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POLITICAL PARTIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Andreas Ufen

The focus of this chapter is on regimes with democratic breakthroughs (though not always successful in the long run) during the third wave of democratisation. In Southeast Asia, the cases are the Philippines (1986), Thailand (1992), Indonesia (1998), East Timor (2002) and Malaysia (2018). Myanmar, Cambodia and Singapore and closed authoritarian regimes such as Vietnam, Laos and Brunei are excluded. Myanmar is still essentially military-controlled, although the National League for Democracy (NLD) has won in elections against the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) that is close to the military leaders. In Cambodia and Singapore, the hegemony of single parties (the Cambodian People's Party or CPP and the People's Action Party or PAP in Singapore) is so marked that party competition is weak. This is all the more true of nominally socialist countries like Vietnam and Laos ruled by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) and the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), respectively. Brunei is still an absolute monarchy without parliament.

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It is common knowledge that political parties in Southeast Asia are usually weak, ridden by 'money politics' and clientelism, do not have meaningful platforms, are factionalised and dominated by rich men (Sachsenroeder and Frings 1998; Manikas and Thornton 2003; Dalton, Shin and Chu 2008; Blondel, Inoguchi and Marsh 2012; Tomsa and Ufen 2013; Hicken and Kuhonta 2014). Nevertheless, there are still evident differences between parties and party systems.

This chapter starts with an analysis of party systems with relatively well-rooted parties and then of those with a strong impact of clientelism, factions and clans. In the second part, common features of party systems as well as gaps and emergent research areas are identified. The chapter shows that in general political parties rooted in social milieus and formed by social movements or by leaders with strong connections to such movements are better institutionalised than those with poor links to voters and supporters and with a low programmatic profile.

The significance of cleavages and rooted parties

There are three examples of party systems that have been characterised by parties that are quite well rooted in socio-cultural milieus and/or are programmatically quite strong: Indonesia, Malaysia and East Timor. In Indonesia, the party system was already shaped by strong cleavages in the 1950s. The four biggest parties, the PNI (Partai Nasional Indonesia, Indonesian

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National Party), the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia, Communist Party of Indonesia), Masyumi (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia, Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims) and Nahdatul Ulama (Renaissance of Islamic scholars) represented so-called *aliran* or 'streams' (Geertz 1963). The four parties had their own affiliated mass organisations and their supporters were mostly secular (PNI and the PKI) or Islamic (NU and Masyumi), concentrated in Java (PNI, NU and PKI) or the Outer Islands (Masyumi), rural-based (NU) or centred in urban areas (especially Masyumi). Moreover, a class cleavage separated the PKI from the other parties. The PKI and the PNI existed previously for decades under the Dutch colonial regime, NU emerged at the beginning of the century as a traditionalist Muslim organisation and Masyumi was created by the Japanese during their occupation of the Indonesian archipelago. These political parties in the 1950s were rooted in social milieus, but with the exception of the PKI not very well organised.

Under President Suharto during the authoritarian New Order regime (1966–1998), party politics was strongly tamed with two semi-opposition parties representing secular and/or non-Muslim (PDI) or orthodox Islamic (PPP) voters, but with a new regime party, Golkar (Golongan Karya or Functional Groups). Golkar was a hegemon always winning over 60 per cent of the votes in manipulated elections. With re-democratisation in 1998/99, the party system of the 1950s re-emerged to an extent (King 2003a), but this time without the banned PKI (many of whose members and supporters fell victim to systematic slaughtering in the mid-1960s), with Golkar as a kind of catch-all party, but with successors of the PNI (now: Golkar (Golongan Karya), of NU (now: PKB, National Awakening Party) and a few other Islamic parties, partly as successors of NU, Masyumi and/or the PPP.

The 1999 elections were the first since 1955 held freely and fairly. The proportional system without threshold resulted in a proliferation of parties. Moreover, the parliamentary system with a special assembly electing the president was so inappropriate that it caused a deep rift between the president and members of parliament. Subsequently, lawmakers introduced a full presidential system with direct presidential elections since 2004 (see Horowitz 2013). This was complemented by direct local elections at different levels since 2004/2005, a parliamentary threshold (currently at 4 per cent) and open candidate lists (fully established since 2009). The number of parties has been reduced via a regulation demanding parties to have branches nationwide. Therefore, with the exception of Aceh regional parties are disallowed. These institutional reforms have somehow not only stabilised the relationship between president and parliament but also propelled a focus on candidates rather than parties and on presidential elections. An individual wishing to be elected as mayor, governor or president needs large financial resources or has to be backed by very wealthy businessmen seeking direct access to the executive in order to facilitate their commercial operations (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). These weaknesses still exist and have been compounded in recent years by dealignment, the fragmentation of the party system and the emergence of a few programmatically hollow political parties used as mere vehicles for would-be presidential candidates (Ufen 2018).

Parties are less rooted since 1998, and they are increasingly dependent on rich people at the top. The lack of leftist parties and the detachment of parties from most social mass organisations such as trade unions or peasant associations have left an ideological vacuum that is mostly filled by a politicised Islam (Fossati 2019), by technocratic ideas or by populist sentiments. Even the religious cleavage is not strongly represented in the party system. This is primarily because radical groups organise opposition outside of the parliament (Mietzner and Muhtadi 2018, 490). Moreover, due to the introduction of a full presidential system, there are now several parties in parliament that function as mere vehicles for presidential candidates (Ufen 2018). In addition, political parties tend to build grand coalitions or cartels (Slater 2018). Consequently, party

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identification is currently low and fell from almost 90 per cent in 1999 to about 20 per cent in 2014. Party membership decreased to around 5 per cent (Kenny 2018, 39).

In Malaysia, the nationalist movement was weaker than in the Netherlands–Indies, political parties and mass organisations were established late, and the transfer of power from the British colonial government to the indigenous elites was relatively smooth. During a period of 'emergency', the British had worn down the Malayan Communist Party and in parallel had prepared the country for independence by supporting rather conservative, ethnically based parties such as UMNO (United Malays National Organisation), the MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) and the MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress).

Because of deep ethnic and religious cleavages as well as a divide between status quo and reformist forces, the electoral system has produced multiple political parties. Since 1957, most parties have represented predominantly one of the three major ethnic groups (Saravanamuttu 2016). Because Malays were at the time often poor peasants led by aristocrats within UMNO, whereas the ethnic Chinese were economically usually better off, ethnicity has always been connected to class differences. Moreover, because Malays are always Muslims (this according to a definition in the Constitution), a religious cleavage sustains the ethnic one. The competition between UMNO and the PAS (Parti Islam SeMalaysia – Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) has deepened this cleavage over the years. Moreover, the electoral authoritarian system has produced an overarching cleavage separating pro-regime parties from those who want major reforms.

Malaysia took over major elements of the British majoritarian plurality system, with 222 MPs are now elected in single-member districts (SMDs). There is a tendency, especially since the late 1990s, to coordinate the nomination of candidates among parties so that in many cases one candidate from the ruling coalition has competed with one from the opposition coalition. In addition, in the two East Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah, regional parties play an important role. The ruling coalition (until 2018 the National Front or Barisan Nasional) has been able to manipulate national and state elections and to systematically restrict political rights and civil liberties. Opposition parties were weak until the late 1990s and did not have a realistic chance of winning elections. But splits in the hegemonic UMNO in 1999 and 2015 and the rise of a civil society *Reformasi* movement with links to the opposition parties resulted in a surprising defeat of the governing coalition in 2018 (Ufen 2020). Afterwards, intensive debates about reforming the electoral system were initiated. The new government (2018–2020) tried to fundamentally reform the electoral system, but failed due to strong civil society and parliamentary opposition and legal hindrances.

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Whereas Indonesia is a case of growing dealignment, and Malaysia's party system is now highly fragmented and characterised by factionalism, party-switching and shifting coalitions, but still with some relatively well-institutionalised parties, in East Timor a multi-party system has evolved within a political environment shaped by its liberation struggle and guerrilla heritage. East Timor has conducted free and fair elections in 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017 and 2018. Formally, the president in the semi-presidential system is weak, but every president since Xanana Gusmão (2002–2007), has been able to wield enormous informal power. Political parties were established at the end of Portuguese colonialism in 1974/75. After the invasion by Indonesian military, the Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor-Leste or FRETILIN led a guerrilla war against an oppressive regime. During the occupation, FRETILIN changed from a Marxist organisation to one accepting multi-partyism and democracy (Sindre 2016), and the independence movement was increasingly split into factions dominated by guerrilla fighters, civilians and diplomats, respectively. When East Timor finally reached independence in 2002 under an UN administration, the FRETILIN party won 55 out of 88 seats, whereas the opposition consisting of 11 parties was fragmented (King 2003b). This predominant party

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system with FRETILIN acting as the sole legitimate voice of the Timorese people underwent fundamental change with the emergence of the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (*Conselho Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor*, CNRT) under Xanana Gusmão. In 2007, after the country had experienced months of bitter intra-elite fights leading to unrest in different parts of the island, Gusmão assembled a governing coalition (with 39 out of 65 seats), but it was seen as illegitimate by the FRETILIN party; it was only after the 2012 parliamentary election that FRETILIN accepted defeat. In 2015, surprisingly, Gusmão initiated single-handedly the formation of a government of 'national unity' and Rui Maria de Araújo from FRETILIN became prime minister. All four parties represented in the national parliament took part in the new government. Yet the 2017 elections resulted in a FRETILIN minority government that was soon challenged by the opposition coalition, the Change for Progress Alliance (AMP) led by CNRT. Early elections in 2018 were won by the AMP and the old polarisation between forces around FRETILIN (including the new President Francisco Guterres) and the AMP with Prime Minister Taur Matan Ruak re-emerged. Polarisation between the two sides then palpably increased in 2020 when the CNRT-led coalition collapsed.

East Timor's politics is strongly personalised. This is enhanced by party leaders deciding on the ranking of candidates on the party list (Shoesmith 2020). It is difficult to identify cleavages in the party system. At least in the 2007 elections, a divide between Easterners, *Lorosa'e* (or *Firaku*), the 'true resistance fighters', and Westerners, *Loromonu* (or *Kaladi*), was reflected in divergent geographical support. But otherwise, the two biggest parties are little different programmatically. They are relatively strong in terms of party identification because of the past as a guerrilla movement (FRETILIN and CNRT), but FRETILIN is less dependent on a single charismatic leader and better organised than CNRT (Berlie 2018).

In summary, many political parties in Indonesia, Malaysia and East Timor have been relatively well rooted since independence, although with decreasing intensity in Indonesia and with a high degree of personalisation in East Timor.

The predominance of clientelism, clans and factions

Parties in the Philippines and Thailand have historically been clientelistic networks (Ufen 2008b), although in Thailand since the late 1990s, a few parties have started to develop stronger links to supporters and voters.

In the Philippines, parties were founded during American colonial rule. When the first national elections were conducted in 1907, some of the patterns of clientelism and elitism were already put in place. In the following years, the NP, a party dominated by rich landowners, controlled party politics. After national independence in 1946, two parties, the NP (Nacionalista Party) and the LP (Liberal Party), competed with each other within a presidential system modelled after the U.S. model (Hutchcroft and Rocamora 2003). The electoral democracy was dominated by wealthy families who usurped the two political parties and whose members from time-to-time switched parties. These two parties were programmatically almost identical, organisationally very weak and consisted of patron-client networks reaching down to the local level. The still dominant patron-client model was at that time popularised by Landé (1965), later refined and altered by Machado (1974), Kimura (1998) and Sidel (1999).

When under President Ferdinand Marcos, martial law was introduced in 1972, and party politics came to a standstill for a few years. Yet a range of (rigged) elections in the final years of the authoritarian Marcos regime allowed for the formation of opposition alliances. A legacy of the Marcos era was the establishment of new parties and coalitions that contributed to the formation of a multi-party system after 1986. Other reasons for the fragmentation of the party

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system until today are the one-term limit of the presidency that discourages the building of solid party structures and motivates the formation of often short-term presidential vehicles.

The presidential system has contributed to weakening political parties. Senators are elected nationwide with the whole country as one electoral district. The 1987 constitution prescribes a first-past-the-post system for all elective officials: president, vice president, senators, MPs, local chief executives, and local legislators. Members of the House of Representatives are elected in SMDs. In addition, up to 20 per cent of the seats in the House of Representatives are reserved for party list candidates who run for parties or organisations each of which can win up to three seats. The party-list system allows civil society organisations and social movements representing the marginalised sector according to the Party-list System Act. Yet often they are front organisations for elite politicians. In the 2019 midterm elections, 134 groups took part and 51 of them won at least one seat.

Yet the parties of the presidents are able to attract most MPs of the other parties because he/she disposes of major patronage resources. Accordingly, some 'dominant presidential parties' (Teehankee 2020, 110) have emerged over time, such as the *Labanng Demokratikong Pilipino* under the administration of Corason Aquino; the Lakas NUCD-UMDP under Fidel Ramos; the *Lapian ng Masang Pilipino* (LAMP) under Joseph Estrada; the Lakas-Kampi-CMD under Gloria Macapagal Arroyo; the LP under Benigno Aquino III; and the *Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan* (PDP-Laban) under Rodrigo Duterte.

But a consolidation 'into two major coalitions representing the administration and opposition forces' took place only until 2010 (Teehankee 2020, 114). There are, for example, regional (Landé 1996, 148) or centre-periphery cleavages (McAllister 2008, 83), but these hardly structure the party system as such (Manacsa and Tan 2005). All in all, Philippine political parties are 'candidate-centred coalitions of provincial bosses, political machines, and local clans' (Teehankee 2012, 188), factionalised, programmatically weak, and subject to frequent dissolutions and to party-switching. Coalitions are so ephemeral and diverse that most voters elect candidates regardless of their party allegiances. In between elections, party organisation is usually shallow.

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In Thailand, parties were from the beginning elitist and programmatically weak and were largely unable to translate social cleavages into the party system (Kuhonta 2014). Vote-canvasser networks developed prior to the formation of political parties. During the 1930s, political parties (aside from the then ruling People's Party) were banned. Party activities started in 1946 with frequent interventions by the armed forces (in total, there were 22 military coups in Thai history) that dominated politics until 1992, and then again during 2006–2008 and 2014–2019 (Chambers and Waitoolkiat 2020, 147). Sometimes, the army created their own parties. Furthermore, the monarch has directly interfered politically from time to time at critical junctures. The 20 constitutions and 7 laws governing political parties that were implemented in the period from 1955 to 2018 included all kinds of legal loopholes and are also testimony to this erratic development.

For a long time, officers and bureaucrats stood at the centre of a 'bureaucratic polity' (Riggs 1966), but there were intermezzi with a high degree of popular mobilisation between 1973 and 1976 when leftist parties took part in elections. Generally, elitist parties shallowly represented conservative royalists, Bangkok centralists, and their respective opponents. Between 1980 and 1988, Thailand morphed into a military-controlled hybrid regime with competitive elections for the national parliament and a second chamber with appointed senators. In this period local politicians and businesspeople as 'godfathers' or *chao pho* formed regional vote – canvasser networks. In the early 1990s, Thailand was an electoral democracy with unstable governments. The new Constitution in 1997 established a mixed-member system with 400 SMDs and 100 seats determined through proportional elections with national party list seats substituting the

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MMD plurality elections formerly used to elect the House of Representatives. Members of the Senate who were not allowed to be party members were for the first time directly elected. The comprehensive 1997 reforms contributed to decreasing the effective number of parties in the parliament from 6.2 to 3.1 in 2001 and 1.6 in 2005 (Sawasdee 2012, 151), but they also ironically paved the way for the dominance of the Thai Rak Thai (TRT, 'Thais Love Thais'), the first party able to survive the full legislative period in Thai politics. Its leader Thaksin Shinawatra employed managers from his own corporation to serve the TRT, paid MPs extra salaries, and made other parties or factions of them join his party (McCargo and Pathmanand 2005; Pasuk and Baker 2009). Thaksin's rise was also due to the political party act of 1998 that brought finances more under the control of party executives. TRT was innovative not only because of new organisational structures but also because of a platform based on policy innovations such as basic health care schemes. It forced other parties to follow suit in sharpening their programmatic profiles.

The TRT hegemony caused resistance by the military and the monarchy as well as their supporters and prompted a strong polarisation within Thai society with fierce protests by so-called 'Yellow Shirts' and 'Red Shirts' (Sinpeng 2014). After two military coups in 2006 and 2014, a new constitution was promulgated in 2017: 350 constituency seats are won in plurality elections, another 150 party list seats give each party a total number of seats ('overhang seats') proportional to the nationwide number of votes they received. The prime minister is selected by the combined National Assembly including the 250 members of the Senate whose members are appointed by the military leaders. Parties now again seem to be weakened: since the July 2019 election, 'party leaders remain constitutionally unable to control MP behaviour and MP factions can easily migrate from one party to another' (Chambers and Waitoolkiat 2020, 162).

Until today, there are cleavages between the Bangkok Metropolitan Region and the periphery as well as between urban and rural voters. Yet, in general, political parties in Thailand are still organisationally and programmatically weak, remain dependent upon rich financiers and only represent these cleavages shallowly (Ockey 2005). Party switching by whole factions is not uncommon. In summary, Thailand and the Philippines are examples of predominance of clientelism and of parties with shallow social roots.

Common features of Southeast Asian party politics

Despite the differences outlined earlier, Southeast Asian parties and party systems share some characteristics: Weak party organisations, a marginalised political left, flawed candidate – and party financing, and shifting institutional landscapes. This section discusses these in closer detail.

Weak party organisation

The European-type mass organisation party is absent in the region. Many parties are rather vehicles for presidential candidates or for wealthy clans or factions led by rich businesspeople. Programmatic profiles are usually shallow and membership figures as well as party identification are low. Nevertheless, there are exceptions. There are new reform-oriented parties trying to represent younger voters such as KHUNTO in East Timor, Future Forward in Thailand (McCargo and Chattharakul 2020) or the Indonesian Solidarity Party (Partai Solidaritas Indonesia, PSI).

In East Timor, the FRETILIN party as a former rebel party is still deeply rooted at least in some parts of the country. Some parties are still able to mobilise supporters on the grounds of religion and/or ethnicity or they offer regime change such as those parties in Malaysia

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belonging to the opposition against the governing coalition around UMNO until 2018. Other parties such as Gerindra and Partai Demokrat in Indonesia or CNRT in East Timor have become popular due to charismatic leaders.

A marginalised political left

The predominance of *clientelistic* over programmatic linkages is also a result of the systematic enervation, repression or even eradication of the political left. In Indonesia, the Communist Party (PKI) and its supporters were killed or imprisoned in 1965–1968, parts of the Communist Party in the Philippines have become marginalised with only a few seats won via the party-list system as some factions opted to take up arms, the Malayan Communist Party was almost fully defeated during the emergency period (1948–1960) by the British and socialist parties were further marginalised in the 1950s and 1960s. Leftist parties that emerged in Thailand from 1973 to 1976 have been equally marginalised. FRETILIN in East Timor has a Marxist past, but has evolved into a mainstream political party. Across Southeast Asia even moderate social-democratic parties are very weak or non-existent. Thus, the usual left-right spectrum is not helpful in describing Southeast Asian party systems. Moreover, liberal or green parties exist only as rudiments in the region.

Flawed candidate and party financing

Southeast Asian parties in most cases depend on rich financiers, and candidates often finance their campaigns themselves. Membership dues are unimportant, and state subsidies, if they exist such as in Indonesia, Thailand, and East Timor, contribute only a minor share of party incomes. Disclosure requirements are often vague causing under-reporting, and weak oversight bodies are unable to scrutinise violations of regulations or enforce legislation (Ufen 2014). At the same time, expenses are rising. This trend is not yet that glaring in East Timor (Scambary 2019), but even here, major parties allegedly frequently misused the government machinery during recent election campaigns. Political financing is opaque, but the campaigning is not as sophisticated and expensive as in other Southeast Asian countries. In the Philippines, campaigning has always been very expensive. The continuous dominance of the leading clans after the fall of Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 also signifies a persistence of patronage and pork barrel politics at all political levels (Hicken, Aspinall and Weiss 2019). Costs of campaigning and costs associated with maintaining patronage networks soared in Malaysia beginning in the 1970s (Gomez 2012), but this was mostly confined to the ruling National Front coalition, especially to UMNO. While in the 1950s, UMNO was dominated by aristocrats at the top and by teachers and bureaucrats at lower levels, with economic development and globalisation, MPs became themselves businesspeople or intermediaries for entrepreneurs seeking links to the regime (Weiss 2020). In Indonesia, campaign costs surged after 1998, and in particular since the 2004 elections. Around that time, surveys, TV advertising and the employment of 'spin doctors' signified a remarkable commercialisation of politics and a growing impact of media oligarchs (Mietzner 2013; Aspinall and Sukmajati 2016; Tapsell 2017).

In recent years, patronage and vote buying have risen (Muhtadi 2019). Political parties are paid *mahar politik* or 'political dowry' for the nomination of candidates and legislators build clientelistic linkages, either via mass organisations or via brokers (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). In Thailand, expenditures by candidates and parties rose in the 1980s and 1990s with 'rural network politicians' (Sawasdee 2006) building clientelistic links and forming factions at the national level. A new dimension was the establishment of a 'business firm party', the TRT, by billionaire Thaksin (Pasuk and Baker 2009).

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Shifting institutional landscapes

Institutional frameworks in many Southeast Asian countries have been changed frequently. East Timor switched from a mixed system in 2002 to pure proportional representation in 2007 with the whole country as one constituency. Yet, elsewhere, Reilly (2015, 229) noticed a tendency to move towards electoral majoritarianism across Southeast Asia with 'distinctively majoritarian mixed-member models' in Thailand and the Philippines similar to Northeast Asia (Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Mongolia) that combine both plurality and proportional voting. In Indonesia, the open list proportional representation system uses a relatively small district magnitude resulting in a plurality system rather than a proportional one (Reilly 2015, 226).

In these young democracies, institutional engineering has been a constant preoccupation of politicians. Reformers in these countries still try to strengthen political parties by boosting party organisation or introducing state subsidies. In Indonesia, numerous reforms were the result of a protracted transition since 1998 involving substantial sections of the old New Order elites and at times vigorous civil society actors demanding fundamental changes. A legacy of institutions not well designed for a democratic polity has contributed to necessitating numerous institutional reforms (Horowitz 2013). In Thailand, the introduction of new constitutions every few years, frequent military coups, and relatively short democratic intermezzi have prevented the development of strong parties and stable, reliable rules of the game. In Malaysia, in addition to the legal restraints on political rights and civil liberties, the design of electoral laws favoured the ruling coalition by means of gerrymandering, malapportionment and political financing (Ostwald 2017). For this reason, the main priority of opposition parties and civil society organisations in Malaysia such as the electoral reform movement *Bersih* is to alter election and party laws.

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Conclusions and avenues for further research

The literature on political developments in Southeast Asia are single-country studies that mostly focus on elections and on the visible political altercations at the national level. Moreover, there is little research comparing different parties or party systems based on political science approaches, for example regarding party types, party structure/organisation and party institutionalisation.[1] This is also due to a scarcity of reliable data. The extreme instability of party systems in Thailand and the Philippines, that is, the frequency of party-switching by single MPs and whole factions, of party dissolutions, of regime and constitutional changes (in Thailand) render it almost impossible to identify enduring patterns. Many of the indicators measuring, for example, electoral volatility or party and party system institutionalisation are difficult to apply, because patron-client networks as well as factions are often more important entities than political parties. To date, methodologically most scholars are oriented towards qualitative designs, but the use of surveys and the examination of voter behaviour with quantitative data is on the rise (e.g. Mujani, Liddle and Ambardi 2018).

Surprisingly, there are also few monographs on single political parties,[2] on party systems (Sawasdee 2006; Mietzner 2013), or on sub-national party systems. There is, however, a diverse corpus of literature on local elections, especially in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Emerging areas of research are the role of social media in political campaigns, for example, the impact of fake news and trolls (Tapsell 2017; Sinpeng, Gueorguiev and Arugay 2020; Tan 2020), the often-flawed participation of women in legislatures and parties,[3] the complex relationship between candidates/parties and social movements (Sinpeng 2014; Tomsa and Setijadi 2018), and populism.

The fight over general political questions sometimes takes place outside of the usual channels of parties and parliaments. Examples are the polarisation between pro-Thaksin 'Red Shirts' and

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anti-Thaksin 'Yellow Shirts' in Thailand and the politicisation of Islam and ethnicity within the Indonesian and the Malaysian civil societies. The trend of polarisation and politicisation also partly explains the growing populist mobilisation in many Southeast Asian countries. In Indonesia, this led to the controversial downfall of the governor of Jakarta in 2017 and to presidential elections in 2014 and 2019 marked by a heated competition between Joko Widodo (Mietzner 2015), who eventually won both elections, and his challenger, former General Prabowo Subianto. Even Islamists are, according to some analysts, part of this populist wave (Hadiz and Robison 2017). Whereas in the Philippines, populists (if we accept a wide definition) frequently emerged ahead of presidential elections with politicians such as Fernando Poe, Joseph Estrada and Rodrigo Duterte (Curato 2017; Thompson 2022), in Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra started to use populist styles and strategies rather late in his career when he increasingly came under pressure as Prime Minister (2001–2006) and was finally toppled by a military coup (Hewison 2017). In all these cases, weak parties and the personalisation of politics have played a part.

Notes

1 See on institutionalisation: Croissant and Völkel 2012; Hicken and Kuhonta 2014; on factions: Chambers and Ufen 2020; on clientelism: Tomsa and Ufen 2013.
2 For exceptions, see McCargo and Pathmanand 2005; Askew 2008; Tomsa 2008; Noor 2014; Welsh 2016; McCargo and Chattharakul 2020.
3 See Bjarnegård 2013; Prihatini 2019; Perdana and Hillman 2020; Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs 2021.

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