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Thailand's Main Opposition Party Hopes for a Landslide Election Victory: A Realistic Goal or Just a Dream?

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A protester holds up a sign referencing article 112, Thailand's *lèse majesté* royal defamation law, during a demonstration in Bangkok on 14 November 2021, after a Thai court ruled that speeches by protest leaders calling for royal reforms amounted to a bid to overthrow the country's monarchy. Picture: Jack TAYLOR, AFP.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Phuea Thai (PT), Thailand’s main opposition party, is aiming at scoring a landslide victory in the country’s next general election, which is expected to take place in the third quarter of 2022.
- PT success may help allow the party’s chief patron, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, to end his self-imposed exile overseas, now in its thirteenth year, and return to Thailand with impunity.
- PT has recently undergone a rebranding exercise, which has included the adoption of a new party logo and a new slogan, as well as the installation of a new party leader and a younger group of executive committee members.
- The party has also appointed Thaksin’s younger daughter, Paethongtarn, as its new advisor on “inclusiveness and innovation”. She looks likely to be one of PT’s three nominees for the premiership in the country’s next general election.
- PT has faced challenges in articulating a position on Thailand’s *lèse majesté* law, which many younger voters would like to see scrapped.
- It is not clear that Thaksin’s predicament as an exile is of concern to those new voters.

INTRODUCTION

Phuea Thai (PT), Thailand's main opposition party, has begun gearing up for a crucial mission: scoring a "landslide" victory in the country's next general election and thus becoming the indisputable leader and core of the next government.

Unfortunately, two recent developments have diverted public attention away from the rejuvenation of PT and disrupted its campaign. They may even force the party to return to the drawing board and to move forward more carefully in future.

First, the Constitutional Court ruled on 10 November that it was unconstitutional for three student protest leaders¹ to have raised a ten-point demand for reform of the Thai monarchy at a rally at Thammasat University on 10 August 2020, and at various subsequent protest rallies. The justices of the Constitutional Court ruled² 8-1 that the three protestors had abused their political rights and civil liberties in seeking "to overthrow the democratic regime of government with the King as the Head of State".³

This ruling has made it more difficult for PT to support, directly or indirectly, any proposed reforms of the monarchy, especially abolishing or amending the *lèse majesté* law. The party's ally in the parliamentary opposition, the Move Forward Party (MFP), has been trying unsuccessfully to soften the law by removing the harsh compulsory jail term of 3 to 15 years per conviction.

A week later came the defeat of opposition parties' effort to push through the first reading of the "people's draft" constitutional amendment bill. On 17 November, the ruling coalition teamed up with senators to reject the draft bill by an overwhelming 473-206 margin.⁴ This vote defeat was yet another setback for PT, which needs to attract the support of young voters.

Young voters are mostly in favour of scrapping the *lèse majesté* law, as well as removing all "vestiges of dictatorship" from the constitution. Many of them supported the "people's bill", which included abolishing the Senate and empowering the House of Representatives to play a more effective role in checking and balancing the executive branch of government. Not least, it would have empowered opposition members in the House of Representatives in that role.⁵

WHY WOO YOUNG VOTERS?

On the basis of the 2020 population census,⁶ it can be extrapolated that by the end of 2021 there will be about 7.68 million of Generation Z voters in 18-26-year-old range. About 3.2 million Thais aged between 18 and 21 years old will be first-time voters if the next general election is held in 2022. In addition, there will also be another 8.39 million of Generation Y voters, in the 27-35-year-old range. Together, these Generation Y and Z Thais may amount up to 16.07 million votes.

In the country's last general election, held on 24 March 2019, the Phalang Pracharat Party (PPP) and PT received 8.44 million and 7.88 million votes, respectively. Unexpectedly, Future Forward, then barely two years old, came third with 6.33 million votes.⁷ Future Forward's candidates were mostly young and energetic, and clearly capable of winning support from young voters.

A survey conducted by the NIDA Poll in the third quarter of 2021 found that, among respondents aged 18-25 years, 30.77 per cent supported the MFP, a successor to the dissolved Future Forward Party. Similarly, among respondents aged 26-35 years, 32.59 per cent supported the MFP. Support for PT among these two groups of younger voters was only 18.88 per cent and 16.61 per cent respectively.⁸

Among the older respondents, more prospective voters tended to support PT than the MFP. In the 36-45 age group, the figures were 20.43 per cent for PT and 13.54 per cent for the MFP; in the 46-59 age group, 26.07 and 11.06 per cent; and among voters aged 60 and above, 24.41 PT and only 6.3 per cent, respectively.⁹

Another survey in October found that MFP leader Pita Limjaroenrat had overtaken Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-ocha in popularity. The 41-year-old former agro-business CEO received 32.94 per cent support, compared to General Prayut's support level of 28.67 per cent. Nevertheless, PT was the most popular party in the survey; its support level of 32.94 per cent exceeded that of the MFP, which was at 25.21 per cent.¹⁰

These numbers suggest, and PT seems to realise, that the party must zero in on Thailand's 16 million young voters. Hence its recent initiatives in rebranding, in changing the party's leadership, in offering support for LGBTQ+ people, and in attempting to address the *lèse majesté* law were largely aimed at attracting young and also progressive voters to the PT banner.

REBRANDING AND NEW LEADERSHIP

In early October, PT introduced a new, completely red, party logo. The blue colour in the previous logo was removed. The blue in Thailand's tri-colour national flag represents the monarchy, whereas the red represents the nation, and the white, the religion.

But PT spokesperson Jiraporn Sinthupai, an MP for Roi-et Province, cautioned against reading too much into the change to the party's logo. She explained that it was intended to make that logo stand out, as one completely different from the many other parties' logos that use the tri-colours. She added that the red in the new logo represented the energy to drive towards election victory and democracy.¹¹

PT also soon adopted a new party slogan: "Tomorrow, the Phuea Thai Party: For the people's better life."¹² This slogan is intended to build on the previous slogan: "Phuea Thai Party: Its heart is the people".

Following these changes, a new PT leadership team was announced at the party's general assembly in Khon Kaen on 28 October. Cholnan Sri-kaew, a 59-year-old medical doctor and MP for the northern province of Nan replaced 80-year-old Chiang Mai MP Sompong Amornvivat as party leader. Prasert Chantha-ruangthong, an MP for Nakhon Ratchasima, retained his post as party secretary-general, but many of the new 23-member executive committee were "new faces".¹³ Several well-known PT veterans stepped aside or moved to join the PT's strategy committee.¹⁴

SUDDEN U-TURN ON THE *LÈSE MAJESTÉ* LAW

Soon after PT's new campaign took off, the party was shaken by political turbulence when it had to back down from a new attempt to lead in tackling Thailand's *lèse majesté* law.

On 31 October, the PT's chief legal advisor, Chaikasem Nitisiri, posted an announcement on the party's website declaring that PT, the party with the largest number of MPs in the House, was ready to bring the people's grievances concerning the *lèse majesté* law and the law on sedition—Sections 112 and 116 of the Criminal Code—up for consideration in the parliament. The purpose would be "scrutiny on the authorities in the justice system, from the police, the public prosecutors, the courts, and the corrections service to find out whether they have abided by the true objectives of the laws".¹⁵

Moreover, Chaikasem, who served as the justice minister in the 2011-2014 Yingluck Shinawatra administration, also pledged that PT would "amend the laws and unjust regulations for the release of prisoners of thought, and for the prevention of any increase in the [arrest] of prisoners of thought, which will constitute the beginning of recovery of trust in the justice system in Thailand."¹⁶

Thaksin apparently was taken aback by Chaikasem's sudden initiative in tackling the *lèse majesté* law – which could be taken by its opponents as a sign that PT was switching to an anti-monarchy stance, perhaps related to its dropping the blue colour from the new party logo. He quickly put on record on his Facebook page his objection to any move to amend Section 112.¹⁷ Thaksin stated that the *lèse majesté* law had "never been a problem"; the real problem, in his opinion, came from the unscrupulous authorities in the justice system "who use this issue to create disunity in society".¹⁸

Immediately, as if taking a cue from Thaksin, PT leader Dr Cholnan clarified that the party would not take the lead in an effort to amend Section 112. Rather, it would merely volunteer to be "the medium" to use the legislative mechanism for the prevention of clashes of ideas outside of the parliament.¹⁹

Thaksin's crucial advice not only changed PT's policy direction on the *lèse majesté* law, but also aroused one watchdog activist to file a complaint with the Election Commission to ask it to investigate Thaksin's alleged interference in directing PT.²⁰

THAKSIN'S NEW TRUMP CARD?

The PT meeting in Khon Kaen brought a development more exciting than the installation of new leadership for the party. This was the introduction of Thaksin's youngest daughter, Paethongtarn, as a new PT advisor on inclusiveness and innovation. In her debut speech, the 35-year-old real estate CEO and mother of an infant girl mentioned three crucial points: She understood the young generations' problems and shared their aspirations for a better life, and she could help bridge generational gaps. She was very close to her father, Thaksin. And her father ardently wished to return to Thailand.²¹

Neither Paethongtarn nor Thaksin would confirm or deny that she was going to be one of PT's three nominees for the premiership in Thailand's next general election. Ex-PT leader Sompong could only confirm that Thaksin's divorced wife, Pojamarn Damapong, would not be among the three nominees. Thaksin and Pojamarn legally divorced at the Thai consulate in Hong Kong in November 2008, after 32 years of marriage.

Thaksin has himself dismissed speculation about his former wife's vying for the next premiership. During a video call to PT MPs on 12 October, he mentioned at least three reasons: Khunying Pojamarn's age, 65; her dislike of politics; and her weakness as a public speaker.²²

More importantly, Thaksin casually disclosed that he had "a few plans" for PT to score a landslide victory in the next general election. He claimed that each of his plans would convince some PT MPs who had accepted bribes to defect to government parties to return the money and stay put in PT. He emphasised that only with a resounding landslide victory could the PT become the indisputable head and core of the next government coalition.

Unfortunately, Thaksin's talk about his "plans" for PT has led to additional accusations of his alleged illegal "control, domination, or directing" of the party.²³

PT leader Dr Cholnan insisted that there was no issue, because Thaksin was talking to PT MPs at an informal dinner gathering, not a formal party meeting. But Ruerng-gai Leekitwattana, a legal advisor to the PPP (and a defector from PT), on 26 October filed a case requesting the Election Commission to examine whether Thaksin and PT MPs violated the political party law during the video call in question.²⁴

Quite obviously, one of Thaksin's plans is to put in place his youngest daughter to vie for the next premiership.

THAKSIN KNOWS BEST

Thaksin's political track record is phenomenal. He gained the historic distinction of being the first elected Thai civilian to serve a full four-year term as premier, from 2001-2004. In the general election of February 2005, his party won a landslide victory with 377 seats, or a 75.4 per cent majority in the House, leaving in the dust the Democrat Party with only 96 seats.²⁵

Thaksin was ousted in a coup on 19 September 2006, while he was in New York City preparing to address the United Nations General Assembly. He returned to Thailand on 28 February 2008 to face trial in a number of criminal cases. At first he seemed confident of acquittal. The prime minister at the time was Samak Sundaravej, the leader of the People Power Party, a successor to the Thai Rak Thai Party, which was dissolved on 30 May 2007.

Mysteriously, Thaksin and his wife received government permission to leave the country, purportedly to attend the opening ceremony of the Beijing Summer Olympic Games, in early August 2008. Both failed to return to appear in court on 11 August in a case involving Thaksin's authorisation for his wife to bid for a plot of government-owned land in Bangkok's Ratchadaphisek area. He was convicted in absentia for this conflict of interest in the execution of his duties and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. His wife, Pojamarn, was acquitted. The couple appeared in public in London on 21 October 2008, and Thaksin's overseas exile began.

Even though Thaksin has been out of the country for well over a decade, he has maintained close ties with a large group of veteran politicians who belonged to the defunct Thai Rak Thai Party. After Samak's forced resignation from the premiership on 30 September 2008, Thaksin managed to install his brother-in-law, Somchai Wongsawat, as Samak's successor. Somchai's premiership ended when the People Power Party was dissolved on 2 December 2008.

Thaksin fought back by setting up PT with assistance from many of his experienced political allies. This time around, his achievement was even more spectacular. In just 59 days, he turned one of his younger sisters, Yingluck, into the first female prime minister of Thailand. PT's simple and winning slogan was "Thaksin thinks, Yingluck acts!" The party won a majority of 265 House seats, beating once again the Democrat Party, which won only 159 seats.²⁶

Yingluck emerged as a fresh newcomer in Thai politics. She held no leadership post in PT, and therefore did not need to worry about party issues or legislative work. This pragmatic model may soon be replicated in the case of Thaksin's youngest daughter, Paethongtarn.

NEW ELECTION SYSTEM

In the March 2019 general election, PT did win the largest number of House seats, 136, while the PPP came second with 116. However, the formula used to allocate the 150 party-list seats in relation to the parties' shares of the popular vote and constituency seats, meant that PT did not qualify for any of the former seats.

The PPP received about 8.44 million votes, or about 23.74 per cent of the total. It won only 97 constituency seats, and was given 19 party-list House seats.

Recent constitutional amendments, backed by both PT and the PPP, to return to the use of separate ballots to indicate candidate and party preference, and to increase the number of

constituency seats from 350 to 400 while reducing the number of party-list seats from 150 to 100, were promulgated in the Royal Gazette on 21 November.

Large and well-funded parties like PT and the PPP will benefit from the new election system. They have the capability and resources to field highly competitive candidates in all 400 constituencies and to mount active campaigns nationwide. On the other hand, small parties will face an uphill struggle to win any House seat – unlike in the 2019 general election, when 12 micro-parties each won a single seat.

With the return of the two-ballot voting system, Thaksin is confident that PT will win again. But he has emphasised that it must score a landslide victory, because—in the absence of support from any of the 250 senators, who are mostly conservative and anti-Thaksin—it might still lose in the voting for the premier in the parliament.²⁷

If PT manages to hold majority control of the House, no one will want to take the premiership without its consent. For the PT can easily force whoever is holding the premiership to resign or dissolve the House by defeating a major draft bill sponsored by the government.

POLITICAL BRINKMANSHIP IN PARLIAMENT

This is precisely the dilemma that General Prayut currently faces, because he does not belong to any party. Although he was nominated for the premiership by the PPP, he is now in a serious power struggle with the PPP's secretary-general Captain Thammanat Prompao. Captain Thammanat tried but failed to oust General Prayut from the premiership in a no-confidence vote in early September.²⁸

General Prayut retaliated by dropping Captain Thammanat, who had served as deputy minister of agriculture, from the cabinet. All available indications show that the two have not settled their conflict, and Captain Thammanat remains quite capable of sabotaging any major government bill in the House.

Nevertheless, General Prayut has maintained that he will not dissolve the House²⁹ – unless he is forced to do so. He remains intent on completing his four-year term as premier in the first quarter of 2023. And he has no intention just yet to join a political party, old or new,³⁰ although he would welcome the PPP's re-nomination to serve another term in the run-up to the next general election.

In recent weeks, a new party called “Thai Sangsan” or “Creative Thailand” has emerged as a potential “spare party” for General Prayut to join and lead into the next general election. The new party is also widely reported to be linked to the former permanent secretary of the Ministry of Interior, Chatchai Promlerd, who retired from government service at the end of September.

CONCLUSION

Questions remain on whether Thaksin and the PT will be able to achieve a landslide victory in the next general election. Thaksin's active role in coming up with "plans" and "advice" could backfire and, even worse, lead to the downfall of PT. He may be able to use his youngest daughter as yet another political proxy. But how effective she can be is the question, especially when Thaksin cannot openly intervene in PT's activities to assist her.

Most young voters care more about their lives and livelihoods. And pay little attention to Thaksin's predicament in exile.

As things stand now, PT needs more new ideas to compete with the MFP for the votes of the young and the restless. Failing that, the party's mission to score a landslide victory, as well as Thaksin's wish to return to Thailand, will remain a sweet but empty dream.

¹ Arnon Nampa, a human rights lawyer; Panupong "Mike" Jadnok, a labour activist; and Panusaya "Rung" Sithijirawattanakul, a Thammasat University student leader were the three protest leaders involved. Chiefly because of their repeated arrests for alleged violations of the law, all three have been denied bail and put in temporary detention while awaiting trial on numerous charges, including violations of the *lèse majesté* law in Section 112 of the Criminal Code. If convicted, they face punishment under this law of a jail term ranging from 3 to 15 years. Based on *iLaw*'s compilation, at least 156 people have been put under arrest during the past 12 months under the same law. Arnon is facing 16 counts of *lèse majesté* violations; both Panupong and Panusaya each faces nine counts. *iLaw* is a non-profit organisation whose mission includes promoting the rule of law and disseminating knowledge on human rights, political rights and civil liberties.

² "ศาลรัฐธรรมนูญเปิดคำวินิจฉัยฉบับเต็ม คดีล้มล้างการปกครอง" [Constitutional Court unveils its full ruling in sedition case], *Thai PBS*, 10 November 2021 (<https://news.thaipbs.or.th/content/309570>, accessed 24 November 2021). The full text of the Constitutional Court's ruling was published in the *Royal Gazette* on 29 November 2021; see http://www.ratchakitcha.soc.go.th/DATA/PDF/2564/A/080/T_0022.PDF.

³ Section 49 of the 2017 Constitution reads in part: "No person shall exercise the rights or liberties to overthrow the democratic regime of government with the King as Head of State. ..."

⁴ "ตามคาด โคนสอข่วง ร่างแก้ไขเพิ่มเติมรัฐธรรมนูญฉบับประชาชน พ่าย 206 ต่อ 473" [As expected, rejection of the people's draft constitutional amendment bill, defeat of 206 to 473 votes], *Thai Rat Online*, 18 November 2021 (<https://www.thairath.co.th/news/politic/2244108>, accessed 24 November 2021). Of those who opposed the bill, 249 were government MPs, and 224 senators. Only three senators voted for the bill, which required a majority of the two houses (362 votes), including at least one third of the 250 senators (83 votes) to pass the first reading.

⁵ "สรุปร่าง "รัฐธรรมนูญประชาชน" ชกเลิก ส.ว. รื้อองค์กรอิสระ เพิ่มอำนาจฝ่ายค้าน" [Summary of 'Demolition of the Prayut regime': scrapping the Senate, demolishing autonomous organs, increasing power of the opposition], *iLaw*, 27 April 2021, www.ilaw.or.th, (accessed 24 November 2021). The petition endorsing the "people's" draft constitutional amendment bill received the support of 135,247 voters, far more than the 50,000 needed.

- ⁶ See details of the 2020 census at the website of the National Statistical Office at (<http://statbbi.nso.go.th/staticreport/page/sector/th/01.aspx>, accessed 24 November 2021).
- ⁷ Official data on the outcome of the 24 March 2019 general election are available at (www.th.wikipedia.org/wiki/การเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรเป็นการทั่วไป_พ.ศ.2562, accessed 24 November 2021).
- ⁸ “ภูมิภาค อาชีพ และวัย กับการสนับสนุนพรรคการเมือง (จบ)” [Regions, occupations, and age groups and support for political parties (conclusion)], *Manager Online*, 19 November 2021 (www.mgonline.com/daily/detail/9640000114721, accessed 24 November 2021).
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ “ดุสิตโพลชี้ เพื่อไทย คะแนนเสียงนำเลือกตั้งหน้า แต่ประชาชนอยากได้ ‘พิธา’ เป็นนายกฯ” [Dusit Poll shows Phuea Thai Party will be leading in the next election, but people want ‘Pita’ as the prime minister], *Thai Post*, 31 October 2021 (www.thaipost.net/news/15597, accessed 26 November 2021).
- ¹¹ “เพื่อไทยเปลี่ยนโลโก้ใหม่เป็นสีแดง” [Phuea Thai changes logo to red], *Thai Rat Online*, 19 October 2021 (www.thairath.co.th/news/politics/2223086, accessed 24 November 2021).
- ¹² In Thai, “พรุ่งนี้ เพื่อไทย เพื่อชีวิตใหม่ประชาชน”. In other words, whatever the Thai people aspire to, the Phuea Thai Party shall deliver it.
- ¹³ “เปิด 23 รายชื่อ กรรมการบริหารพรรคเพื่อไทย ชุดใหม่ รับศึกเลือกตั้ง” [Disclosing list of 23 members of the Phuea Thai’s executive committee, a new team to fight the general election], *Thai Rat Online*, 28 October 2021 (www.thairath.co.th/news/politic/2230096, accessed 24 November 2021).
- ¹⁴ “เข็น ‘ชัยเกษม’ ประธานยุทธศาสตร์เพื่อไทย ‘อ้วน’ - ‘เลียบ’ - ‘มิ่ง’ นั่งกรรมการ” [Pushing ‘Chaikasem’ to be chairman of Phuea Thai’s Strategy Committee; ‘Uan’, ‘Liap’ and ‘Ming’ sit as committee members], *Thai Post Online*, 28 October 2021 (www.thaipost.net/politics-news/14125, accessed 24 November 2021). “Uan” is the nickname of former PT secretary-general Phumtham Wechayachai; “Liap” is the nickname of Dr Surapong Suebwonglee; and “Ming” is the nickname of Dr Prommin Lertsuridej. These three, as well as Chaikasem Nitisiri, served as ministers in the administrations of Thaksin and Yingluck. The strategy committee includes Dr Surapong Suebwonglee, the new CEO or operations director of the party and a trusted lieutenant of Thaksin. Dr Surapong’s return to manage the PT tends to underline Thaksin’s determination to help PT win big in the next general election.
- ¹⁵ “เพื่อไทย ออกแถลงการณ์ผลักดันแก้ ม.112, ม. 116 ในสภา” [Phuea Thai issues a declaration on pushing for the amendment of Section 112 and Section 116 in parliament], *Krungthep Thurakit*, 1 November 2021 ([https:// www.bangkokbiznews.com/news/969144](https://www.bangkokbiznews.com/news/969144), accessed 26 November 2021). Chaikasem was the Phuea Thai Party’s number 3 nominee for the premiership in the 2019 general election. Its first-ranked nominee was Sudarat Keyuraphan, and number 2 was Chadchart Sittiphan; both of them have left the party, the latter to run as an independent for the post of governor of Bangkok in polls likely to take place early next year.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ See Facebook.com/thaksinofficial, 2 November 2021.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ “หมอชลน่าน แจงจุดยืน เพื่อไทยไม่ได้แก้ ม. 112 แค่ตัวกลาง” [Dr Cholnan clarifies Phuea Thai’s stand, not for amending Section 112, will merely serve as the medium], *Khom Chat Luek*, 2 November 2021 (www.komchadluek.net/news/490993, accessed 26 November 2021).
- ²⁰ “‘ศรีสุวรรณ’ ร้อง กกต. สอบ ‘โทนี่’ ครอบงำเพื่อไทย สั่งถอดแก้ 112” [‘Srisuwan’ asks Election Commission to investigate ‘Tony’ for dominating Phuea Thai in ordering it to back down from amending Section 112], *Thai Post*, 8 November 2021 (www.thaipost.net/news-update/20841, accessed 26 November 2021). As a fugitive from justice, Thaksin, whose alias on the Clubhouse social media platform is Tony Woodsome, is prohibited from being a member of any political party or interfering in its political activities. If PT is found guilty of following unlawful guidance from Thaksin, it could face dissolution by the Constitutional Court. Srisuwan Janya is the head of a political watchdog

group who has frequently filed cases against political parties and politicians with either the Election Commission or the Constitutional Court.

²¹ “เพื่อไทย แลนด์สไลด์ เปิดตัว ‘แพทองธาร ชินวัตร’” [Phuea Thai landslide introduces “Paethongtarn Shinawatra”], *Voice TV*, 28 October 2021

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xMJ9MWMNVQ>, accessed 25 November 2021).

²² Thaksin’s video call took place during a birthday dinner for PT deputy leader Kriang Gallapatinan at a restaurant in Bangkok on 12 October 2021. Kriang asked Thaksin to invite Potjamarn to take over the party leader’s post.

²³ “คลิป ‘อดีตนายกฯ ทักษิณ’ ครอบงำ ‘พรรคเพื่อไทย’ ...? ตอบโจทก์, [Clip! “Former PM Thaksin” dominating the Phuea Thai Party’ ...? Question Time Programme], *Thai PBS*, 19 October 2021

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAP_U5533WA, accessed 25 November 2021).

²⁴ “‘เรื่องไกร’ ร้อง กกต. ชุบเพื่อไทย สอบคลิป ‘โทนี่’ วิดีโอคอล ‘เกรียง’ อ้างจัดเลี้ยงวันเกิด” [“Rueng-gai” calls on Election Commission to dissolve Phuea Thai; examining the video call of “Tony”, “Kriang” claims it was only a birthday party], *Matichon Online*, 26 October 2021

(www.matichon.co.th/politics/news_3010260, accessed 25 November 2021). If the Election

Commission finds enough evidence of Thaksin’s breaking the political party law, it will submit the case for a decision by the Constitutional Court. The Constitutional Court in February 2020 dissolved the Future Forward Party after finding evidence of party leader Thanathorn Juangroongrerkkit controlling his party through illegal loans of over 191.2 million baht to ease the cash flow in the young party.

²⁵ See the official results of the 2005 general election at

https://th.wikipedia.org/wiki/การเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรไทยเป็นการทั่วไป_พ.ศ._2548 (accessed 25 November 2021).

²⁶ See the official results of the 2011 general election at

https://th.wikipedia.org/wiki/การเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรไทยเป็นการทั่วไป_พ.ศ._2554 (accessed 25 November 2021).

²⁷ PT came first in the last general election, but the prospective coalition of seven parties in whose formation it participated had only 246 seats, whereas the PPP-led coalition of 19 parties (including 11 of the 12 micro-parties) squeezed through with a razor-thin majority of 254 seats in the 500-member House. The pro-Prayut coalition had overwhelming support in the Senate. General Prayut won the premiership on 5 June 2019 with 500 votes, from 251 MPs and 249 of the 250 senators. Thanathorn, the opposing coalition’s candidate from premier, received only 244 votes from opposition MPs, and none from any of the senators.

²⁸ See the background of their quarrel in the author’s article, “Thai PM Remains Vulnerable Without a Party of His Own,” *ISEAS Perspective* 2021/127, 28 September 2021

(<https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2021-127-thai-pm-remains-vulnerable-without-a-party-of-his-own-by-termsak-chalermpananupap/>, accessed 25 November 2021).

²⁹ Should the House be dissolved before the new constitutional amendments can be incorporated into the political party law and the election law through normal legislation, then General Prayut would need an emergency decree, endorsed by the king, to use the new election system in the next general election.

³⁰ “‘บิ๊กตู’ ช้าไม่ชุบสภา อยู่กับพรรคเดิมหรือไม่ ให้ฟัง ‘ลุงป้อม’ ชี้สะดุดบ่อย เพราะใจร้อน คิดหลายเรื่อง” [“Big Tu” reiterates that he will not dissolve the House; on the question whether he will stay with the same party, says just listen to “Uncle Pom”; has stumbled a few times because impatient, thinking about many things], *Manager Online*, 24 November 2021 (www.mgsonline.com/politics/detail/9640000116675, accessed 25 November 2021). “Big Tu” is the nickname of General Prayut, and “Uncle Pom” is the nickname of Deputy Prime Minister General Prawit Wongsuwan, the leader of the PPP.

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