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FACTIONS, PARTIES AND THE DURABILITY OF PARLIAMENTS, COALITIONS AND CABINETS

The Case of Thailand (1979–2001)

Paul Chambers

ABSTRACT

Did Thailand's multiple parties and factions influence cabinet and coalition durability in the period 1979 to 2001? If so, which one – parties or factions – was the more significant? Taking a Transaction Costs Analysis approach, this article addresses these questions and argues that intra-party factions, as the building blocks of Thai parliamentary politics, have been more important than parties, such that each additional faction in a cabinet triggers a reduction in the longevity of prime ministerial terms and cabinets while affecting the durability of coalitions. Furthermore, while factions tend to shorten parliamentary and cabinet terms, they have the opposite effect on coalition terms. The study suggests that where parties are less cohesive, informal institutions within parties are of considerable importance.

KEY WORDS ▪ cabinets ▪ coalitions ▪ factions ▪ parties ▪ Thailand

Introduction

Have parties or factions been the more significant unit of analysis in Thai parliamentary politics? Under what conditions might parties or factions play a role in cabinet or coalition durability? This study, through Transaction Costs Analysis, addresses these questions by examining the impact of multiple parties and factions on parliamentary, coalitional and cabinet durability in Thailand from 1979 to 2001.[1] It disaggregates the influences of intra-party factions and political parties to gauge their relative importance in influencing parliamentary, coalitional or cabinet longevity. Data[2] gathered from field research make it possible to assess these relative effects empirically.

The study's findings suggest that factions have a greater effect on parliaments, coalitions and cabinets than do parties in Thailand. While factions tend to shorten parliamentary and cabinet terms, they counter-intuitively have the opposite effect on coalition terms.

Though the political party has long been considered the essential unit of analysis in literature on coalitions and cabinet durability, very little has been written about the impact of factions on government duration. No study has specifically compared the influence of factions versus parties on government duration – the principal objective of this study. Factions do matter. Factions can make and break governments. Factions are often the building blocks of parliamentary stability. Sometimes, in some countries, factions are more important parliamentary actors than the parties that host them. That is what this study seeks to show in the case of a developing country and an emerging democracy – Thailand.

The analysis focuses on three types of durability (measured in number of days): the durability of parliamentary terms, the durability of ruling coalitions and the durability of cabinets. The parliamentary term begins after an election and ends with dissolution. Those prime ministers whose term did not end through dissolution (e.g. Kriangsak) are viewed as sharing term space with their successors until the next election. The coalition is defined as alliances of factions around groupings of parties which fill the cabinet and tend to dominate parliament for a period of time. Coalitions change when a party enters or leaves the dominant alliance. The cabinet refers to the Council of Ministers and changes when at least one minister enters or leaves the Council of Ministers.

Since data on Thai factions have by and large been thought to be unreliable, no one has yet tried to operationalize Thai factions or measure how they affect cabinet or coalition longevity or portfolio changes across a parliamentary term. That is exactly what this study seeks to do. It first posits a method for operationalizing factions. It then offers hypotheses concerning the impact of factions and parties on cabinet and coalition durability. Finally, it presents measurements, analyses and conclusions.

Parties, Factions and Cabinet Durability

There have been multiple explanations for cabinet (non-)durability (institutions, rational choice, ideology, policy distance, outside events). In an attempt to draw out the institutional importance of levels of parliamentary actors, this study examines only how parties or factions influence cabinet durability (see p. 302–3 as well as endnote 14). The connection between number of parliamentary actors and lack of cabinet durability is well worn and intuitive, dating as far back as Lowell (1896) and Lord Bryce (1921). The former argued that in parliamentary democracies, 'the combination of parties is unstable. . . . Since there must be parties, the fewer and stronger they are,

the better' (Lowell, 1896: 121–2). Laski (1938: 56–7) agrees: 'The multiparty system . . . either makes for coalition government, with its inherent erosion of principle; or for minority government which is always likely to be weak.' Duverger (1954: 400–8) described 'a "parliamentary game"' in which 'a coalition of associated parties . . . is always uneasy', while 'cabinet collapses . . . become normal and frequent'.

More recent institutionalist accounts of cabinet duration include Rae (1967), Groennings (1970) and Dodd (1976). Rae formulated a mathematical index of 'fractionalization' showing the degree to which one or a few parties dominate a party system. From his analyses, Rae (1967) concluded that a high level of fractionalization correlates negatively with cabinet durability. Meanwhile, Groennings (1970: 457) holds that:

> [T]he greater the number of participants in the process [parties in the coalition], the slower will be the process of coalition formation. Presumably, the greater the number of coalition partners, the more complicated will be the strategies.

Dodd (1976) agrees, contending that, with an increase in the number of political parties in a system, party strength will vary more across elections, and cleavage conflicts within a cabinet will be more pronounced and that this will affect coalition size which in turn will influence cabinet durability.

Laakso and Taagepera (1979: 3–27) arrive at a mathematical index of fractionalization that they call 'the effective number of parties' (based on numbers of vote-shares among parties). Using this index, Taagepera and Lijphart (1988) formulate an inverse law of coalition durability in which durability is correlated with the effective number of parties in the assembly (cited in Taagepera and Shugart, 1989: 100).

Ultimately, there have been three main approaches to modelling cabinet duration. First, there have been institutionalist models (e.g. Dodd, 1976), where attention is focused on structural factors, such as characteristics of the cabinet or of the party system, that could be expected to lead to greater or lesser cabinet longevity. Then there is events analysis (see Browne et al. [1984] and Cioffi-Revilla [1984]) in which duration owes to the appearance of random events which cause governmental collapse. Meanwhile, King et al. (1990) combine structural factors with 'events' factors in a stochastic 'hazard model' approach. This would have no bearing on discovering the relations between the aforementioned independent and dependent variables. Other approaches focus on ideological distance (see Axelrod, 1970). In all of these approaches, the objective is to discover which variables most significantly trigger cabinet duration.

The aforementioned literature has generally assumed that, regarding cabinet durability, parties are unitary actors. First, parties are the legal groupings of MPs allowed to participate in coalitions. Second, as a result of their explicit character, parties are easier to measure. As such, the assumption that parties are unitary actors has long been fundamental to coalition research.

Yet, as Laver and Shepsle (1996: 247) point out, 'to treat parties as unitary actors . . . is clearly an oversimplification'. Still, few scholars have explored a link between intra-party factionalism and cabinet durability.

Literature pertaining to the intra-party impact on inter-party politics, hence cabinet durability, is fairly recent. Groennings (1970) was the first to do so:

> The a priori hypothesis that a party weakened by factional dispute will find it difficult to formulate a coalition policy leads quickly to the hypothesis that the greater the organized dissensus in the party, the lesser is the tendency to coalesce.

Groennings' argument is that decentralized parties make poor coalition partners (1970: 445–65).

Meanwhile, Luebbert (1986: 170) proposes a theory of coalition behaviour that derives fundamentally from assumptions of intra-party politics. He argues that protracted government formation negotiations are invariably the result of disputes between rival factions, not merely party versus party.

Maor (1998) contends that intra-party conflicts tend to weaken 'the power of a party to bind itself'. A party unable to bind itself affects coalition formation and maintenance. Centralized parties drive factions to defect, while decentralized parties allow factions to voice dissent without leaving the party, leading to factional endurance.

Druckman (1996: 400) disagrees with Maor about the impact of party factionalism on cabinet duration. Using a principal–agent approach, he contends that 'factionalized parties should participate in less durable cabinets'. Laver and Shepsle (1996: 250) also examine how intra-party players might influence cabinet formation and duration. In their model of intra-party politics, they assume policy positions among senior politicians. Yet, this assumption is difficult to apply to Thailand, given the country's non-ideological, non-policy-oriented form of politics (King, 1996: 218).

There have been few studies of Thai cabinets or coalitions. Pongphaew (1998) analyses Thai coalitions using the cases of the Chatchai government (1988–91) and the Chuan1 government (1992–95). He finds that Thai coalitions have generally been oversized and that their durability derives from various factors, including pressure from opposition parties, party discipline and portfolio allocation (Pongphaew, 1998). Though there have been analyses of factionalism in Thailand, they have been sparse and the studies that do exist have almost all been descriptive.[3] Analyses of Thai parties have emphasized their regionalized, factious nature while assuming that weak parties with strong factions have created political instability.[4] No study has empirically investigated the influence of intra-party factions *per se* (or even political parties) on Thai government longevity.[5]

The existing work on coalitions in general and Thai politics in particular points to a need to open the box of parties and analyse the effect of factions on government duration. This analysis thus seeks to build on these earlier

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works by not just investigating factions *per se*, but attempting to demonstrate scientifically whether parties or intra-party groupings have a more significant effect on parliamentary, coalitional and cabinet durability. This it does by using field research in a new, developing democracy. Moreover, this study, in applying the aforementioned Taagepera/Laakso (T/L) index through regression analysis, focuses solely on a comparison between the effective number of parties and the effective number of factions in terms of longevity (number of days). As such, the above duration models were intentionally not utilized nor were controls applied on other variables (such as ideology), as that was not the purpose of this study.[6] Indeed, I am not simply trying to understand what exactly affects the duration of Thai governments (e.g. economic factors, ideology, parliamentary rules, bargaining, etc.). A study of the influence of such variables might be the subject of a future study. Instead, I am trying to better understand the relationship between parties/factions and the duration of parliaments, coalitions, cabinets.

Parties, Factions and Cabinets

How does one explain the behaviour of parties and factions in Thai governments and parliaments – the principal units of analysis in this article? Ideological and policy-oriented divisions hardly exist in Thai politics (King, 1996: 218). What has been more important is the quest for financial returns and position by Thai politicians. Given this reality, venal political interest has been an essential ingredient in Thai parliaments. Interest-driven parties and factions have been the dominant forces in Thailand's evolving democracy (McCargo, 1997: 6). As such, rational interest plus institutions have been most important in influencing the stability of Thai governments and parliaments. For this reason, this study has chosen to apply Transaction Costs Analysis (TCA) as a theoretical guide to inform understanding of Thai parliamentary behaviour.

TCA is a variant of rational choice 'New Institutionalism'. It postulates that in the marketplace transactions by multiple actors regularly and rapidly occur. Transactions are costly, information is incomplete and the market environment is uncertain (North, 1990). Two behavioural assumptions undergird TCA. First, players act in terms of *bounded rationality* (Simon, 1961). Decisions are made on the basis of partial information and preference-satisficing rather than preference-maximizing. Bargains – easily collapsible – are the result. A second assumption is that players are *opportunistic*, a behaviour defined as 'self-interest seeking with guile' (Williamson, 1985: 45–9).

In a world where multiple political parties and multiple factions exist together, political chaos is an accustomed event. To overcome transaction problems, actors often agree to establish institutions that impose costs on opportunistic behaviour, disciplining dishonest agents and improving the flow of information. Still, in many parts of the developing world, emerging

democracies have continued to experience institutional disarray and have consequently reformed their constitutions. Thailand is such a country. From 1979 to 2001, its constitutions allowed numerous decentralized parties and numerous powerful factions to exist side by side.

In Thailand's multiparty parliamentary system, coalitions make it possible for a limited number of parliamentary players to benefit in the coalition. This is because the forming and maintaining of coalitions is initially a positive-sum game, since all involved have the potential to receive rewards in the cabinet (e.g. portfolios, etc.) as long as they remain in the cabinet. Squabbles among coalition players (parties or factions) have inevitably pertained to which group should get what posting or whether some party or faction deserves a greater number of cabinet slots than another. In the end, both inter-party and intra-party bickering, especially where there are multiple players (parties or factions), can regularly lead to a coalition's fall or produce cabinet reshuffles.

The stability of Thai political parties has, to a large extent, been a function of the cohesiveness and durability of factions, since factions are the essential building blocks of Thai political parties (Ockey, 1994, 2003). Indeed, since Thai politicians' prospects for re-election have often been more directly dependent on factional support than on the decisions of party leaders, individual politicians have tended to be more responsive to factions than to over-arching party structures (Ockey, 1994: 255–6). The more factionalized the political party, the less the degree of party leadership flexibility in decision-making. The less the degree of party leadership flexibility in decision-making, the greater the constraints[7] on a party's participating within a coalition. The greater the constraints on a party's participation within a coalition, the less the degree of cabinet durability (Chambers, 2003: ch. 3). The rationale for the above is as follows: (1) factionalism constrains party leadership because factions essentially act as veto players within the party. The greater the number of veto players, the harder it is for party leaders to change the status quo, *ceteris paribus*. (2) The less flexibility available to party leaders due to factions, the greater the constraints to the parties participating in the coalition. Indeed, parties with a plethora of factions make less appealing coalition partners owing to the difficulty in keeping all factions satisfied. (3) The more constraints on a party's participation in a coalition, the less the degree of cabinet durability.

Most parties in the world have wings or tendencies. But not all parties are as factionalized as those in Thailand. Prior to 2001, intra-party factions were generally more important than parties in influencing both cabinet and coalition durability (Ockey, 1994: 251–74). Where there were not enough cabinet portfolios to appease self-interested factions in the cabinet, these factions could compel the rapid turnover of portfolios by faction, thus reducing the temporal length of between-reshuffle periods. Factions could likewise pressure their party leadership to remain in or bow out of ruling coalitions, sometimes precipitating dissolutions. This power of factions (rather than party

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leaderships) to determine whether Thai political parties remained in a coalition reflected the decentralized nature of Thai political parties.[8]

Other than hastening parliamentary, coalitional and cabinet changes, factions have interfered in inter-party politics in several ways. First, factions have influenced the choosing of coalition partners; second, factions have affected the level of a party's commitment to a ruling coalition; third, factions have influenced the hammering out of coalition (and quota share) agreements; fourth, factions have affected the timing of coalition formation; and, fifth, factions have influenced whether a party will follow the coalition consensus (Maor, 1998: 1; Ockey, 1994).

The significance of a system with both multiple factions and low coalition durability is that it can increase the number of coalition players and complicate cabinet maintenance. This might have held in the case of Thailand prior to the 1997 constitution (first applied to parliament in 2001) because Thai political parties were decentralized, factions were numerous and more influential than today, and both coalitions and cabinets were relatively short-lived.[9] Ultimately, applying TCA to Thailand facilitates understanding of the seemingly chaotic behaviour of Thailand's non-ideological, venal political actors who are able to influence the longevity of Thai parliaments, coalitions and cabinets.

Operationalizing Factions in Thailand

A great deal of fieldwork in Thailand went into this research (see below). As Mershon has pointed out, when studying factions, area studies become an important research tool (2001: 555). This study aims to emphasize the importance of area fieldwork when exploring factions.

Factions can be defined as the often-temporary grouping together of politicians and their support groups within and apart from an overarching party structure. Thai factions have distributions at various levels and in different forums: within the Lower House of parliament, the ruling coalition, the dominant ruling party and the cabinet.

In this analysis, 'faction' is operationalized in terms of the faction leader's identity, charisma and finance, as well as the number of faction leaders in a party, and the *approximate* number of faction MPs (1979 to 2001). Attention is directed at instances where factional numbers rise or fall over a parliamentary lifespan.[10]

Operationalizing intra-party factions presents quite a challenge given the temporary character of many factions. Some factions are more cohesive than Thai parties, most of which are temporary formations. Still, exact calculations of many factions have proved difficult (e.g. MPs may affiliate with two factions [though, according to interviews, few MPs do]; factions are informally grouped; factions change size across elections; accounting for sub-factions; factions can be secretive).

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To conduct research, I spent one year in Thailand from 2001 to 2002 collecting information on factions, parties, cabinets and coalitions. During that time, I interviewed 100 subjects. These were divided into three sub-groups.[11] The first comprised 50 Thai members of parliament (including party leaders, party sub-leaders and faction members). The second comprised 25 Thai political scientists. The third comprised 25 Thai journalists writing on Thai elections/party politics.

I also gleaned information on Thai factionalism from written sources, including books, Thai government documents, newspaper articles and dissertations.[12] To strengthen the validity of the data, these sources (both written and two-thirds of interviews) were utilized only where they agreed regarding numbers of factions, numbers of faction members, identity of faction leaders and, where possible, identity of faction members.[13]

Hypotheses

The aforementioned debates in the literature and the TCA theory of parliamentary behaviour lead to one principal question: which produces a more significant effect on the durability of parliaments, coalitions and cabinets: parties or factions? This study answers this question using the 1979 Taagepera/Laakso effective number of parties index (see below, pp. 3–27) as well as the Taagepera/Lijphart 1988 inverse formula of coalition durability (where coalition durability correlates with the effective number of parties in the assembly) though I examine factions as well as parties and durability of parliaments, coalitions and cabinets.[14] The study derives the following five hypotheses (followed by indicators):

A. *Where Multiple Factions Possess Ministerial Positions, Disagreements Likely to Destabilize Governments are More Liable to Occur.*

Given the squabble among factions in the cabinet for the most lucrative portfolios, it is hard to keep factions satisfied. It is thus difficult to maintain a lasting cabinet, coalition or government. Factions can pressure their parties to remain in or bow out of coalitions, precipitating parliamentary dissolutions.

Independent Variable: effective number of factions (no. 1, pp. 15–16).
Dependent Variable: number of days Lower House lasts (no. 2, p. 16).

I test this hypothesis at the level of parliamentary term durability, coalition durability and cabinet durability.

B. *The Greater the Effective Number of Parties in the Ruling Coalition, the Less Durable the Ruling Coalition.*

This hypothesis is based on the notion that a plethora of parties in a coalition, each squabbling for partisan gain, will make it difficult for that coalition to last for long.

Independent Variable: effective number of coalition parties (see MMT no. 1 below, pp. 15–16).

Dependent Variable: number of days coalition lasts (see MMT no. 3 below, p. 16).

C. *The Greater the Effective Number of Factions in a Ruling Coalition, the More Durable the Coalition.*

This hypothesis is based on the counterintuitive notion that, since not all factions in a ruling coalition initially receive portfolios in a cabinet, this tends to extend the coalition's lifespan as it causes these frustrated factions to stay in the coalition until they are finally allocated portfolios.[15]

Independent Variable: effective number of coalition factions (no. 1, pp. 15–16).

Dependent Variable: number of days coalition lasts (no. 3, p. 16).

D. *The Greater the Effective Number of Factions in a Cabinet, the Less Durable a Coalition.*

This hypothesis derives from the notion that, with many factions in a cabinet, it is difficult to please all of them with portfolios. Factions' dissatisfaction with their posts gives way to increasing cabinet disagreements. To try to please all factions (or other members of a faction initially excluded from portfolios), frequent reshuffles become necessary.

Independent Variable: effective number of cabinet factions (see MMT no. 1 below, pp. 15–16).

Dependent Variable: number of days coalition lasts (see MMT no. 3 below, p. 16).

E. *The Greater the Effective Number of Factions in a Cabinet, the Less Durable the Cabinet.*

This hypothesis is based on the notion that where there are many factions simultaneously in a cabinet jousting for portfolio positions (or more lucrative posts), cabinet dissensus and reshuffles will more likely occur.

Independent Variable: effective number of cabinet factions (see MMT no. 1 below, pp. 15–16).

Dependent Variable: number of days cabinet lasts (see MMT no. 4 below, p. 16).

For a visualization of these hypotheses, see Figure 1.

My raw data about Thai parties and factions were gathered into a workable format for measuring numbers of parties/factions in the Lower House, ruling coalitions, the dominant ruling party and cabinets across eight parliamentary terms, 25 ruling coalition governments and 43 reshuffles. The device used for this purpose was Laakso and Taagepera's effective number of parties index (1979). This measure counts parties, putting greater weight on those with more seats (and vice versa). The institutional character of this index corresponds with Transaction Costs Analysis (TCA). Figures 2 to 4 show

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Figure 1. Visualization of hypotheses

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┌─────────────────────────┐                    ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Effective number of     │                    │ Durability          │
│                         │ ─────────────────▶ │ of                  │
│ factions in cabinet     │                    │ parliamentary       │
│                         │                    │ term                │
└─────────────────────────┘                    └─────────────────────┘
```
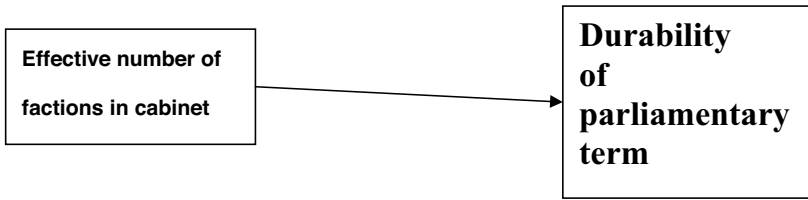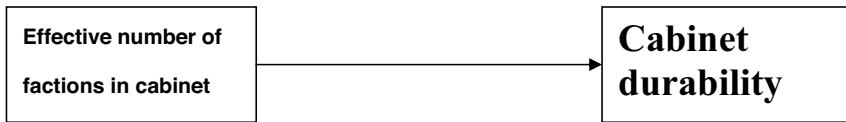
Level 1: Durability of prime ministerial terms (number of days between election and dissolution)

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Effective number of     │
│                         │ ──────┐
│ parties in coalition    │       │
└─────────────────────────┘       │
                                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Effective number of     │    │ Coalition           │
│                         │ ──▶│ durability          │
│ factions in coalition   │    │                     │
└─────────────────────────┘    └─────────────────────┘
                                  ▲
┌─────────────────────────┐       │
│ Effective number of     │ ──────┘
│                         │
│ factions in cabinet     │
└─────────────────────────┘
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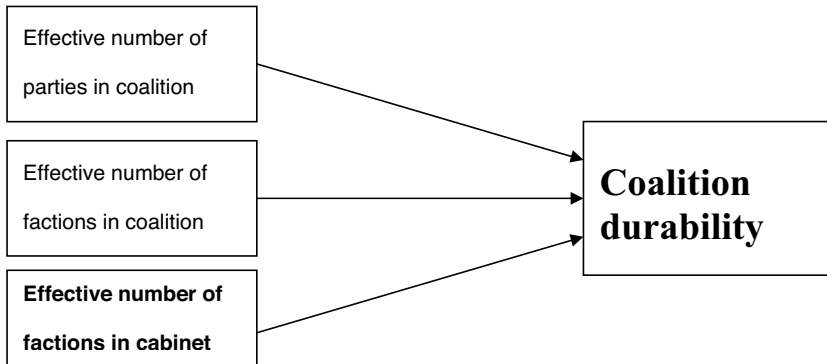
Level 2: Durability of ruling coalitions (number of days in which a particular set of parties controls a government. Changes occur when parties enter or leave the government)

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┌─────────────────────────┐                    ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Effective number of     │                    │ Cabinet             │
│                         │ ─────────────────▶ │ durability          │
│ factions in cabinet     │                    │                     │
└─────────────────────────┘                    └─────────────────────┘
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Level 3: Durability of between-reshuffle periods (number of days in which a particular set of ministers controls cabinet portfolios. Changes occur when minister[s] enter or leave the cabinet)

Thailand's effective number of parties and factions across prime ministerial terms, coalitions and cabinets (see also the appendices on pages 316–19).

These measurements, and the three forms of durability used in this study, are as follows:

(1) The effective number of parties or factions by seat share.

This measure is useful when we want to count the number of parties/factions and they are not of equal size. The number of seat shares that each party or faction has is squared and then all are added together. This results in the Hirschman–Herfindahl (HH) concentration index. The HH provides an index from 0.0 to 1.0 (see above)[16] that can show different concentrations

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Figure 2. Visualization of the effective number of parties and factions across parliamentary terms, 1979–2001
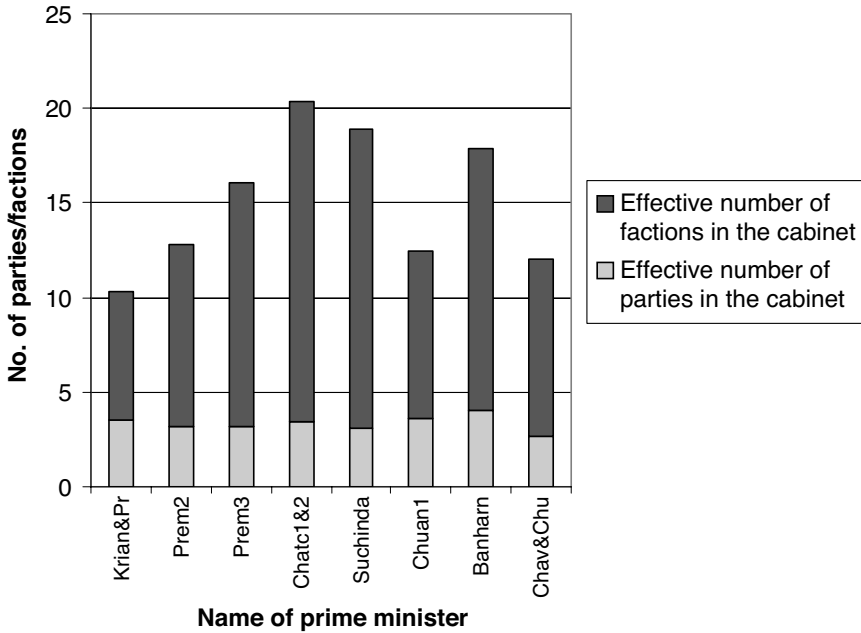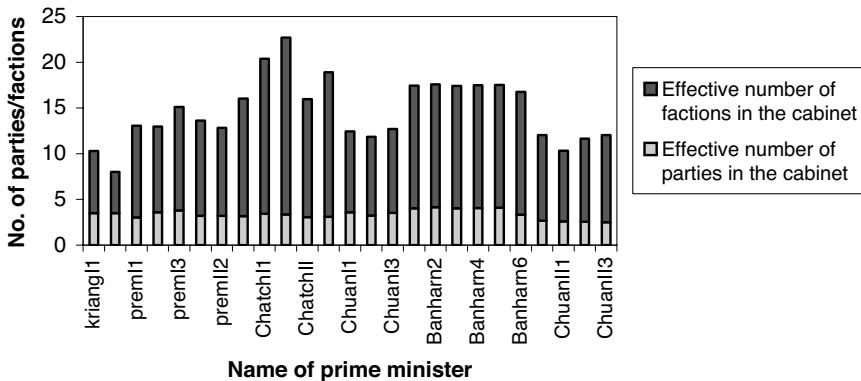

Figure 3. Visualization of the effective number of parties and factions across ruling coalitions, 1979–2001

across cabinets. The greater the concentration, the higher the number. The inverse of the HH concentration index is the effective number of parties or factions (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989: 77–81). This study uses the HH to measure the sizes and balances of power of Thai parliaments, coalitions and cabinets by party and faction from 1979 to 2001.

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Figure 4. Visualization of the effective number of parties and factions across cabinet reshuffles, 1979–2001
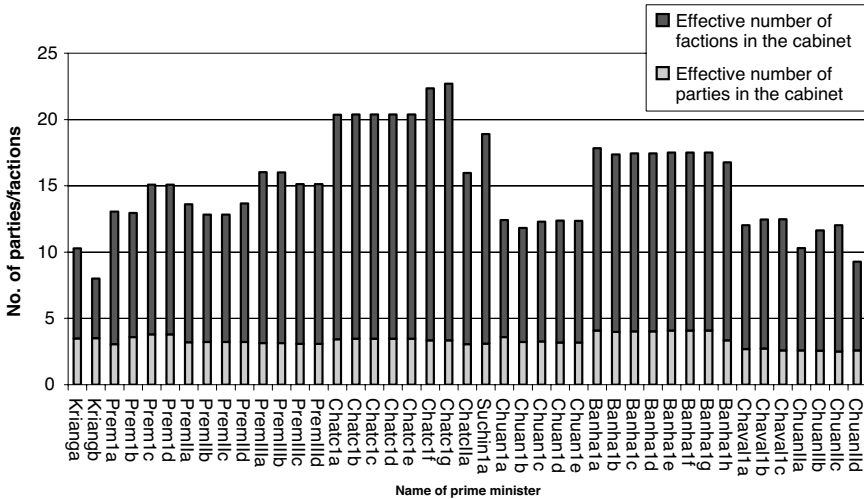
(2) *Parliamentary term durability*: measured in terms of the number of days from the beginning of a parliamentary Lower House term until that term's dissolution.

(3) *Coalition durability*: measured in terms of the number of days from the formation of a ruling coalition until a party drops out or another is added.

(4) *Cabinet durability between reshuffles:* measured in terms of number of days between one reshuffle and the next reshuffle. To arrive at the variables 'effective number of [parties, factions] in the cabinet', I constructed a weight scale to distinguish the relative power of each cabinet portfolio. These weights, converted into numerical assignments and based on the results of 100 interviews with Thai politicians, journalists and academics, are exhibited in Appendix B of this study. The prime minister was allocated a weight of 10 (this number rose after 2001). The least powerful portfolios garnered weights of 1.[17] To group together the weights in the cabinet, the sum of the weights held by the party or faction was added to the quantity of the cabinet seat shares of the party or faction holding those portfolios.

F. *Measurements*

Let us now turn to the evidence. How did inter-party and intra-party competition affect cabinet durability in Thailand, 1979–2001? Using the Taagepera/Laakso index, along with bivariate and multivariate regression, I tested the extent to which alternate distributions of parties or factions affected the durability of eight parliamentary terms, 25 ruling coalitions and 43 cabinets. None of the statistical relationships exhibited multicollinearity or heteroskedasticity.

Eight models (bivariates/multivariates) contained significant relationships.

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Six of these dealt with factions while only two dealt with parties. The significant bivariate relationships are synopsized in Table 1. Table 2 gives the significant multivariate relationships.

Table 1. Summarized quantitative findings (bivariates)

Number of cases	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Adjusted R^2 (significance)
8 parliamentary terms (1979–2001)	Effective number of factions in parliament	Number of days parliament lasts prior to a dissolution	0.510 (0.028)*
25 ruling coalitions (1979–2001)	Effective number of parties in ruling coalition	Number of days cabinet lasts prior to ruling coalition change	0.144 (0.035)*
43 between-reshuffle periods of cabinet (1979–2001)	Effective number of factions in cabinet	Number of days cabinet lasts prior to a reshuffle	0.117 (0.014)*

Table 2. Summarized quantitative findings (multivariates)

Number of cases	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Adjusted R^2 (significance)	Controlling for:
8 parliamentary terms (1979–2001) MODEL 1	Effective number of factions in cabinet	Number of days parliament lasts (8 premierships)	0.461 (0.045)*	Effective number of parties in parliamentary term
25 ruling coalitions (1979–2001) MODEL 2	Effective number of parties in coalition	Number of days ruling coalition lasts (25 coalitions)	0.141 (0.045)*	See note**
25 ruling coalitions (1979–2001) MODEL 3	Effective number of factions in coalition	Number of days ruling coalition lasts (25 ruling coalitions)	0.205 (0.036)*	See note†
25 ruling coalitions (1979–2001) MODEL 4	Effective number of factions in coalition; effective number of factions in cabinet	Number of days coalition lasts (25 coalitions)	0.170 (0.018)* (0.023)*	The two independent variables were regressed against the dependent variable.
43 between-reshuffle periods of cabinet (1979–2001) MODEL 5	Effective number of factions in cabinet	Number of days cabinet lasts prior to a cabinet reshuffle (43 periods)	0.146 (0.037)*	See note‡

* Significant at the level of 0.05 or less = fairly significant.
** This model controls for effective number of parties in Lower House, effective number of factions in Lower House, effective number of factions in ruling coalition.
† This model controls for effective number of parties in Lower House, effective number of factions in Lower House, effective number of parties in coalition, effective number of factions in dominant ruling coalition.
‡ This model controls for effective number of parties in cabinet, effective number of parties in coalition and effective number of factions in dominant ruling party. This was the only multivariate regression relationship that allowed for any type of significant relationship at the level of cabinet.

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Regarding multivariate regression models, I first examined the influence of cabinet parties and factions on the durability of parliamentary terms.

Model 1 (Hypothesis A)

The greater the effective number of factions in the cabinet (measurement no. 1), the less durable the parliamentary term (measurement no. 2). This equation demonstrates that each additional faction included in the cabinet diminishes parliamentary longevity by 99 days.[18] Model 1 regresses cabinet factions and cabinet parties together against the dependent variable 'number of days parliament lasts'. Multivariate regression for this model found an adjusted R^2 of 0.461 and a significance of 0.045. The findings show that cabinet factions are more significant than cabinet parties.

I next looked at how effective numbers of parties/factions affected Thailand's 25 ruling coalitions (1979–2001). Coalitions are assemblages of parties which, by virtue of their majority in the Lower House, are allowed to form a cabinet. Changes in coalition occur when a party enters or leaves it.

Model 2 (Hypothesis B)

For model 2, I argue that the greater the effective number of parties in the ruling coalition (measurement no. 1), the less durable the ruling coalition (measurement no. 3). For each additional party added to a coalition, coalitional longevity diminishes by 182.343 days. Multivariate regression for this model found an adjusted R^2 of 0.141 and a significance of 0.045. Moreover, when comparing coalitions through bivariate analysis, factions are less relevant than parties. But is this so surprising? Changes in coalitions are defined as when a *party* (*not faction*) enters or leaves a coalition. It must thus be expected that parties have a closer association with coalition durability.

Model 3 (Hypothesis C)

Model 3 finds that the greater the effective number of factions in the coalition (measurement no. 1), the more durable the coalition (measurement no. 3). Model 3 is significant since it is counter-intuitive. With many factions in a coalition, not all have the chance to receive a portfolio initially. These factions wait their turn for a portfolio and pressure their parties to remain in the coalition until the factions get a chance to obtain a posting. Thus, as the findings indicate, intra-party factions are significant for ruling coalitions. But the counter-intuitive twist is that in this case the more factions in a *coalition* the longer the coalition lifespan. For each additional faction in a coalition, cabinet longevity increases by 64 days. Multivariate regression found an adjusted R^2 of 0.205 and a significance of 0.036.

Model 4 (Hypothesis D)

In model 4, 'effective number of factions in coalition' and 'effective number of factions in the cabinet' show robustness. For this model, I hypothesize that the greater the effective number of factions in a coalition (measurement no. 1), the more durable the coalition (measurement no. 3); however, the greater the number of factions in the cabinet, the less durable the coalition. For every additional faction entering the coalition, the longevity of that coalition increases by 60.8 days. This is because the more factions in a coalition (*without necessarily being in the cabinet*), the longer parties remain in that coalition. After all, party leaders seek to appease factions, which are the foundation of Thai parties. Every faction awaits its chance to possess positions in the cabinet. The findings indicate that factions are significant to coalitions. The more factions in a *coalition*, the longer the coalition lifespan.

Model 4 also argues that for every additional faction entering the cabinet, the longevity of that coalition diminishes by 57.7 days. With an inflated number of factions in a cabinet, it is difficult to allocate portfolios such that all participating factions are satisfied. With numerous factions in a cabinet, it is hard to agree on policy. The result is diminished coalition longevity. Multivariate regression for this model found an adjusted R^2 of 0.170 and significances of 0.018 and 0.023. One could argue in this case that a coalition of a few larger parties, each with several factions (only some factions participate in the cabinet), is superior to a larger coalition of multiple smaller parties, each with fewer factions (many factions participate in the cabinet).

The next hypothesis is based on data at the cabinet level. There are 43 of these cases between 1979 and 2001. The independent variables are based on measures of both parties and factions. The dependent variable is 'number of days cabinet lasts prior to reshuffle'.

Model 5 (Hypothesis E)

'The greater the effective number of factions (measurement no. 1) in the cabinet, the less durable the cabinet (measurement no. 4)' proves to be the only significant relationship at the level of cabinet (Council of Ministers). The findings show that with every additional faction in the cabinet, cabinet durability diminishes by 14 days. Multivariate regression found an adjusted R^2 of 0.146 and significance of 0.037. From these data, one might surmise that with regard to cabinet durability, factions are more significant than parties.

Figure 1 provides a visual summary of the study's findings. It shows that at three levels – parliamentary terms, coalitions and the cabinet – intra-party factions are more significant than parties themselves. In two (out of eight cases), parties show significance. Yet, even then, factions have a higher significance.

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Discussion and Conclusion

These analyses and tests make for some interesting findings. Both parties and factions play a role in cabinet and coalition durability although factions tend to be more significant players than parties. The findings show that both intra-party and inter-party actors have a negative (sometimes positive) impact on cabinet and coalition durability in Thailand. What is interesting is that across Thailand's eight parliamentary terms (1979–2001), the greater number of factions rather than the greater number of parties diminished parliamentary term and coalition duration. Multiple parliamentary factions triggered a clear reduction in parliamentary term longevity. Furthermore, the bivariate and multivariate regression findings for these results are highly robust.

When examining Thailand's 25 ruling coalitions using multivariate regression, factions appeared to influence coalition durability more so than did parties. Indeed, coalition factions tended to extend the coalitions' lifespans. The demands of factions initially excluded from a cabinet line-up cause parties to stay in a coalition until those frustrated cliques are finally allocated portfolios. As opposed to coalition factions, cabinet factions tend to lessen coalition longevity, since it is difficult to please all participating factions with suitable portfolios.[19] Thus, cabinet changes tend to be initiated more by factions than by parties. When analysing Thailand's 43 cabinet reshuffles, we again see that it is factions, not parties, which affect the longevity of cabinets. Rapid factional reshuffles are necessary to make room for other coalition factions, which were initially excluded from the cabinet line-up.

All of these results indicate that the oft-cited factional tendencies within Thai politics can indeed be measured and do in fact have a statistically significant effect on cabinet durability. Indeed, across parliamentary terms, coalitions and between-reshuffle periods, an interesting pattern emerges: political party factions have tended to diminish parliamentary, coalitional and cabinet longevity. Moreover, as this study shows, factions, as the essential foundation stones of Thai political parties, have been more relevant than parties when analysing cabinet behaviour. Parties do influence durability when it comes to analysing ruling coalitions. The findings relating to parties are interesting because they do show that smaller parties have been a larger source of short coalition duration than larger parties. This is suggested by the findings that more parties have made for shorter coalition longevity. With more parties in a coalition, those parties must necessarily be smaller. Where there is a multiplicity of parties in a coalition, coalition consensus becomes much more difficult to achieve.[20] The result is more frequent coalition changes. Still, as indicated above, the findings for parties are hardly robust.[21] Nor are they surprising given that coalition change is defined in terms of party entry or exit. This study's findings demonstrate the importance of conducting extensive field research, and mark a promising beginning to using both qualitative and quantitative techniques in studying Thai factions.

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The findings demonstrate the need for more investigations into the role of factions in parliamentary, coalition and cabinet behaviour in developing democracies such as Thailand.

In line with Transaction Costs Analysis, inter-party and intra-party bickering among multiple, self-interested and opportunistic parties or factions regularly leads to short lifespans among parliaments, coalitions and cabinets. But factions have usually influenced parliaments, coalitions and cabinets more so than parties because of the decentralized nature of Thai parties. In some cases, decentralized party finance and subsequent weakened party leadership have strengthened factions. On the other hand, some party leaders have maintained almost tyrannical authority over their parties (Chambers, 2003: 73–6, 359). Both situations cause cabinets and coalitions to collapse. Both scenarios have occurred in Thailand.

Ultimately, this study finds that, from 1979 to 2001, Thai factions were more significant than parties as makers and breakers of parliaments, coalitions and cabinets.[22] At the same time, where there were many factions in a coalition, that coalition counter-intuitively tended to have a longer lifespan. This finding, supporting hypothesis C, is certainly quite novel in terms of what one would expect. The finding significantly indicates that in Thailand a greater number of factions tend to destabilize parliaments and cabinets while tending to sustain coalitions. With regard to parties, they tended to influence coalition durability only to the extent that they were aggregators of the factions within them. The only caveat to this was where small parties formed ruling coalitions. Where a coalition was made up of smaller parties (possessing fewer factions), many parties were necessary to achieve this purpose. With many parties in a coalition, more disagreements were likely and coalition changes tended to be more frequent. These findings support the notion that a multiple number of parties or factions can influence cabinet durability. Sometimes (as in Thailand) factions are more important players.

Thailand's 1997 constitution strengthened parties at the expense of factions (perhaps overly so) beginning with the 2001 election of Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai party. The new constitution made it difficult for members of parliament (MPs) grouped into factions to switch parties at random while giving greater powers to party leaders over MPs. Yet factions continue searching for loopholes, while voices throughout Thailand's political establishment have increasingly called for a loosening of the new rules governing parties. In May 2006, the country began seriously to consider implementing constitutional reforms that would increase institutional space for factions. The 19 September coup, its voiding of the constitution and the subsequent constitutional assembly may well facilitate such a move.

Coalition politics have often been seen as an intricate series of rational choice games among self-interested political parties acting within the constraints of institutions. The inclusion of factions adds depth and complexity to gaming scenarios. This inclusion is necessary, since factions are significant actors that have for too long been ignored in quantitative analyses.

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Thailand is a case in point. During the country's emerging democratic period (1979 to 2001), not just parties but also factions played a significant role in affecting government duration. It is high time to disassemble the black box of the party as a unitary actor in coalition studies. This is especially true in countries like Thailand, where factions have more significantly determined coalition outcomes than have parties.

Appendices

Appendix A. Empirical data on parties, factions and cabinets

Table a

Term in office	Prime minister	Effective number of parties in Lower House	Effective number of parties in cabinet	Effective number of factions in Lower House	Effective number of factions in cabinet	Changes in portfolio allocation across parliamentary term
1979–80	Kriangsak	8.07	3.49	23.0	6.8	36
1980–83	*Prem I*	8.28	3.05	17.4	11.3	42
1983–86	Prem II	3.9	3.2	19.2	10.9	11
1986–88	Prem III	6.1	3.15	20.8	13.0	4
1988–90	Chatchai I	7.8	3.46	28.3	16.93	59
1990–91	*Chatchai II*	6.35	3.06	25	12.98	0
1992	Suchinda	5.9	3.1	23.5	18.4	0
1992–95	Chuan I	6.1	3.6	23.5	8.82	42
1995–96	Banharn	6.18	3.96	19.2	13.75	32
1996–97	Chavalit	4.33	2.68	16.6	9.49	33
1997–2001	*Chuan II*	4.35	2.59	16.4	8.08	39

Cabinet turnover by party across parliamentary term	*Cabinet turnover by faction across parliamentary term*
0.24	0.134249
0.34266	0.086979
0.30572	0.087919
0.3174	0.0766
0.290857	0.053596
0.3266	0.0737
0.3255	0.0587
0.2812	0.105268
0.255771	0.0725
0.37052	0.100206
0.2674	0.092294

Names in *italics* represent prime ministers who served following the resignation of preceding prime ministers.

Table b

Period of coalition	Prime minister	Effective number of parties in ruling coalitions	Effective number of factions in ruling coalitions	Effective number of factions in dominant ruling party	Effective number of parties in cabinet	Effective number of factions in cabinet
1979–80	Kriangsak 1	4.0	8.38	3.51	3.49	6.80
1980	Kriangsak 2	2.59	4.79	3.51	3.50	4.50
1980–81	Prem I 1	3.4	15.6	6.09	3.05	10.01
1981	Prem I 2	3.8	8.9	6.09	3.60	9.36
1981–83	Prem I 3	3.05	14.8	6.09	3.79	11.30
1983–85	Prem II 1	2.966	15.8	9.40	3.21	10.41
1985–86	Prem II 2	2.965	15.7	9.40	3.21	9.62
1986–88	Prem III	3.19	12.06	3.94	3.15	12.89
1988–90	Chatchai I 1	3.5	19.5	4.93	3.44	16.93
1990	Chatchai I 2	3.9	19.17	4.93	3.35	19.34
1990–91	Chatchai II	3.685	13.2	8.10	3.06	12.91
1992	Suchinda	2.9	15.1	7.56	3.10	15.80
1992–93	Chuan I 1	3.6	11.4	3.43	3.60	8.82
1993–94	Chuan I 2	3.3	10.2	3.43	3.23	8.60
1994–95	Chuan I 3	3.4	11.8	3.43	3.52	9.19
1995–96	Banharn	3.99	13.3	3.60	4.08	13.75
1996	Banharn	4.15	13.69	3.62	4.14	13.44
1996	Banharn	3.99	13.3	3.60	4.02	13.41
1996	Banharn	4.27	13.85	3.66	4.06	13.42
1996	Banharn	3.99	13.3	3.60	4.09	13.42
1996	Banharn	4.15	13.69	3.62	3.34	13.41
1996–97	Chavalit	2.5	10.7	4.54	2.68	9.35
1997–98	Chuan II 1	2.4	8.8	3.92	2.59	7.72
1998–99	Chuan II 2	3.3	11.1	3.92	2.56	9.08
1999–2001	Chuan II 3	2.8	10.1	3.92	2.51	9.52

Table c

Period between reshuffle	Prime minister	Effective number of parties in ruling coalitions	Effective number of factions in ruling coalitions	Effective number of factions in dominant ruling party	Effective number of parties in cabinet	Effective number of factions in cabinet
1979–80	Kriangsak 1	4.0	8.38	3.51	3.49	6.80
1980	Kriangsak 2	2.59	4.79	3.51	3.50	4.50
1980–81	Prem I 1	3.4	15.6	6.09	3.05	10.01
1981	Prem I 2	3.8	8.9	6.09	3.60	9.36
1981	Prem I 3	3.05	14.8	6.09	3.79	11.30
1981–83	Prem I 4	3.05	14.8	6.09	3.79	11.30
1983–85	Prem II 1	2.966	15.8	9.40	3.21	10.41
1985	Prem II 2	2.965	15.7	9.40	3.21	9.62
1985–86	Prem II 3	2.965	15.7	9.40	3.216	9.62
1986	Prem II 4	2.965	15.7	9.40	3.216	10.46
1986–88	Prem III 1	3.19	12.06	3.94	3.15	12.89
1986	Prem III 2	3.19	12.06	3.94	3.15	12.85
1986–87	Prem III 3	3.19	12.06	3.94	3.08	12.05
1987–88	Prem III 4	3.19	12.06	3.94	3.08	12.05
1988–89	Chatchai I 1	3.5	19.5	4.93	3.44	16.93
1989–90	Chatchai I 2	3.5	19.5	4.93	3.46	16.93
1990	Chatchai I 3	3.5	19.5	4.93	3.46	16.93
1990	Chatchai I 4	3.5	19.5	4.93	3.46	16.93
1990	Chatchai I 5	3.5	19.5	4.93	3.46	16.93
1990	Chatchai I 6	3.9	19.17	4.93	3.351	19.00
1990	Chatchai I 7	3.9	19.17	4.93	3.354	19.34
1990–91	Chatchai II	3.685	13.2	8.10	3.06	12.91
1992	Suchinda	2.9	15.1	7.56	3.10	15.80
1992–93	Chuan I 1	3.6	11.4	3.43	3.60	8.82
1993–94	Chuan I 2	3.3	10.2	3.43	3.231	8.60
1994–95	Chuan I 3	3.3	10.2	3.43	3.264	9.19
1995	Chuan I 4	3.4	11.8	3.431	3.190	9.188
1995	Chuan I 5	3.4	11.8	3.431	3.190	9.160
1995–96	Banharn 1	3.99	13.3	3.60	4.08	13.75
1996	Banharn 2	3.99	13.3	3.60	4.08	13.75
1996	Banharn 3	3.99	13.3	3.60	4.08	13.75
1996	Banharn 4	4.15	13.69	3.62	4.14	13.44
1996	Banharn 5	3.99	13.3	3.60	4.02	13.41
1996	Banharn 6	4.27	13.85	3.66	4.06	13.42
1996	Banharn 7	3.99	13.3	3.60	4.09	13.42
1996	Banharn 8	4.15	13.69	3.62	3.34	13.41
1996–97	Chavalit 1	2.5	10.7	4.54	2.68	9.35
1997	Chavalit 2	2.5	10.7	4.54	2.74	9.71
1997	Chavalit 3	2.5	10.7	4.54	2.58	9.90
1997–98	Chuan II 1	2.4	8.8	3.92	2.59	7.72
1998–99	Chuan II 2	3.3	11.1	3.92	2.56	9.08
1999–2000	Chuan II 3	2.8	10.1	3.92	2.51	9.52
2000–01	Chuan II 4	2.8	10.1	3.92	2.58	6.70

Appendix B. List of Thai cabinet portfolio positions
Each has been assigned a number – a weight – based on interviews with 100 Thai
MPs, academics and journalists

Prime Minister	10		
Minister of Interior	9	Deputy Minister of Interior	4
Minister of Communications and Transport	8	Deputy Minister of Communications	4
Minister of Finance	7.5	Deputy Minister of Finance	4
Minister of Defence	7	Deputy Minister of Defence	3
Minister of Agriculture	6	Deputy Minister of Agriculture	3
Minister of Education	5	Deputy Minister of Education	2
Minister of Commerce	5	Deputy Minister of Commerce	2
Minister of Industry	5	Deputy Minister of Industry	2
Deputy Prime Minister	5		
Minister of Public Health	5	Deputy Minister of Public Health	2
Minister of Science	4	Deputy Minister of Science	1
Minister of Labour	3.5	Deputy Minister of Labour	1
Minister of Foreign Affairs	3	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs	1
Minister to the Prime Minister's Office	3		

Notes

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1 This study does not include the period prior to 1979 and 1991–2, when the military dominated Thailand. The study ends just prior to the General Election of 2001, the first General Election to which the 1997 Constitution was applied – affecting parliamentary terms, cabinets, parties and factions.
2 Effective numbers of parties and factions in the Lower House, ruling coalitions, dominant ruling parties and cabinets across eight parliamentary terms, 23 ruling coalitions and 43 cabinet reshuffles.
3 Chambers (2006) argues that Thai factions have played an essential role in making and breaking coalition governments.
4 Kramol (1982) argued that Thai parties were not 'real' because they lacked a mass following; they were not well institutionalized; and did not have any extra-parliamentary organizations. More recently, McCargo (1997) tried to distinguish between Thai parties which are 'real', 'authentic' and 'actual'. King (1996) also investigated Thai political party organization.
5 Virtually all works on Thai factionalism have been historical and descriptive. Ockey (1994) argues that factional bickering destabilizes cabinets, exacerbates political corruption, hinders the development of political parties and makes Thailand's languishing parliamentary system more subject to *coups d'état*. Khamnurakhasa (2000) investigates the structure, development and role of Thai intra-party factions. Chambers (2001, 2006) contends that factionalism in Thailand has inhibited government performance and has affected coalition

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formation and maintenance. Ockey (2003) argues that parties have relied on factions to establish their electoral networks; coalition-building has been based on the size of individual factions; and patronage flowing from cabinet postings has been controlled and distributed by factions. (See Ockey, 2003: 670–1. Other works on Thai factionalism include Lertsukekasem, 1988; Nelson, 2005; Ockey, 1994; Sajjayan, 1997; Sutranan, 1991).

6 An examination of Thai cabinet durability using other duration models would make a fascinating study worthy of further research.

7 In this case, 'constraints' refers to a condition of being checked or bounded by others. Thai party leaders, when required to placate multiple factions, find it difficult to steer the party, given that party finances and electoral candidates have generally been controlled by factions who can always defect. Party leaders thus become checked by factions. A factionalized party often finds it slow to come to consensus and, when participating in a coalition government, can be an unsteady partner. (See Chambers, 2003: ch. 3).

8 The leverage of Thai factions over parties has generally derived from their control of candidate and party financing, the decentralized nature of Thai parties, and the pre-2001 ability of factions to switch parties prior to elections, where ruling coalition parties need adequate seat numbers to maintain control of the Lower House. (See Chambers, 2003: 97–100).

9 The 1997 constitutional reforms (applied to parliament in 2001) empowered parties at the expense of factions. New electoral requirements made it difficult for factions to defect from parties.

10 At least two independent sources were used to verify whether an MP was a member of a faction. The minimum size of factions is three MP faction members, except in occasional cases where factions based only on kinship allow for only two MP faction members.

11 Those interested in the identities of the interviewees please contact me at pakse@hotmail.com.

12 Among the works I used to investigate Thai factions, coalitions and cabinets were Thai government documents, Thai dissertations and Thai newspapers.

13 Despite the use of academic, journalistic, political party sources and a great many personal interviews with knowledgeable Thai politicians, academics and journalists, this study of Thai factions remains problematic. It has had to rely partly on speculation given factions' surreptitious nature. On the other hand, examining the party level was much easier since party members have had to publicly identify their partisan identification and could not switch parties from election to dissolution (except from 1979 to 1983). Despite the difficulty in operationalizing factions, they are essential players in Thai parliamentary politics – given their ability to make and break governments – and, as such, need to be studied.

14 I specifically used these methods because they allowed me exclusively to compare the importance of quantities of factions or parties on parliamentary, coalitional and cabinet durability without including factors such as ideological distance or outside events. For this reason, I did not use alternative duration model techniques or incorporate other variables into the formula.

15 Factions might also seek to extend a coalition's lifespan so that they can be allocated a more powerful portfolio than the one/s initially assigned to them.

16 HH is simple to calculate and easy to visualize. At the same time, it is slightly biased in favour of larger groupings of seat shares. Moreover, given that Thai

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factions are generally nebulous and can change in size, HH makes it difficult to ascertain the exact concentration of factions over time. However, given that this formula has been applied consistently over time, such possible errors should be trivial.

17 I realize that it is difficult to generalize ministerial weights across 20 years, especially when powerful personalities or military officials holding portfolios temporarily strengthened a given post. Yet this weight scale, created according to the viewpoints of interviewees and based on the 1978 constitution, the provisional constitution of 1991–92, and another constitution in 1992, which was later heavily amended (all covering the period of this study), at least provides a *general* picture of the differences in power among ministerial slots.

18 I state in places that 'each additional [party/faction] . . . diminishes/increases longevity by [a number] of days'. By 'additional' and 'increases', I mean 1 or 2 plus. By 'diminishes', I mean 1 or 2 minus. This is an operationalized formula reflecting the notion that the larger the grouping of parties/factions, the shorter/longer the durability. Furthermore, increases or decreases do not continue *ad infinitum* because, at some point, adding additional parties or factions is impossible as there are no more; at some point the term cannot be extended/diminished.

19 Coalition factions, existing within a semi-limited forum, must make suboptimal choices while cabinet factions, having entered through the gateway of the cabinet, are more prone to zero-sum behaviour.

20 As the payoff for entering coalitions, Thai parties have invariably required at least one portfolio – or they bolt. On the other hand, not all coalition factions can initially be allocated a cabinet posting – they thus wait. This is why hypothesis B argues a negative relationship between coalition parties and coalition durability, while hypothesis C argues a positive relationship between coalition factions and coalition durability.

21 This holds true especially when comparing results for parties with findings for factions across the eight parliamentary terms.

22 These findings are supported by the study's combined use of qualitative and quantitative methods. Furthermore, they are supported by interviews with Thai politicians, journalists and academics, most of whom agree that both large numbers of parties and large numbers of factions can influence cabinet and coalition durability but that factions have had a greater influence.

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