
Classrooms	0.312**	0.613**	0.394**	0.314**	0.040	0.205	-0.014

source: author's calculations.

Table 5 Bivariate Correlations of Economic Variables and Total Number of Votes for MPEs and MPPs

MPE/MPP	DEM	PPP	RJT	PPD	CT	MAT	PR
Minimum Wages	0.313*/	0.028/	0.693/	0.572/	-0.071/	-0.294/	1.000**/
	0.376**	0.187	0.036	-0.087	0.040	0.102	-0.018
GPP per capita	0.168/	-0.120/	0.031/	-0.113/	-0.121/	-0.205/	-1.000**/
	0.226*	-0.017	-0.084	-0.136	-0.005	0.031	-0.101
Patient beds	0.832**/	0.390**/	0.287/	0.343/	0.183/	-0.273/	-1.000**/
	0.870**	0.722**	0.125	0.203	0.122	0.529**	0.001
Classrooms	0.704**/	0.651**/	0.867/	0.856*/	-0.012/	0.034/	-1.000**/
	0.501**	0.700**	0.503**	0.707**	0.079	0.449**	0.065
N	**40/76[5]**	**47/76**	**4/76**	**7/76**	**19/76**	**9/76**	**2/50**

source: author's calculations.

to have been squeezed out of the MPP section, which is what would have been expected according to the principle that multi-member constituencies tend to favour the larger parties with more resources.

The total number of votes cast correlated by the demographic details yields the following results.[6] (Table 4)

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[5] Figures for votes for MPEs are not available in the case where no member of that party was elected. The problems of low sample sizes emerge, therefore, in parts of this analysis.

[6] The sample size (n) is 76, representing all provinces, unless otherwise noted.

There are highly significant positive correlations associating the number of Democrat MPEs with all the economic variables, indicating that higher levels of wealth mean more votes for the party. The PPP party has significant positive results for number of patient beds and number of classrooms. Indeed, the number of classrooms is also highly significantly correlated with the RJT and PPD parties.

By taking the number of votes for both MPEs and MPPs rather than the number of MPEs in this analysis, the following results are obtained. (Table 5)

A similar pattern of results obtains here. It is clear that voters are more likely to choose the Democrat party as income and life opportunities increase. However, although income increases do not explain the number of votes for the PPP party, the number of patient beds and classrooms does. It is possible that, in this case, voters are more likely to vote for PPP when they can see the concrete results of enacted policies (i.e. health and education in the public sector). Figures for further analysis of this issue are not currently available. Nevertheless,

Table 6 Correlation Analysis of Land Use and Voting Pattern

Voting Patterns	Forest land	Farm land	Unclassified
No of MPPs	-0.226*	-0.030	0.421**
DEM No MPEs	-0.132	-0.210	0.523**
DEM MPE Votes	-0.218	-0.233	0.562**
DEM MPP Votes	-0.138	-0.206	0.527**
PPP No MPEs	-0.093	0.023	0.123
PPP MPE Votes	-0.075	0.024	0.087
PPP MPP Votes	-0.178	0.012	0.279*
RJT No MPEs	-0.004	0.077	-0.104
RJT MPE Votes	-0.343	0.421	0.012
RJT MPP Votes	-0.079	0.138	-0.066
PPD No MPEs	-0.036	0.091	-0.071
PPD MPE Votes	-0.270	0.466	-0.170
PPD MPP Votes	-0.216	0.232*	0.028
CT No MPEs	-0.236*	0.346**	-0.104
CT MPE Votes	-0.028	0.014	0.025
CT MPP Votes	-0.179	0.204	0.006
MAT No MPEs	-0.135	0.230*	-0.104
MAT MPE Votes	-0.275	0.377	-0.265
MAT MPP Votes	-0.127	0.034	0.163
PR No MPEs	-0.050	0.065	-0.011
PR MPE Votes	1.000**	-1.000**	1.000**
PR MPP Votes	0.000	0.028	-0.030

source: author's calculations.[7]

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[7]Figures for N are the same as for Table 4 above.

it would add some confirmation to the observation made elsewhere that, for example, the 30 baht health care has provided definite although limited benefits for the poor of Thailand (e.g. Towse, Mills and Tangcharoensathien, 2004).

Additional variables were introduced to investigate the impact of industrial development at the provincial level. This was proxied by adding two variables for the most recently available figures (2006) concerning percentage of land designated as forest and percentage of land designated as farmland. Generally, it is anticipated that lower percentages of farm land will indicate higher levels of urbanisation and industrialisation.[8] A third variable was also included, which represented the unclassified land which may have been put to residential and commercial uses (and other purposes). That there are some connections between land use and income is indicated by a bivariate correlation analysis between these three new variables and GPP per capita. Although there is no significant correlation with the proportion of farmland, there is with forest (-0.253*) and unclassified land (0.472**). In other words, GPP

declines along with the increased proportion of forestland and increases along with the increase of unclassified land. Analysis by correlation of the number of MPEs and the total number of votes for MPEs and MPPs by the land use variables reveals the following: (Table 6)

It is notable that, once again, these results help to explain the nature of votes for the Democrat Party but not for the PPP party. Chart Thai's voting patterns might also be explained insofar as a strongly significant result positively links number of votes with the proportion of farm land. It may be the case that other parties endeavour to attract voters from a wider range of different circumstances than these two parties do. However, Chart Thai has established a reputation for being a strongly local party and it may just be that the area in which loyalty to the party and its leadership exists most strongly is an area in which farming is an important activity.

This initial analysis has suggested that while there is some scope to believe that explanatory variables indicate reasons for voting patterns, it is

Table 7 Regional Population and Modern Media Usage

Region	Population (6+)	Computer user	Internet user	Mobile phone user
1	7,035,604	1,871,265	1,162,913	3,024,730
2	6,959,701	1,698,903	931,959	3,001,733
3	7,560,107	1,662,747	905,835	2,827,971
4	7,436,063	1,710,360	956,794	2,680,998
5	7,299,997	1,957,925	912,673	3,747,979
6	8,784,944	3,449,346	2,505,112	5,676,775
7	7,480,079	1,827,301	993,507	3,706,699
8	7,417,214	1,895,449	951,337	3,266,500
Total	**59,973,709**	**16,073,296**	**9,320,130**	**27,933,385**

source: Census Figures, 2007.

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[8] It is not possible to separate the relative importance of these two factors with the currently available data.

Table 8 Correlations of Voting Patterns and Use of Modern Media

Voting Pattern	Computer use	Internet use	Mobile phone use
No of MPPs	0.938**	0.839**	0.938**
DEM No MPEs	0.791**	0.797**	0.800**
DEM MPE Votes	0.842**	0.819**	0.852**
DEM MPP Votes	0.859**	0.843**	0.866**
PPP No MPEs	0.461**	0.431**	0.446**
PPP MPE Votes	0.450**	0.429**	0.429**
PPP MPP Votes	0.787**	0.758**	0.776**
RJT No MPEs	0.153	0.055	0.148
RJT MPE Votes	0.774	0.694	0.201
RJT MPP Votes	0.218	0.110	0.218
PPD No MPEs	0.098	0.019	0.096
PPD MPE Votes	0.756*	0.368	0.781*
PPD MPP Votes	0.284*	0.207	0.282*
CT No MPEs	-0.063	-0.074	-0.037
CT MPE Votes	-0.040	-0.108	0.091
CT MPP Votes	0.100	0.091	0.128
MAT No MPEs	0.016	0.011	0.001
MAT MPE Votes	0.311	0.406	-0.013
MAT MPP Votes	0.550**	0.533**	0.542**
PR No MPEs	-0.014	-0.023	-0.009
PR MPE Votes	-1.000**	-1.000**	-1.000**
PR MPP Votes	0.818	0.915	0.813

*N = 76

source: author's calculations.

also true that there is no clear or obvious connection in this case. One final area of investigation more specifically related to political communications and modern media concerns the presence of personal computers and internet and mobile phone usage. The basic statistics are provided in Table 7.

Bivariate correlation analysis (as reported previously in Table 6) was also used to try to identify patterns of significance linking number of votes with the prevalence of use of modern media (Table 8). As can be seen, there are strong positive correlations between the prevalence of use of modern media and the number of MPS for both the Democrat and PPP parties. The correlations are quite strong for some other parties but, presumably because of the low numbers of MPs involved in these cases, the results do not indicate statistically significant results. It is apparent, therefore, that as might be expected people do seem to use these media as one of their information sources when thinking about voting and elections. If these variables represent income and opportunity only, then this would explain the Democrat party results. If more of the information searching and acquisition value is important, then this might perhaps better explain the results obtained for PPP.

Although the numbers of MPs involved are low, it is noticeable that some parties (especially CT and PR) have negative correlations, indicating that they receive more votes when use of modern media is lower. This perhaps suggests that their votes are drawn from a section of voters which is not interested in obtaining information about policies and politics.

Conclusion

There is considerable scope for improving the breadth and depth of the analysis reported on in this paper. Psephological analysis is effectively in its infancy in Thailand and the technical capacity for collecting statistics reliably is also limited. These limitations are compounded by the short lives of many political parties and, hence, the difficulties inherent in trying to determine consistent voting patterns along based on ideological grounds. The principal lines of division in the government formed after the 2007 election tended to be in connection with purely partisan rather than ideological lines. One of the central acts of the most recent junta was the realignment of various judges and legal systems and, subsequently, the PPP government was mired in a series of court cases alleging 'policy corruption' and the business of government was further hindered by the obstructive nature of the opposition. Indeed, this has continued to the Abhisit regime currently in place.

In terms of political communications, there is some suggestion that advertising the presence of the results of policies might be successful in some cases. This does not yet appear to have been taken on board by political parties since, in elections expected for 2010 or 2011, communications have been dominated by increasing numbers of posters,

mostly posted roadside, showing the faces (often suitably air-brushed) of candidates dressed in appropriate uniform and with, at best, a short slogan representing ideology.

There seems to be no breakthrough in political communications so far. As ever, more research is necessary to examine these issues and the current program of research hopes to be able to add some necessary demographic variables to those which have been discussed above. The degree to which a proxy for ideological beliefs may be added is as yet unclear but an attempt will be made to identify a series of existing policies which may be classified according to known frameworks of ideology: i.e. pro- or anti-openness; pro- or anti-workers' rights; pro- or anti-free trade and so forth.

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