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Thai PM Needs to Show His Cards if He Survives the Upcoming No-Confidence Fight

*Termsak Chalermphanupap**



Thailand Prime Minister Prayut's political future is in no danger of failing in the short term, but it will depend on how he handles the no-confidence debate, Thammanat Prompao's manoeuvres and the grievances of the group of restless government MPs. In this picture, Thailand Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha delivers a speech as part of the 27th International Conference on The Future of Asia in Tokyo on 26 May 2022. Photo: Kazuhiro NOGI/AFP.

**Termsak Chalermphanupap is Visiting Fellow in the Thailand Studies Programme, ISEAS –Yusof Ishak Institute. He served previously as a researcher on ASEAN political and security cooperation at the Institute's ASEAN Studies Centre.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Thai Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-ocha and most of the 10 members of his cabinet targeted in a no-confidence motion to be debated in the third week of July are in no danger of falling.
- The ruling coalition supporting Prayut is strong and in control of a comfortable majority in the House of Representatives. In early June, it managed to pass the first reading of the administration's draft 2023 budget bill with a wide margin of 278 to 194 votes in the House.
- Meanwhile, the opposition has been weakened by defections.
- However, several challenges confront the Prime Minister. Captain Thammanat Prompao, leader of the "independent" Thai Economic Party, could create serious tensions within the ruling coalition. While his party has only 16 MPs, he claims that he has "more than 40 MPs" on his side.
- Also, a group of government MPs from small parties and micro-parties is also clamouring for attention and for reconsideration of proposed changes in the election law, in exchange for their support in the upcoming no-confidence vote.
- Prayut's political future will depend on how he handles the no-confidence debate, Thammanat's manoeuvres and the grievances of the group of restless government MPs.

INTRODUCTION

Thai Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-ocha and most of the 10 ministers in his government¹ facing a no-confidence motion are in no danger of losing the vote in the House of Representatives set for the third week of July. The seven parties in the parliamentary opposition do not have enough votes to unseat the prime minister or any of their other targets, unless at least 46 government MPs defect to vote with them.

Two ministers from the Phalang Pracharat Party (PPP), the largest party in the ruling coalition, are vulnerable, however, and will have to work hard to avoid defeat. They are Chaiwut Thanakamansorn, the digital economy and society minister, and Suchart Chomklin, the labour minister. Both are members of the party's recently revamped 22-member executive committee, and Suchart is also its director of operations.

The opposition's motion accuses Chaiwut of "behaving immorally, and seriously violating as well as failing to comply with the ethical standards".² A deputy leader of the Phuea Thai Party (PT), Yutthapong Charas-satien, has dropped strong hints about having dug up dirt about Chaiwut's private life.³

Labour Minister Suchart, on the other hand, has requested that House Speaker Chuan Leekpai investigate how his name was mysteriously added to the list of ministers facing the no-confidence motion just a few hours before the motion's formal submission on 15 June. He believes that many of the 182 opposition MPs who signed the motion may not know that he was subsequently included among its targets.⁴

Suchart suspects secret collusion between some opposition leaders and an "influential figure outside the opposition" who has a vicious grudge against him. Quite obviously, Suchart has in mind Captain Thammanat Prompao, leader of the "independent" Thai Economic Party (TEP). Thammanat, when he was secretary-general of the PPP, frequently clashed with Suchart. Eventually, Thammanat was expelled from the PPP last January.

Thammanat's TEP now has 16 MPs in the 477-member House of Representatives. He claims, however, that he has the support of more than 40 MPs, including several from the PPP and from small parties (each with two to five MPs) and micro-parties (each with only one MP) in the ruling coalition.⁵

Thammanat is a shrewd operator, a wild card capable of creating political tensions or worse, and a man whom the prime minister and ministers facing the no-confidence motion cannot ignore.

RULING COALITION IN CONTROL, BUT...

The upcoming no-confidence debate, which will last four days starting on 19 July, will be the fourth and the last in the current four-year term of this House of Representatives, whose members took office after the March 2019 general election. General Prayut and his ministers have overcome three previous no-confidence debates without much trouble.⁶

The easy passage in its first reading on 3 June of the Prayut administration's draft 2023 budget bill, by a vote of 278 to 194,⁷ suggests that the ruling coalition controls a comfortable majority in the House.

On 10 July there will be a by-election in Lampang Province's Constituency No. 4. Captain Thammanat's TEP has fielded a strong candidate, who is expected to win; this victory will increase the number of active MPs in the House to 478. In order to unseat the prime minister or any other ministers in the upcoming no-confidence vote, scheduled on 23 July, the opposition will thus need 240 votes. As things now stand, it is highly unlikely that the opposition will be able to instigate a large-scale defection of government MPs to join in voting against the ministers targeted in the no-confidence motion.

Captain Thammanat, however, is in a unique position to create serious tensions in the ruling camp. If his candidate wins the Lampang by-election, the number of MPs in his TEP will rise to 17. This will make his party the fourth largest government party — after the PPP with 97 MPs, Bhumjaithai with 62 MPs, and the Democrat with 51 MPs — if Thammanat brings the TEP into the ruling coalition.

If and when the TEP joins the ruling coalition, the party will be able to ask for at least two or three cabinet posts – based on the existing rate of allocation of one such post for every five MPs that a party has. The currently fourth largest government party, the 12-MP-strong Chatthai Phatthana, holds one ministerial post and one deputy ministerial post. These are held by Varawut Silpa-archa, minister of natural resources and the environment, and Praphat Phothesoon, deputy minister of agriculture. Praphat is also Chatthai Phatthana's secretary-general.

Last September, while he was still secretary-general of the PPP, Thammanat was fired from the post of deputy minister of agriculture following the collapse of his scheme to oust General Prayut from the premiership in the no-confidence vote held early that month. Now, as leader of the TEP, he may want a full minister's post and up to two deputy ministers' posts for the party's senior MPs in exchange for supporting General Prayut's premiership.

But Thammanat must first force General Prayut to reshuffle his cabinet. How? Perhaps by making at least two ministers look bad in the upcoming no-confidence debate.

MINISTERS IN HOT WATER

General Prayut has dismissed calls from government parties for a cabinet reshuffle since the sudden dismissals of Captain Thammanat and Deputy Labour Minister Dr Narumon Pinyosinwat⁸ from their cabinet posts last September.

Recently, however, two deputy ministers have been plunged into serious legal hot water. Deputy Education Minister Kanokwan Wilawan has been accused by the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) of encroaching on national forest land,⁹ and Deputy Interior Minister Nipon Bunyamaneer has also been accused by the NACC of corruption while he was heading the Songkhla Provincial Administration from 2013 to 2019.

The second of these two is among those cabinet members targeted by the pending no-confidence motion, which opposition leaders have described as a well-coordinated campaign “to chop off heads and demolish political scaffolding” supporting General Prayut’s premiership. This approach explains the motion’s focus on leaders and secretaries-general of key government parties, with the notable omission of Agriculture Minister and Democrat Party secretary-general Chalermchai Sri-on.

PT leader and Leader of the Opposition Dr Cholanan Sri-kaew has denied there was any “compromise” with any government parties to pull punches. The opposition, he has insisted, will aim at slaughtering all the no-confidence targets in the House.¹⁰ However, he conceded that, this time, the opposition does not have much material to zero in on Chalermchai. That minister was censured in the previous no-confidence debate, in which he prevailed with a vote of 270 to 199 – the highest vote of confidence among the six ministers targeted last September.¹¹

By not wasting time on strong ministers, the opposition will have more opportunity to attack the prime minister and some of the more vulnerable ministers on its list, particularly Chaiwut and Suchart. These two men received low votes of confidence last September: Chaiwut survived by a vote of 267-202, Suchart by 263-201.¹²

If Captain Thammanat and his TEP MPs withhold their support from these two ministers in this month’s votes in parliament, they will once again receive low votes of confidence, and thus face additional pressure to call it quits.

GAME ON FOR SMALL AND MICRO-PARTIES

The ruling coalition comprises 17 parties. Among them, 11 parties, with a total of 21 MPs,¹³ do not hold any of the 36 cabinet posts. However, the Action Coalition for Thailand Party, with only 5 MPs, has been given one cabinet post — held by party leader Dr Anek Laothamatas, serving as minister of higher education, science, research and innovation. Earlier, the Chatthai Phatthana Party, with only 4 MPs, was given one cabinet post — held

by Tewan Liptapallop, who served as minister in the prime minister's office before resigning in July 2020.

Now these small parties and micro-parties worry that they will suffer political extinction in the next general election if proposed amendments to the election law appearing to favour large parties are adopted. The parliament has already approved amendment of the constitution to increase the number of (single seat) constituencies from 350 to 400, and to reduce the number of party-list House seats from 150 to 100. This change will benefit large parties with the resources to field competitive candidates in all 400 constituencies. Small parties and micro-parties will face an uphill struggle to compete with large parties, and their chances of winning in any constituency will be virtually nil.

Worse still, additional proposed amendments will change the rules for the allocation of party-list House seats among parties and consequently wipe out all micro-parties. One of the proposed changes is to do away with the rule concerning how many MPs a party "deserves to have" based on the total of votes collected by its candidates.

In Thailand's 2019 general election, the PT's candidates collected altogether 7.881 million votes, which constituted 22.16 per cent of the grand total of 35.561 million votes from all 350 constituencies nationwide. Twenty-two per cent of the seats in the 500-member House is 110 MPs, the number of MPs that the PT "deserved to have". But the PT's candidates had already won 136 of the 350 House seats in constituency races; in other words, the PT had won more House seats than it "deserved to have"; therefore it did not get any share of the 150 party-list House seats.

In the next general election, each voter will cast two ballots: one to elect a candidate, and another to choose a party. The total of second-ballot votes that each party receives will go towards calculating its share of the party-list House seats. At issue now is how the allocation is to be calculated. Large parties want to derive the rate of allocation by dividing the grand total of all second ballots collected by all parties in the race by 100, the number of party-list House seats. For example, if the grand total of second ballots cast is 40 million, the rate of allocation of party-list House seats will be one party-list House seat per 400,000 second-ballot votes.

Small parties and micro-parties, both those in the ruling coalition and those in the opposition, have joined hands in campaigning against the proposed change. They want to divide the grand total of the second ballot votes by 500, the total number of House seats. In this case, if the grand total of the second ballot votes cast is 40 million, the rate of allocation of party-list House seats will be one seat per 80,000 second-ballot votes.¹⁴ Adoption of the latter formula will give these parties some chance of getting a share of the 100 party-list House seats in the next general election.

These small parties and micro-parties also want to retain the rule concerning how many MPs each party "deserves to have". In this effort, they have gained the support of many other active parties that have no MPs in the current House.¹⁵

Labour Minister Suchart, who is in charge of liaising with small parties and micro-parties in the ruling coalition, has promised to bring the parties' grievances and demands to the attention of the PPP's leadership. Inside the PPP, there are now concerns that the proposed changes to the election law will indeed enable the PT to achieve a "landslide victory" in the next general election.

The PT hopes to win at least 250 of the 500 House seats in that election. It will then be able to play the role of indisputable core leader in forming the next coalition government along with a few like-minded allied parties, notwithstanding the fact that the 250 senators¹⁶ will still participate in the selection of the next prime minister.

The chief opposition party has been boosted in recent months by the arrival of Paetongtarn Shinawatra to chair the PT's advisory committee for participation and innovation. The 36-year-old businesswoman is the youngest daughter of exiled former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Paetongtarn has also become "the head of the Phuea Thai Family" and spearheaded a campaign to woo anti-military Red Shirts to return to support the party.¹⁷

In a recent survey undertaken by NIDA Poll, Paetongtarn's popularity rating doubled from the 12.53 per cent figure in the previous survey in March to 25.28 per cent, compared with General Prayut's 11.68 per cent (12.67 per cent in March). In fact, General Prayut's popularity rating dropped to third place, behind those of not only Paetongtarn but also Move Forward Party leader Pita Limjaroenrat. The latter's rating dipped slightly, from 13.42 per cent in March to 13.24 per cent in June.¹⁸

In theory, a large number of the senators can still help a minority coalition's nominee win the next premiership. However, in reality, such a lame duck prime minister would not last long, as his administration's draft bills would be blocked in the House, and he would be voted out in the first no-confidence debate. Faced with such a dreadful political stalemate, the Thai military might be tempted to step in once again to break that damaging stalemate.

KEEPING HIS CARDS CLOSE TO HIS CHEST

As he faces both the short- and medium-term future, General Prayut is carefully keeping his cards close to his chest. His well-known wish is to host this year's APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, scheduled for Bangkok from 18 to 19 November, and to complete his four-year term in March 2023.

Other than this, the prime minister has not disclosed his thoughts about surmounting existing political hurdles: the upcoming no-confidence debate, the calls for a cabinet reshuffle, the grievances and demands of small parties and micro-parties in the ruling coalition, and the lingering doubt on whether he is approaching the eight-year constitutional limit on time served in the premiership in August.¹⁹ Neither has he been willing to discuss his political plans beyond the end of his four-year term.

Occasionally, General Prayut has given the Thai public a piece of his mind. One such occasion took place on 6 June in Phuket, where he travelled to deliver a keynote address to the Thailand Tourism Congress 2022.

To his prepared speech, General Prayut added a few extra comments, including “Seeing the sea makes me wish I could go for a swim. To tell you the truth, I have not swum in the sea for eight years now... Seeing numerous problems, I cannot complain, because I am the prime minister. Many people say I have complained a lot. But I am confident that the situation will improve and get better, like what I have often said about ‘Better Thailand’. ... I am not going to die in office. It depends on the people. Today being in my position, I just would like all to help. ...”²⁰

These recent impromptu remarks indicate that General Prayut is gaining more self-confidence and becoming more optimistic about Thailand and, perhaps, about his political future as well.

At the same time, some young protesters have also recently returned to the streets of Bangkok to demand General Prayut’s resignation. On some tense evenings, they have clashed with anti-riot police near the prime minister’s residence. Some unknown “third hand” might be supporting these young protesters, just to unnerve General Prayut in the approach to the upcoming no-confidence debate in the third week of July.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that General Prayut and his ministers will all overcome the no-confidence vote that they face later this month. The ruling coalition remains strong and in control of a comfortable majority in the House, whereas the opposition has been weakened by defections.

What remains unclear is whether or not General Prayut will take over a political party, perhaps the PPP, and meet the challenge of the PT head on in Thailand’s next general election. Without a party of his own, General Prayut’s political survival will continue to depend precariously on the goodwill of his “Big Brother”, Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan, the current leader of the PPP, and on the support of the PPP leadership, over which General Prayut has had no control.

The luxury of staying in power without having to lead a party will soon end. General Prayut must decide what to do sooner rather than later and put all his cards on the table to show what he sees in his political future.

ENDNOTES

¹ The 11 targeted in the no-confidence motion are the following.

1. General Prayut Chan-ocha, prime minister, and concurrently defence minister
2. Jurin Laksanawisit, deputy prime minister, and minister of commerce; leader of the Democrat Party.
3. Anutin Charnvirakul, deputy prime minister, and minister of public health; leader of the Bhumjaithai Party.
4. General Prawit Wongsuwan, deputy prime minister; leader of the Phalang Pracharat Party (PPP).
5. General Anupong Paochinda, minister of interior.
6. Saksiam Chidchob, minister of transport; secretary-general of the Bhumjaithai Party.
7. Chaiwut Thanakamanusorn, minister of digital economy and society; a member of the PPP's executive committee.
8. Juti Krairerk, minister of social development and human security; a Democrat MP, targeted for the first time in four years.
9. Santi Promphat, deputy finance minister; secretary-general of the PPP.
10. Nipon Bunyamane, deputy interior minister; a deputy leader of the Democrat Party.
11. Suchart Chomklin, minister of labour; a member of the PPP's executive committee and the party's director of operations.

² “ฝ่ายค้าน ยื่นไม่ไว้วางใจ 11 รัฐมนตรี ข้อครหาทุจริต ยึดติดอำนาจ ไร้ความสามารถ ” [Opposition submits its no-confidence motion against 11 ministers — untruthful, corrupt, clinging to power, and incompetent], *Prachachat Business*, 15 June 2022 (www.prachachat.net/politics/news-95585, accessed 18 June 2022). The press report contains a summary of all the accusations against each of the 11 targets of the no-confidence motion.

³ “‘ยุทธพงศ์’ ไว้วางใจ ‘ตึกชกฟอก’ เต็มชีพ รัฐมนตรี ตายคาสภา รับรองม็กรี้ด” [‘Yuttapong’ claims he has the receipt (evidence) for the no-confidence battle to kill a minister in the House; guarantees there will be screams], *Bangkok Business News*, 29 May 2022 (www.bangkokbiznews.com/politics/1007019, accessed 19 June 2022).

⁴ “‘สุชาติ’ ยื่น ‘ชวน’ สอบ ‘ผู้ตึกชกฟอกเดือน’ ข้อใจ รมต. โดนอภิปราย 10 คน เพิ่มเป็น 11 คน” [‘Suchart’ asks ‘Chuan’ to probe ‘the unlawful no-confidence motion’, why 10 debate targets became 11], *Thai Post*, 17 June 2022 (www.thaipost.net/politics-news/163676, accessed 18 June 2022).

⁵ “‘ชัยวุฒิ’ เชื่อตึกชกฟอกหลุด แม้ไม่มี ศท. ‘ธรรมนัส’ ชัด รมต. ปากก่ง โวในสภามีเกิน 40 เสียง” [‘Chaiwut believes (he) can survive the no-confidence vote even without the support of the Thai Economic Party; ‘Thammanat’ hits back at the minister with a big mouth, claiming he has more than 40 votes in the House], *Isra News*, 26 May 2022 (www.isranews.org/article/isranews-news/109108, accessed 19 June 2022).

⁶ The data below summarize the voting outcome of each of the three previous no-confidence motions.

Outcome of the Past Three No-Confidence Votes				
	4 September 2021	20 February 2021	28 February 2020 **	Remarks
PM / Defence Minister Gen Prayut Chan-ocha.*	264-208	272-206	272-49	
DPM Gen Prawit Wongsuwan*	--	274-204	277-50	Leader of the PPP

Interior Minister Gen Anupong Paochinda*	--	272-205	272-54	
DPM Dr Wissanu Krea-ngam	--	--	272-54	
DPM / Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai	--	--	272-55	
DPM / Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul*	269-196	275-201	--	Leader of Bhumjaithai Party
Transport Minister Saksiam Chidchob*	269-195	268-201	--	Secretary-General of Bhumjaithai Party
DPM / Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit*	--	268-207	--	Leader of Democrat Party
Agriculture Minister Chalermchai Sri-on	270-199	--	--	Secretary-General of Democrat Party
Labour Minister Suchart Chomklin*	263-201	263-212	--	PPP Operations Director
Digital Economy Minister Chaiwut Thanakamanusorn*	267-202	--	--	PPP Executive Committee Member
Deputy Interior Minister Nipon Bunyamaneer*	--	272-206	--	A deputy leader of Democrat Party
Deputy Agriculture Minister Captain Thammanat Prompao	--	274-199	269-55	Fired from the cabinet on 8 September 2021.
Education Minister Nataphol Teepsuwan	--	258- 215	--	Dropped from the cabinet on 24 February 2021.

* These are nine of the 11 who have been once again named as targets in the no-confidence motion submitted by the opposition on 15 June 2022. Two ministers who had never been targeted but will now face the censure are Deputy Finance Minister Santi Promphat, PPP secretary-general, and Minister of Social Development and Human Security Juti Krairerk of the Democrat Party.

** Having staged a “symbolic walkout” from the House before casting their votes, not all Phuea Thai Party MPs took part in the final voting, hence the low votes of no-confidence in 2020.

⁷ The table below presents details on the vote on the draft 2023 budget bill.

Vote on the Draft 2023 Budget Bill, 3 June 2022

Government Parties (for the bill)		Opposition Parties (against the bill)	
Palang Pracharat Party (PPP)	96	Phuea Thai (PT) Party	123
Bhumjaithai Party	62	Move Forward Party	46
Democrat Party	51	Thai Liberal Party	10
Chatthai Pattana Party	12	Prachachat Party	6
Action Coalition Party	5	For the National Party	6
New Economics Party	5	New Economics Party (defectors)	1
Thai Local Power Party	5	Thai Civilised Party	1
Chatpattana Party	4	Thai People Power Party	1
Thai Forest Conservation Party	2		
Eight micro-parties,* each with one MP	8		
Thai Economic Party	16		
Phuea Thai Party (defectors)	7		
Move Forward Party (defectors)	4		
Prachachat Party (defectors)	1		
Total	278		194

As of 3 June 2022, the House of Representatives had 479 active MPs. Two MPs from the PT were absent from the vote on the bill. House Speaker Chuan Leekpai abstained, along with Move Forward’s MP Kasemsant Meethip. Deputy House Speaker Suchart Tancharoen was present but did not vote.

* They are the Thai Teachers for People Party, the Thai Rak Dham Party, the New Democracy Party, the People Progressive Party, the Phonlamueang Thai Party, the Nation Power Party, the New Phalang Dharma Party, and the Phuea Chatthai Party.

Source: The House of Representatives Secretariat (https://msbis.parliament.go.th/ewtadmin/ewt/parliament_report/download/vote_detail/20220606084604A2.pdf, accessed 28 June 2022).

⁸ Dr Narumon Pinyosinwat is known to be a close ally of Captain Thammanat. She remains a member of the PPP’s executive committee and in fact continues to serve as the party’s treasurer.

⁹ “ปชช. ชี้มูล ‘กนกวรรณ’ รมช. ศธ. ผิดข้อหารุกป่าเขาใหญ่ พ่วงฝ่าฝืนจริยธรรม” [NACC identifies valid evidence against Deputy Education Minister Kanokwan for encroaching on Khao Yai National Park, plus violation of ethical standards], *Kom Chad Luek*, 9 June 2022 (www.komchadluek.net/news/518134, accessed 18 June 2022). Also accused by the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) was Kanokwan’s father, Sunthorn Wilawan, who is head of the Prachinburi Provincial Administration. Sunthorn at first disappeared, fleeing an arrest warrant, but surrendered to the police on 21 June. Deputy Education Minister Kanokwan surrendered to the police to face charges, and has been released on bail pending a hearing in court. If the court accepts the prosecutor’s case against her and orders the termination of her service as an MP, she will immediately lose her cabinet post.

Likewise, Deputy Interior Minister Nipon, who is not an MP, is also awaiting a court decision. If it goes against him, he will immediately lose his cabinet post.

¹⁰ “ฝ่ายค้านปัด เกียะเจียะ” [Opposition dismisses talks about compromise], *Siam Rath*, 16 June 2022 (<https://www.siamrath.co.th/n/357466>, accessed 18 June 2022).

¹¹ See note 6 above.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ The New Economics Party with six MPs, the Thai Local Power Party with five MPs, the Thai Forest Conservation Party with two MPs, and eight micro-parties with only a single MP each; see details in note 7 above.

¹⁴ In the 2019 general election, the allocation rate was one party-list House seat per 71,123 votes. Consequently, 12 parties, each with collected votes ranging from 73,421 votes (Phalang Chatthai) to 33,787 votes (Thai Rak Dham) were given one party-list House seat apiece. Eleven of them, the exception being Thai People Power, joined the ruling coalition. Subsequently, Thai Civilised turned to join the opposition. Three of the 11 micro-parties in the ruling coalition, People Reform, Pracha Niyom, and Thai People Justice, have dissolved themselves and joined the PPP.

¹⁵ The latest records of the Office of the Election Commission show that, as of 14 March 2022, there were 87 parties in operation. Only 24 of them — 17 in the ruling coalition and seven in the opposition — have had active MPs. See https://www.ect.go.th/ect_th/download/article/article_20220315134054.pdf, accessed 20 June 2022. See also “‘คทาเทพ’ โว 82 พรรคเล็กหนุน ส.ส. ใช้ 500 หากเลือกตั้ง ได้ ส.ส. 57 ที่นั่ง” [‘Krathathep’ claims 82 parties support the idea of using 500 as the divider; this will enable them to win up to 57 party-list House seats], *Banmuang*, 11 June 2022 (www.banmuang.co.th/news/region/283892, accessed 20 June 2022). Krathathep Techadej-ruerngkul is leader of one of the eight government micro-parties, Phuea Chatthai.

¹⁶ In the 5 June 2019 selection of a new prime minister, 249 of the 250 senators voted for General Prayut Chan-ocha, who won the premiership with a total of 500 votes, including 251 votes from elected MPs in 17 parties. His rival, Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, leader of the Future Forward Party, received only 244 votes, all from MPs in 7 parties. Most of the 250 senators were hand-picked in 2018 by a secretive search committee headed by General Prawit Wongsuwan when Thailand was under the rule of the military regime headed by General Prayut. In accordance with the terms of the military-sponsored 2017 Constitution, the appointed senators shall continue to take part in the selection of every new prime minister during their five-year term, ending in May 2024.

¹⁷ “ตั้ง ‘ณัฐวุฒิ ไสยเกื้อ’ นั่ง ผอ. ครอบครัวยุโรป ไทย ดูกลับแฟนคลับเสื้อแดง” [‘Nattawut Saikua’ appointed director of operations of the Phuea Thai Family to woo Red Shirts to join the fan club,] *Thansettakij Business News*, 14 June 2022 (www.thansettakij.com/politics/528795, accessed 20 June 2022). Nattawut was formerly one of the most prominent leaders of the Red Shirts. He served as deputy minister of commerce and deputy minister of agriculture in the PT-led coalition government of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, 2011-2014.

¹⁸ “บุคคลที่ประชาชนสนับสนุนให้เป็นนายกรัฐมนตรีในวันนี้” [The person whom the people support to be the prime minister today], *NIDA Poll*, 26 June 2022 (https://www.nidapoll.nida.ac.th/survey_detail?survey_id=580, accessed 28 June 2022). The survey was conducted between 20 and 23 June 2022. Note that fully 18.68 per cent of respondents to the survey could not yet specify an individual whom they considered suitable for the premiership.

¹⁹ See the author’s “How Much Longer Can Thailand’s Prime Minister Rule Before Reaching the Eight-Year Limit”, *ISEAS Perspective* 2021/139, 27 October 2021 (<https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2021-139>, accessed 28 June 2022).

²⁰ “‘นายก’ โว วันนี้อะไรก็ดีไปหมด ประเทศสุขสงบ ลั่น ไม่อยู่นตายรัง” [‘Prime Minister’ claims today everything is good, the country is at peace; affirms will not die in the nest], *Bangkok Business News*, 6 June 2022 (www.bangkokbiznews.com/politics/1008479, accessed 20 June 2022). “Not to die in the nest” means not to die while in power as the prime minister.

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