
THAI DEMOCRACY: NOT RIGHT NOW

thesis
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1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy first appeared in Thailand in 1932 when the monarchy was overthrown by revolution. The revolution led to the country's first constitution. The introduction of a constitution however has not resulted in continuous civilian rule. The military took over government in 1957, 1976, 1991 and lastly in 2006. The October 1973 mass uprising was the first time that a revolution had actually started from below. The second mass popular uprising in May 1992 successfully threw out the military resulting in a broad movement for political reform. These events eventually led to the creation of the 1997 Constitution (Albritton, 2002; Englehart, 2003; Ji Ungkaporn, 2002).

Thailand looked well on its way to becoming a democracy that could sustain, in the literature known as a consolidated democracy. Thai elites had accepted the constitution from 1997. If not because of intrinsic motivation than the elites had learned that military coups endanger economic development and prosperity (Englehart, 2003). Stability had arrived in February 2005 when Thaksin's TRT party again won the elections. For the first time a premier served a full four years term and was elected for a second (Freedom House, 2010). It was as if the Highley and Gunther description of a consolidated democracy had been realized in Thailand (Highley, 1992). However, in September 2006 a military coup was staged against Thaksin through which Thailand lost its "most democratic constitution ever". Followed in August 2007 by the acceptance in a referendum of a less democratic constitution (Englehart, 2003: 277; Mikami, 2008).

The abolishment of a democratically elected government in a military coup was not met by public anger in Thailand. One explanation might be some ambivalence within the Thai society towards the concepts "democracy" and "good governance" (Albritton, 2009:3). Another interpretation might be that the appreciation of democracy by Thai is based on the demanded outcomes like social order and economic stability, not the participation and individual freedom democracy has on offer to the masses (Sil, 2004).

This thesis examines whether changes in public opinion on support for democracy can explain the decline of democracy in Thailand. My goal is to better understand what factors, according to literature, explain public support for democracy, and how relevant these factors have been in Thailand. The better understanding of what influences public opinion on democracy might shed light on how the chances of survival for democracy can be improved. In particular, this thesis focuses on the role of public opinion in the decline of democracy in Thailand, examining three research questions: 1) How do Thai understand democracy? 2) How has public support for democracy in Thailand evolved from 2002 to 2006? And 3) what may be possible explanations for these changes in public support for democracy?

The thesis starts off with a literature review. The literature review provides a framework for understanding the development in Thai politics from a wider context. The answers to the research questions will be used to answer the question which of the identified explanations has influenced public opinion towards

democracy most in Thailand. The possible explanations will be derived from literature on democratic consolidation and literature on Thailand. The section on democratic breakdown also analyses circumstances specific to the Thai context. The literature review is also used to reveal expectations or assumptions that might be applicable for Thailand. These expectations and assumptions will be formulated into hypotheses and tested. The answers to the research questions will be briefly discussed and lead up to the conclusion, the final part of the thesis.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

Of the many forces influencing a democracy's chance of survival, legitimacy in the eyes of its own people is one feature no democratic regime can endure without (Chang, 2006: 66). Legitimacy of a regime means a generally positive orientation among the populace toward the political regime. A regime is legitimate to the extent that the populace regards it as providing a satisfactory order and believes that no available alternative would be vastly superior (Sil, 2004: 347). The continuity of democratic rule depends on the willingness of citizens to embrace democracy "both as a regime and as a set of political practices" (Sin, 2005: 90). The importance of commitment to democracy by both elite and citizens is emphasized by Mattes as the "single direct determinant" for the chances for a democracy to endure (Mattes, 1998: 96) and by Fukuyama as "democracy requires popular consensus and works only if the vast majority believe that it is legitimate" (Fukuyama, 2007: 28). Linz and Stepan stated that the attitudinal aspect of a consolidated democracy is reflected through public opinion. A strong majority of the public should believe that democratic procedures and institutions are the only acceptable means to govern collective life. Such a majority should be present regardless the state of the economy or the approval rates for politicians at any moment (Linz, 1996).

In order to know about the legitimacy of a political system scholars have investigated the attitudes of citizens towards the political system (Anderson, 2005). Public opinion is crucial in determining if a regime is legitimate because public opinion presents the judgments of citizens. Surveys into the public opinion open the possibility to assess the public support for a regime empirically (Chang, 2006: 67). Therefore, public opinion might well be the "the very lifeblood of democracy" as the existence of opinion is the fundamental guide to political action (Taber, 2003: 434). Public opinion polls appear to be a more inclusive form of political representation than traditional forms as campaign volunteerism, magnifying the voice of less privileged towards the resource rich part of society (Berinsky, 1998). As such public opinion, representing the point of view of mass public, indicates the mandate the people have given democracy and the actors in democracy (Bunce, 2003). These surveys also might indicate how far democratic regimes have moved toward consolidation and, might hint at both supportive and destructive factors (Chu, 2010). The periodic measurement of public opinion in one or more countries, also labeled as barometers, enables scholars to address political systems over time in one or more countries (Diamond, 2001:1).

Returning to Linz and Stepan, Fukuyama and Mattes, it is not possible to specify an absolute level of support necessary for regimes to survive. However, new democracies lacking institutions capable of overcoming

fundamental challenges are more vulnerable than established regimes regardless substantial public approval. It means “that stable or increasing support for democracy facilitates the survival of democratic regimes, whereas declining support puts regimes at increasing risk.” Next to increasing support, in order for the democratic regime to survive support must also be widely distributed within society (Mishler, 1996: 555). The first hypothesis stems from Mishler’s statement that for a young democracy to survive, public support for democracy should increase or at least be stable. The stability of Thai democracy in 2006 is checked along Mishler’s reasoning, H_1 : *Public support for democracy in Thailand has declined in the period from 2002 to 2006.*

3. DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION AND DEMOCRATIC BREAKDOWN

Regime legitimacy differs from democratic consolidation. Whereas legitimacy is measured by its output (Sil, 2004), democratic consolidation is measured by the conformation to organizational and procedural principles (Albritton, 2005). Consolidated democracy can be defined as “a minimal or electoral democracy that has already lasted for some period of time, and that can be expected to last into the future” (Doorenspleet, 2008a: 702). More profound is the description by Linz and Stepan as a consolidated democracy means “1) no national, social, economic, or institutional constituencies attempt to create a non-democratic regime or secede from the state; 2) a strong majority of public opinion believes that democratic institutions and procedures are the most appropriate way to govern, even in the face of major economic problems or dissatisfaction with incumbents; 3) governmental and nongovernmental groups accept the control of laws, procedures, and institutions created through democratic processes” (Albritton, 2009: 5; Linz, 1996).

For a country to arrive at the state of democratic consolidation Diamond named five elements as crucial. The first is the rule of law. Horizontal accountability is the second element delivering distribution of powers between the different institutions. Third, civil society is essential for a proper functioning of democracy. The respect for minorities and their entitlement to forms of self government is fourth. Finally, an institutionalized party system is blissful to consolidate democracies (Diamond, 2000).

Democracy did not consolidate nor survive in Thailand. When the core rules of democratic competition are no longer obeyed it is labeled as breakdown. Democratic breakdown occurs when countries fall into non-institutionalized, or unstable democracies (Doorenspleet, 2008a). Several scholars addressed the reasons for a democracy to collapse. Diskin’s analysis into the role of independent variables on democratic stability shows that no single variable is capable of predicting democratic breakdown. A combination of factors is key to the demise of democracy. The most crucial of such factors are cleavages within society, malfunctioning economy, unfavorable history, government instability, and foreign involvement. If four of these negative factors appear simultaneously, the democratic regime is almost doomed to collapse (Diskin, 2005).

An example of unfavorable circumstances are interventions by military. Democracies that were preceded by a military dictatorship face significantly lower chances of becoming consolidated than democracies preceded by civilian dictatorship, a monarchy or, those democracies not independent before the transition to

democracy (Svolik, 2008). Belkin and Schofer found three structural causes for coup risk. A strong civil society is a hindrance for a coup attempt and for it to succeed. Trade unions and voluntary organizations around the world have shown to be capable of taming the military. Also openness towards political entrepreneurs and older age regimes seem better able to prevent coups. Legitimacy, especially the lack of legitimacy, as was explained in the former paragraph is a second cause for understanding coup risks. A coup will experience popular support if the new regime is believed to be superior to the regime that is replaced. Finally, a positive association exists between the amount of coups in a country in recent times and the chances of coup in the near future (Belkin, 2003).

Looking at Thailand with what is known about breakdown, breakdown can be seen inevitable. Both Svolik and Belkin mentioned that a history of coups, as occurred in Thailand, are predictors of another coup. Beside the history of military coups in Thailand (Albritton, 2002), the military leaders also claimed to have a role in politics (Pongsudhirak, 2008) emphasized by the acclaimed governing of the military by the Thai people and King instead of by political rule (Albritton, 2009; Pathmanand, 2008). Also four out of Diskin's five predictive variables for democratic breakdown can be identified in Thailand in 2006 (Diskin, 2005). Nearly all factors mentioned by Diskin are recognizable in Thailand in the years to 2006. Thailand had to engage economic stagnation (Phongpaichit, 2005). Thailand also lacked a strong civil society to prevent a military coup (Englehart, 2003; Mikami, 2008). Although the 1997 Constitution made the entrance of Thaksin into Thai politics possible, he was not welcomed at all. The least by those with nested interests (McCargo, 2005; Phongpaichit, 2005). Foreign involvement cannot be identified as a directly influential variable. However, foreign investment can be identified as a factor causing cleavages between elites in Thailand because of its political implications.

Privatization and deregulation, neo-liberal reforms in Thailand after the crisis in the late nineties, resulted in the dominance of international capital in Thai economy. That dominance of foreign capital harmed the position of the established Thai business elite. To restore their position domestic capitalists created coalitions to try to seize political power enabling them to shape markets and institutions to their commercial needs (Case, 2009; Hewison, 2005).

Next to the causes identified from literature analysis also cleavages within Thai elites might be a cause for Thai democracy to breakdown. The next chapter identifies these cleavages and explores the importance of each of the cleavages on the breakdown of democracy in Thailand.

4. CLEAVAGES IN THAI SOCIETY

At least three cleavages between elites can be recognized in Thailand, all of which will be explored in the next paragraphs. The first cleavage is the one separating royalists from populists like Thaksin. The second cleavage is the one between civilian rule and the military. A third cleavage is the one between Bangkok and rural Thailand.

4.1 ROLE OF ELITES

Schumpeter has described democracy as “the institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Schumpeter, 1947: 269). Central to his argumentation is that “collectives act almost exclusively by accepting leadership” (Schumpeter, 1947: 270). According to Schumpeter democracy requires an elite.

Elites are persons that are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organizations, to affect national political outcomes regularly and substantially (Bealy, 1996: 320; Highley, 1992: 8). Because of this strategic position elites, be it political or military, are by their actions decisive for the sustainability of democracy (Bunce, 2000). The stability of any democracy depends on the agreements that can be struck among elites representing the rival organizations and popular groups (Highley, 1992). Thai history show that Thai elites have clashed more often than coalesced, even on the organization of the political system (Case, 2009; Rodan, 2009). The elite might have learned from the financial crisis in the late nineties that stability in the eyes of foreign investors also meant political stability. This understanding made Thai elite supportive towards political reform resulting in the 1997 Constitution. Thai elites appeared to have understood then that coups turned out to be threats for economic development and prosperity (Englehart, 2003).

Securing stability in Thailand including any arbitrage between competing elites has been a role for the Thai monarchy. The networks around the King sure have been active in political struggles thereby not affecting the position and the authority of the King is beyond doubt (Dressel, 2009). Nowadays the King is old and ill and, none of the eligible heirs to the throne possesses the authority to maintain this role in Thai politics (Pongsudhirak, 2008). From that perspective the royal succession might turn out to be a complicated issue to deal with for Thai democracy.

Moreover, the elites around the King and Thaksin have kept on competing. McCargo delivers interpretations from events in southern Thailand pointing at the existence of a network against Thaksin (McCargo, 2005; 2006). Thaksin Shinawatra was a political newcomer. His entry into politics was a shift from the traditionally ‘behind the scenes’ influencing by business families. It was one of the unexpected effects of the 1997 constitution and credit crisis; business people got enthusiastic for public office (Freedman, 2006; Phongpaichit, 2005). Thaksin’s increasing control over military, bureaucracy and local governments endangered the position of the monarchy that rested on a system of political patronage (Rodan, 2009). Also, Thaksin’s business group performed better after the economic crisis of the nineties than did the Crown Property Bureau (CPB), the Royal Family’s holding. Although CPB stayed the financially largest business group it felt threatened by Thaksin’s. Next to CPB other business conglomerates felt endangered and coalesced against Thaksin (Pathmanand, 2008; Rodan, 2009). This anti-Thaksin sentiment was bundled in PAD. A broad coalition of organizations and people, amongst whom also business competitors of Thaksin that took the street to protest against Thaksin (Pye, 2008). Amidst the chaos caused by street protests in Bangkok the army’s commander took over power while Thaksin was abroad (Mikami, 2008). Democratic breakdown in Thailand had occurred. What

explains that the military had the position to stage a coup without meeting public anger? That question into the relation between Thai society and the military is the topic for the next paragraph.

4.2 CIVIL MILITARY RELATIONS

Civil-military relations are a special case for democratic theory, involving designated political agents controlling designated military agents (Feaver, 1999: 215). Military elites, because of their position and the force of their organization could catapult over any institutional wall to make its way to the top (Bunce, 2000; Pion-Berlin, 2009: 565) because the coercive force that is trusted the military to protect communities, also grants them the ability to enforce their will upon the societies that created them. A fundamental premise of democracy therefore is that civilians control the military. In a democracy, the hierarchy of de jure authority favors civilians over the military, even in cases where the underlying distribution of de facto power favors the military (Feaver, 1999: 215). All societies and political regimes must ensure that the military is subordinate to legitimate political decision-makers (Croissant, 2010).

Within the Thai army there are sentiments emphasizing the role of the army in the political future of the country (Pongsudhirak, 2008). However, in the 1997 Constitution the military was denied political power explicitly by forbidding extra-constitutional acquirement of power and denial of engagement in social and economic development projects (Hicken, 2003). The institutionalization of the civilian control over the military is mostly shaped by a Ministry of Defense. That ministry is the organizational link between the democratic governance and the military that allows politicians to translate policy preferences into military commands (Pion-Berlin, 2009). "Fully fledged civilian control requires that civilian authorities enjoy uncontested decision making power in all areas of defense and security policy while in the ideal type military regime the armed forces dominate political matters" (Croissant, 2010: 955).

One can conclude that the democratic process itself has a sobering effect on the potential persistence aggressive military. The army is controlled legitimately by elected politicians or the institutions. This by no means prevents interaction between politicians and military outside the state-centered defense organizations. The results of these interaction may well influence the power equation (Pion-Berlin, 2009: 582).

Thaksin worked hard to improve his relations with the army. On one hand by placing persons from his personal network on key positions. On the other hand he eased some of the restrictions placed over the military in the 1997 Constitution. The military was allowed to participate in policymaking regarding the neighboring countries but most of all in the war against drugs (Ji Ungpakorn, 2002). Such an action is typical for countries where democracy is weakly consolidated. Civilian leaders attempt to use the armed forces to protect themselves from domestic adversaries in times of high social conflict. Too late then they discover they become victims of military praetorianism (Pion-Berlin, 2005).

Regardless his efforts to improve the relation with the army, tensions had risen between soldiers and politicians during Thaksin's reign because of several reasons. First, the insurgency in southern Thailand had

soldiers risk their lives at a daily basis. Beyond that, the commander in chief had been made responsible to come to a peace agreement with the rebels without full authority in the negotiations. Second, Thaksin had tried to place former classmates from military school on favorable positions. It had not always come out as aimed for because of constitutionally checks made by Prem Tinsulanonda, the leader of the Privy Council and also a former general. Third, contrary to Thaksin's preference General Sonthi declared that there was no need for the state of emergency in the run up to the 2006 elections since none of the demonstrations was illegal and peaceful as well. Tensions raised further when rumors spread that General Sonthi would be promoted bringing him in a politically less powerful position (Ockey, 2007: 136-137). These tensions became public when Prem stated several times that soldiers belong to the King and the country, even though the government supervises the army (Albritton, 2009; Pathmanand, 2008). And in 2002, despite the years of military dictatorship the military was nearly the most trusted institution in Thailand (Albritton, 2004). The military staging the coup attached yellow ribbons to their sleeves and weapons thereby showing their warm feelings towards the King (Pathmanand, 2008).

4.3 BANGKOK AND RURAL THAILAND

So far it is clear that the Thaksin government alienated both the royalist elite and the military. The third cleavage represents a typical feature of Thai society, the distinction between Bangkok and the rest of Thailand. The sophisticated urban people in Bangkok see democracy as a producer of political and policy experts. Those experts should know what is best for the country and the business of the country. The demand for a university degree for members of parliament in the 1997 Constitution is a strong indication of this opinion. Concerning Bangkokians democracy should deliver both personal and community benefits. Politicians with "populist" agendas might pose a direct threat to the interests of different stakeholders. That explains why in Thailand urban middle-class support for democracy primarily exists when it coincides with their interests (Albritton, 2004).

Looking into one of the differences, the experiences with corruption between Bangkok and the rural area results in an interesting paradox. Bangkokians estimate that the rural areas are more corrupt while data from the Asian Barometer indicate that Bangkokians experience corruption more often (Albritton, 2009). This either points at differences in understanding of corruption between rural areas and Bangkok or at a fixation or misconception of corruption by Bangkokians.

Rural Thailand exemplifies the agrarian nature of the nation. Roughly 80 percent of the population works in agriculture. In rural areas political activity is mostly limited to elections where candidates that can produce benefits for the local community receive mass support. Democracy is perceived as a countervailing power against the dominance by Bangkok elites. Bangkok dominated Thai politics until the introduction of democracy. The resulting shift of political power and priorities in favor of rural Thailand from 1932 onwards caused a cleavage between urban and rural Thailand holding a continuous challenge for democracy (Albritton, 2002; Albritton, 2004).

Several times the urban elites have driven out governments chosen by the rural population because these governments seemed inept and corrupt, according to the urban elites. Urban elites have showed to be willing to sacrifice democracy when they find control of government slipping from their grasp. If needed, the military would assist by threatening or the actual use of force (Case, 2009; Pye, 2008). That is exactly what happened in 2006. The second hypothesis aims at identifying the existence of a difference in the appreciation of democracy between urban Thailand and rural Thailand as suggested in this section of the literature review. H_2 : *The level of support for democracy in urban areas has declined more than it has in rural Thailand.*

This chapter intended to disclose issues specific to Thai circumstances. These issues are relevant to understand the Thai context in which the coup in September 2006 took place. The next chapter introduces literature on democratic consolidation and democratic breakdown. This literature is used to derive presumably generically applicable variables to understand and measure the development in support for democracy in Thailand.

5. INFLUENCES ON SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

So far only elites have been dealt with in this research into Thai politics. The attention for elites is justifiable from the view that the durability of a democracy depends partly on whether or not the prominent actors behave democratically (Schedler, 2001: 85). However, the main goal of this thesis is to find out if changes in public opinion towards support for democracy can explain the decline of democracy. Therefore the focus will be broadened from elites to all Thai to find answers to the question what caused breakdown in Thailand. The analysis aims to clarify the expectations and appreciation of democracy by Thai, by means of a cross cut survey through Thai society looked from a set of angles. These angles will now be introduced shortly in the next paragraphs.

5.1 ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

Economic performance is important for a young democracy to survive. If confronted with a lack of intrinsic legitimacy the survival of democracies depends on effective performance, a concept primarily measured in economical terms (Diamond, 2011). The link to economic performance is important especially since economic globalization hampers democratically elected governments in managing their national economy or protecting citizens' household economies. A strong causal relation between economic performance and commitment to democracy might endanger the sustainability of the latter (Chu, 2008: 74). This possible causal relation might lead citizens to decide that since democratic elected governments cannot protect them against economic hardship, democracy is not worth sustaining. Bad economic performance leaves democracies vulnerable, especially poor democracies.

Both the overall and personal economical situation is believed to be important for the support for democracy. Economic prosperity on the individual level is believed to lead to better appreciation of democracy

by citizens (Welzel, 2008). The hypothesis H_3 : *The better economic experiences meet individual expectations, the higher the dedication to democracy will be* will clarify if economical circumstances are relevant for the support for democracy in Thailand. The quest for democracy is done by people that have relatively ample economic and cognitive resources. These people are expected to have moved from emphasizing survival values toward emphasizing self-expression values, reflecting a synthesis of interpersonal trust, tolerance, and political activism (Welzel, 2008). The hypothesis H_2 : *Highly educated Thai or Thai with an above average income will find democracy more suitable than Thai scoring on or below average on education and income* checks the validity of Welzel's statement for Thailand.

At macro level Przeworski and Limongi noticed that no democratic country that had surpassed a certain degree of economic development, an income per capita above \$6,055 had fallen back into authoritarian rule (Przeworski, 1997). The income per capita in Thailand in grew from \$5140 in 2002 to \$6890 in 2006. The Gross Domestic Product increased in the same period from \$127 billion to \$207 billion (Worldbank). Although income per capita was well over \$6055 in Thailand, democratic breakdown occurred in Thailand in 2006.

5.2 TRUST

Next to economic performance also trust is believed to be crucial for the emergence and survival of democracy (Welzel, 2008). Several scholars have emphasized the importance of interpersonal trust for democracy (Inglehart, 2000: 34). Trust is seen as a prerequisite democracy because both participation in the democratic process and adhering to the rules of democracy depend on trust. If one does not trust its peers one cannot be expected to trust leaders and institutions that are at an even larger distance (Lagos, 2001: 144). The trust that citizens place in governmental institutions that claim to represent them is also significant for the legitimacy and effectiveness of newly democratized regimes. Examples of such institutions are the government, parliament, armed forces and, courts (Sil, 2004: 349-350). Therefore the change in appreciation or trust in government as a whole and in several institutions specifically is important to understand the events in Thailand in 2002 and 2006 (Mishler, 1996: 566).

The relevancy of trust, the identification of changes in trust in government between 2002 and 2006, and if the change in trust towards the military is different from other government institutions is checked in two hypotheses. First H_4 : *Decrease in support for democracy equals or exceeds the decline in trust in government as a whole* checks if the support for democracy in Thailand has not declined not only because of lower trust in governmental institutions but also because of other factors, not yet identified in this thesis. H_5 : *The difference of citizen's trust in the army and trust in other governmental institutions has risen between 2002 and 2006* relates to the civil-military relationship that was a topic earlier in this thesis. If this hypothesis is accepted, an explanation for the absence of public anger in Thailand after the coup in 2006 is identified.

5.3 SOCIALIZATION

Finally, socialization is important to explore since political awareness and attitude of adolescents are indications to their political behavior as adults (Krampen, 2000; Settle, 2011). Adolescence appears to be a decisive period for developing trust toward other persons, society as a whole and acceptance of authority. The preferences, attitude and generalizations acquired and obtained during one's adolescence have proven to be sustainable for a lifetime (Settle, 2011). Both parents and friendship networks influence adolescents political behavior, although the primary source of influence is food for thought and discussion among scholars (Kiousis, 2005; Settle, 2011). Next to the adolescence the political attitude is also influenced by major political events such as the Vietnam War, Watergate and 9/11 (Damico, 2000; Krampen, 2000). The last hypothesis is meant to show a possible difference among Thai because of differing socialization *H₆: The change in support for democracy from 2002 to 2006 among first time voters differs from older generations Thai.*

6. RESEARCH METHOD

So far this thesis has focused on reasons why democracy could not consolidate in Thailand. However, also without being consolidated democracies do root and survive. Svobik distinguishes between democracies that survive because they are consolidated and democracies that survive because of favorable circumstances (Svobik, 2008). What than can one conclude about the cause of breakdown of democracy in Thailand, lack of consolidation or absence of favorable conditions?

To answer that question the focus is shifted to public opinion in Thailand to find out whether decreased support for democracy has lead to the absence of anger after democracy had been replaced by yet another military coup in 2006. The goal is to identify from public opinion what made it possible for Thailand to fall from being an example of democracy back into military rule. The goal of the thesis is not only try to understand changes in the support for democracy at a generic level. Also possible differences between groups within Thai society will be researched. Before starting to systematically analyze the data first some considerations towards the method of analysis are mentioned and placed into the context of this thesis.

6.1 CONCEPTS

Democracy scholars have been criticized to have rarely formulated clear defined dependent variables in order to be able to theorize on democracy and democratic consolidation (Munck, 2001: 143). Schedler supports Munck's critiques on operationalization by noting that democratic consolidation suffers of an ensuing lack of clarity. The most salient being the problems with operationalizing the concept (Schedler, 2001: 66). Munck, on the issue of operationalizing democratic consolidation asks scholars to stop "unwarranted use of aggregate and dichotomous measures" (Munck, 2001: 143).

As a response to Munck's critique one might say that the issue for scholars using aggregates when operationalizing democratic consolidation is that citizens cannot be expected to pick and choose among different aspects of the political system, supporting some, opposing others. So when scholars ask citizens to

confront the reality of a new regime, interest goes out to their experience in its entirety, including its various institutions, leaders, and policies at the moment. Therefore a first measure of political support is to simply ask citizens to their likings of the government systems. More abstract and nuanced evaluations may develop later (Mishler, 1996: 557). Still, it might be possible to identify among significant societal groups differences in support for levels and trajectories of democracy (Mishler, 1996: 566).

Apart from the differences between groups in society in their support for democracy, the perception of what democracy is or means might differ between groups. This holds true for both the differences between western and non western citizens but also among people living in the same territory. For example, in Russia long before the break-up of the USSR some kind of democracy evolved which was linked to norms as collectivism, economic security and egalitarianism (Sil, 2004: 355). This type of democracy does not call for policies and institutions as are common in western liberal democracies but do demand the state to fulfill its obligations by delivering promised goods and services (Sil, 2004: 356). Also, variables must respect that democratic consolidation is a multi dimensional phenomenon involving the transformation of both political institutions and cultural values (Shin, 2005: 89). That is another reason to check for local interpretations of democracy. The local interpretation might concern both institutions and values. Concerning these values, some scholars emphasize the importance of path dependency and identify cultural factors that contribute to democracy (Welzel, 2008: 137-138). Economic development appears to change society's values, especially the self-expression values which impact positively on civil society and democratization (Inglehart, 2010).

This thesis will not explore values but instead explore trust in political institutions as means of indirect measure of support for democracy. Especially for the legitimacy of new democracies trust of the public in governmental institutions is important (Sil, 2004). Neither will this thesis answer Munck's demand for a comprehensive causal model nor will it comprehensively answer Schedler's question about clear defined variables for the operationalization of democracy and democratic consolidation. Schedler and Munck are right in case scholars step into universal comparisons of democracy. However, for case studies clearly described variables for that specific case satisfy.

6.2 DATA & MEASUREMENT

The answers to the research questions are retrieved from research into public opinion. The availability of public opinion survey research offers the opportunity to assess the attitude of people to democracy (Chu, 2001: 123). Public opinion survey data delivers valuable raw material to explore "norms and beliefs about the legitimacy of democracy, both in principle and as embodied in a particular regime". The introduction of public opinion surveys delivered scholars the opportunity to study the "dynamics of democratic regimes" especially valuable to better understand the causes for the sustainability or weakness of a democratic regime (Diamond, 2001:2). At the same time one has to be careful interpreting these surveys as people's support for democracy could be based on social desirability, misperception of democracy as a concept or biases in the design of the polls (Chu, 2010; Berinsky, 1998).

The data from which the opinion of Thai is gained stems from Wave One and Wave Two of the Asian Barometer Project (ABP). The data for Wave One is gathered in 2002 after the 2001 elections when Thailand seemed on its way to become a consolidated democracy. The data for Wave Two is gained in April 2006 at the time Thailand entered into political turmoil resulting in the coup in September that year. The timing of data collection offers the opportunity to compare public opinion not only over time but also in different political circumstances. Thailand was ruled by a democratically elected regime during data collection for both Wave One and Wave Two. Therefore it is expected that the respondents felt free to express their actual opinion without having fear for any consequences of their answers laid upon them by the Thai government.

The sampling process for both waves of the survey consisted of a two-stage cluster sampling. The sampling resulted in 1546 respondents in both waves. The sampling method for data collection resulted in representative figures for the used independent variables, except for age. In both samples the young, it means Thai aged 25 or younger are slightly underrepresented. The amount of 'missing' respondents in answers is low (Asian Barometer Project, 2003; Asian Barometer Project, 2006). The introduction of additional answering options as 'do not know' and 'can't choose' in 2006 affected the results. The influence of these answering options can be read from the presented data and tables.

The data from the two waves of the Asian Barometer are used in a two-step approach. First, the data is analyzed at the level of all respondents. Next, the data is analyzed by four general distinctions in society as geographical location, income, education and age. These characteristics can be identified as lurking variables.

The remainder of this thesis presents answers to the research questions through the analysis of public support for democracy in Thailand in 2002 and 2006. The analysis is done by descriptive statistics, meaning that the data is analyzed and presented in cross tables showing the change in public support for democracy in Thailand from 2002 to 2006. The cross tables might indicate correlation between independent variables, lurking variables and the dependent variable. Any observed correlation between independent variables and the dependent variable might be explained through a lurking variable or through confounding effects. However, correlation does not imply causation. Causation between variables must be described theoretically as well as accepted (Moore, 2001). Therefore the results of this study will not present causation but stick to identify correlation between the independent and dependent variables.

7. MEANING AND CHANGE IN SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

7.1 MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy is a concept that can be understood differently. Already in the introduction several interpretations of democracy were mentioned. Interpretations as "good governance" (Albritton, 2009:3) but also social order or norms as collectivism, economic security and egalitarianism (Sil, 2004). As this article aims at understanding why support for democracy has declined in Thailand it is important to know what Thai mean

when talking about democracy. One question in the Asian Barometer serves this research question directly as it asks “to you, what does democracy mean?”. The respondents were allowed three choices from a list of over 200 possible meanings which can be grouped into 9 categories. Not all respondents did come up with an answer to this question, even less were able to deliver multiple answers. Table 1 shows the results to this question. The numbers in all tables represent percentages.

Meaning of democracy	2002	2006
Interpreting democracy in generic (populist) terms	7,9	8,5
Interpreting a democracy in terms of some key elements of liberal democracy	68,3	77,5
Interpreting democracy in terms of social and economic system	14,0	4,7
Interpreting democracy in terms of good government	1,7	4,9
Interpreting democracy in term of individual behaviors	23,5	8,7
Interpreting democracy in other broad and abstract terms	7,4	9,6
Conditions or Prerequisites for Democracy	0,0	0,2
Evaluation of Democracy or Democratic Regime	4,7	1,7
Reference or Cognitive Association to democracy	0,8	0,0

Table 1: Meaning of democracy according to Thai presented in percentages

Already in 2002 but even more so in 2006 Thai understood democracy mostly in terms of “key elements of liberal democracy” (ABS, 2006). Among the listed key elements are ‘limited government’, ‘political equality’, ‘freedom of individual choice’, ‘rule of law’, ‘respect for minority rights’, and ‘ability to select or change government’ (ABS, 2006). The key elements listed in ABS describe liberal democracy in a way that fits Diamond’s description of liberal democracy. Diamond wrote “liberal democracy extends freedom, fairness, transparency, accountability, and the rule of law from the electoral process into all other major aspects of governance and interest articulation, and representation” (Diamond, 2002: 25; 35). In 2006 over 75% of Thai mention one or more key elements of liberal democracy when asked what democracy means to them. Rather remarkable is not only that over 75% mention an element of liberal democracy but also that none of the other options even reaches 10% in 2006. One might conclude from this number that Thai mean liberal democracy when talking about democracy. Generic and abstract descriptions of democracy such as ‘putting national interest above partisan interest’ or ‘harmony’ score second and fourth in meaning of democracy in 2006. Notions like ‘respect for individual privacy’, ‘no extremism’ or ‘compromise’ and ‘trust’ represent in ABS the behavioral aspect of democracy scored with over 23% second in 2002 but has lost its value for understanding democracy for Thai in 2006.

The understanding of democracy as an economic system dropped ten percent points between 2002 and 2006. Economic understanding of democracy scored third in 2002, in 2006 only sixth place. It might

indicate that Thai mentally have separated the economical from the political system between 2002 and 2006. The answer to the first research question is that Thai understand democracy mostly in terms equivalent to liberal democracy as defined by Diamond.

7.2 SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

The military coup did not seem to enrage Thai society (Albritton, 2009). The absence of public anger after the coup might indicate that already before the coup Thai no longer had positive feelings for the political regime. As if democracy could be replaced by a superior alternative (Sil, 2004: 347). The basic presumption of this thesis is that public support for democracy has declined between 2002 and 2006. Therefore a decline in public support for democracy is expected. *H₁: Public support for democracy in Thailand has declined in the period from 2002 to 2006.*

One must take notice in the change of public opinion regarding the support for democracy. The question to be answered thereto is *How has public support for democracy in Thailand evolved from 2002 to 2006?* This question is answered first using answers to the question from ABS “Which would you think democracy is suitable for our country?” The items of choice for the respondents were scores running from “Democracy is completely unsuitable scoring a 1 and Democracy is perfectly suitable scoring a 10.” Figure 1 presents the scores from both ABS waves.

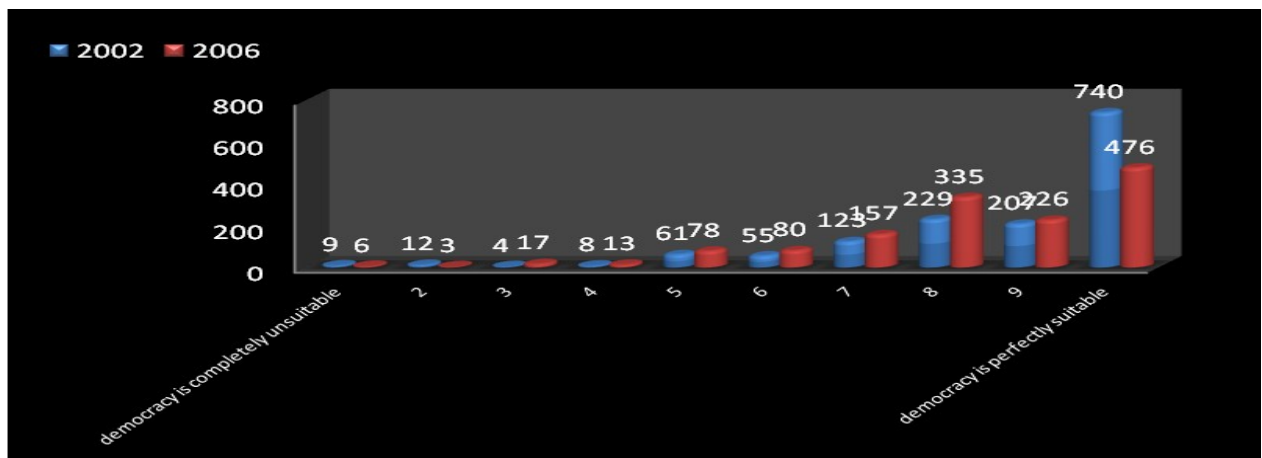


Figure 1: scores on suitability of democracy for Thailand in 2002 and 2006

Looking at the numbers in figure 1 that the top score for support for democracy dropped one third from 2002 to 2006. The scores just under the top score gained between 10% and 30%. However, the overall outcome is that less people in 2006 as in 2002 find democracy perfectly suitable for Thailand. When redistributed into three classes and presented in percentages results as presented in the table underneath come forward.

Which would you think democracy is suitable for your country?	2002	2006
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Democracy is completely unsuitable (1-3)	1,7	1,9
Democracy is somewhat suitable (4-7)	17,1	23,6
Democracy is perfectly suitable (8-10)	81,2	74,6

Table 2: Suitability of democracy to Thailand presented in percentages

Because of the redistribution a decline in the highest scores for the suitability of democracy for Thailand from 2002 to 2006 is noticeable. However, from the absolute number one could know that solely the top score lost, all other high scores gained a little. The percentage of the respondents that find democracy is completely unsuitable has not really increased. One might conclude from figure 1 and table 2 that less Thai in 2006 as in 2002 mean that democracy is absolutely suitable for Thailand, but a large majority still finds democracy perfectly suitable for Thailand. Next to asking about the suitability of democracy also the appreciation of an authoritarian regime as an alternative to democracy is used to test H_1 .

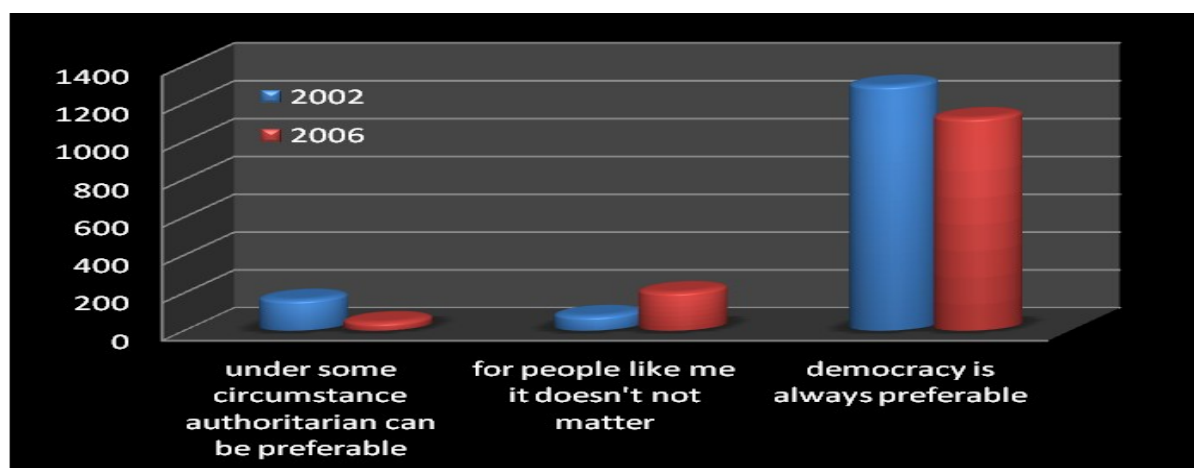


Figure 2: Preference for democracy or authoritarian rule in Thailand in 2002 and 2006

The preference for democracy by Thai has, according to figure 2 somewhat decreased from 2002 to 2006. This finding together with the results table 2 do imply that H_1 is true. However, in comparison from 2002 to 2006 less Thai find authoritarian rule acceptable under some circumstances. So while democracy surely has lost some of its support, so has the understanding for the need for authoritarian rule. It is like government itself, regardless the type of government has lost support.

As described in the chapter on cleavages in Thai society, typical of Thailand is the distinction between Bangkok and the rest of Thailand (Albritton, 2004). That is why a different level of support for democracy is expected in Bangkok than in rural areas of Thailand. The analysis on geographical location is done according to the available classification in the datasets. The geographical location is either rural or urban, as perceived by the interviewer. The distinction between urban and rural Thailand does not exactly represent the difference between Bangkok and rural Thailand as emphasized in literature. The 2006 questionnaire no longer contains the question by which Bangkok can be isolated from other parts of Thailand, only a distinction between rural and

urban areas can be created. The next hypothesis is phrased to find differences between rural people and urbanites regarding the support for democracy. H_2 : *The level of support for democracy in urban areas has declined more than it has in rural Thailand.*

Which would you think democracy is suitable for your country?	urban		rural	
	2002	2006	2002	2006
Democracy is completely unsuitable (1-3)	0,8	1,6	2,0	1,9
Democracy is somewhat suitable (4-7)	24,2	25,8	14,7	23,1
Democracy is perfectly suitable (8-10)	75,0	72,6	83,2	75,0

Table 3: Suitability of democracy by rural Thai and urbanites presented in percentages

Table 3 shows that rural Thai in 2006 remain to find democracy more suitable for Thailand than urbanites do. However the difference has narrowed between 2002 and 2006 instead of widened as is the statement of H_2 . When looking at the acceptance of authoritarian rule as an alternative to democracy as is showed in table 4 H_2 might seem more plausible.

Which comes closest to your own opinion?	urban		rural	
	2002	2006	2002	2006
under some circumstance authoritarian can be preferable	13,8	4,7	9,5	2,5
for people like me it doesn't not matter	3,4	11,9	5,6	13,5
democracy is always preferable	82,8	68,5	84,8	73,7

Table 4: Preference for democracy by rural Thai and urbanites presented in percentages

The preference for democracy by urbanites in 2006 has fallen to a little bit over $\frac{1}{3}$ while nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the rural Thai hold on to prefer democracy above the authoritarian alternative. The difference between the urbanites and rural Thai are in table 4 however is too few to undo the findings of table 3 altogether. H_2 cannot be accepted. The geographical location of Thai shows no differences for the support for democracy. The support for democracy has decreased similarly in cities and the countryside of Thailand.

7.3 CHANGE IN SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY RELATED TO EDUCATION AND INCOME

From literature is learned that education and income could influence one's appreciation for democracy. This aspect is tested by the hypothesis H_2 : *Highly educated Thai or Thai with an above average income will find democracy more suitable than Thai scoring on or below average on education and income.* In order to test this hypothesis the data for both income and education have been reclassified. To assess H_2 'high educated' are those Thai with some kind of university. All Thai without an university degree are put into the 'low educated'

category. Thai with a 'high income' are those in the top two quintiles of income. Other Thai are brought into the 'income average or below'.

Which would you think democracy is suitable for your country?	Low educated				High educated			
	Income average or below		High income		Income average or below		High income	
	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006
Democracy is completely unsuitable (1-3)	1,8	1,8	1,8	2,4	0,0	1,0	1,0	2,4
Democracy is somewhat suitable (4-7)	15,4	22,5	19,5	24,2	20,5	19,4	28,6	20,0
Democracy is perfectly suitable (8-10)	82,7	75,7	78,6	73,4	79,5	79,6	70,4	77,6

Table 5: Suitability of democracy because of education and income presented in percentages

Table 5 is interesting not only because of the nearly equal numbers in 2006 for the perfect suitability of democracy for Thailand by means of education and income. Interesting is that only among highly educated Thai with an above average income an increase of respondents finding democracy suitable for Thailand is noticeable. The numbers have not changed for highly educated Thai earning at the most an average income and for less educated Thai the numbers have even decreased. This might be due to the fact that the 1997 Constitution only allowed Thai with a university degree into Parliament (Hicken, 2003). The recognition of actions by Members of Parliament might have increased with highly educated Thai while in the same time have decreased for lower educated Thai. Whatever might have caused the changed the numbers, the numbers lead to the conclusion that H_2 has to be rejected. The difference in finding democracy suitable for Thailand between highly educated, high earning Thai and other Thai is too small to accept H_2 . Referring to the exclusion of Parliament of non-academics it might be that if the influence of income and education was measured separately, it might have been that the education of Thai would be influential on the support for democracy.

From 2002 to 2006 the overall development of public support for democracy is one of decline. The answer to the second research question must be that support for democracy has decreased from 2002 to 2006. The lesser support for democracy in 2006 is evenly distributed over nearly all societal groups that have been investigated. Only Thai with a tertiary education and earnings over 10,000 baht have gotten to like democracy better from 2002 to 2006. That better appreciation of democracy in 2006 compared to 2002 by the best educated and best earning Thai means that income and education together show no distinction between Thai in their believe in the suitability of democracy for Thailand. While support for democracy has dropped, so has the preference for authoritarian rule. The support for authoritarian rule nearly diminished from 2002 to 2006. One might conclude that Thai have lessened all support for their country leadership whatever the nature of that rule.

Each of the next chapters take on a possible explanation for the decrease of support for democracy in Thailand, as presented in the final paragraphs of the literature review.

8. ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

The perceived importance of the economy in relation to democracy is checked first. Figures 3 and 4 present answers by respondents when asked to choose between democracy and economic development.

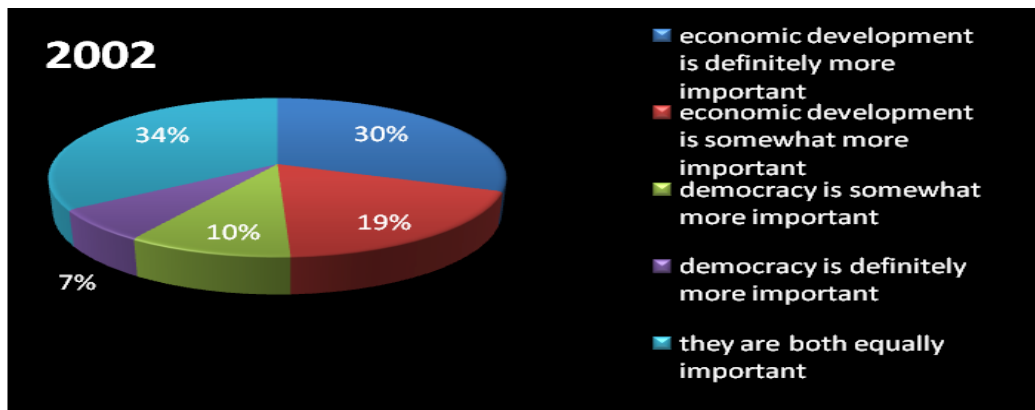


Figure 3: importance of democracy in comparison to the economy in 2002

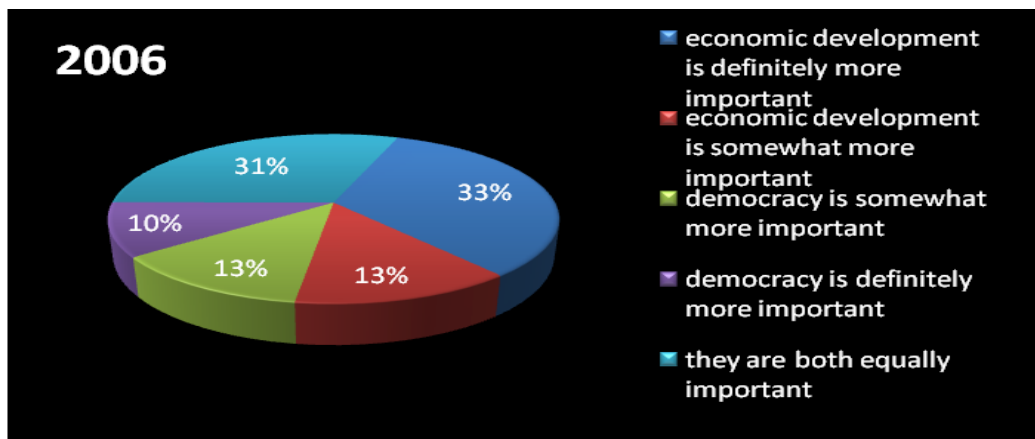


Figure 4: : importance of democracy in comparison to the economy in 2006

Figure 3 and 4 show that both in 2002 and 2006 more Thai find the economy more important than democracy. Although Thai began to find democracy relatively more important than economy from 2002 to 2006, still more Thai emphasize the importance of the economy. Twice as much Thai find economy more important than democracy than democracy is found of more importance than economy. These figures underline Amy Freedman’s notion that in Thai society “the desire for increased economic growth and to improve the quality of life overshadows the desire for democracy” (Freedman, 2007: 214).

The next two tables indicate that when Thai are grouped by either income or education some peculiarities can be found in perceived importance of democracy or economy. Income has been split into five classes in the datasets, depicting the acknowledged levels of wealth in Thailand (Asian Barometer Project, 2006).

choose between democracy and economic development?	0-1,000 baht		1,001-5,000		5,001-10,000		10,001-20,000		> 20,000	
	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006
economic development is definitely more important	36,5	31,0	32,8	30,2	25,4	27,9	27,4	35,0	23,2	30,3
economic development is somewhat more important	15,1	11,3	16,9	11,3	22,6	11,9	20,4	8,6	23,9	18,2
democracy is somewhat more important	8,5	8,4	9,8	10,5	13,6	14,3	9,7	11,7	8,4	7,6
democracy is definitely more important	6,6	5,8	7,0	9,5	8,4	11,5	3,2	6,1	5,2	12,1
they are both equally important	33,2	27,0	33,5	30,5	30,0	27,0	39,2	30,1	39,4	31,8

Table 6: Importance of economy and democracy checked for difference because of income presented in percentages

Table 6 uncovers two interesting findings. First, for Thai with an income below 1000 baht the importance of democracy has decreased in relation to economy. This decrease is contrary to the general trend where democracy relatively gained importance from economy. Second, Thai with an income between 5,001 and 10,000 baht have the highest appreciation of democracy in relation to the economic performance. The appreciation has grown in the period from 2002 to 2006. Still, also for this income class economy is more important than democracy too.

For the analysis the ABS classification of education is aggregated into three classes. These classes separate respondents in those with primary education as highest level, secondary education as highest level or as third class Thai with any kind of university degree. Looking at differences because of education again something is noticeable. From table 7 can be learned that in 2002 Thai with an education at maximum secondary level already stood out in the relative high appreciation of democracy. The level of support remained roughly the same from 2002 to 2006.

Choose between democracy and economic development?	Max Primary		Max Secondary		University	
	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006
economic development is definitely more important	33,1	31,1	24,6	29,4	22,5	26,8
economic development is somewhat more	17,4	12,6	21,6	9,6	22,5	14,4

important						
democracy is somewhat more important	8,7	9,0	15,9	15,2	8,5	13,2
democracy is definitely more important	6,1	7,8	8,0	9,9	7,7	12,4
they are both equally important	34,7	28,2	29,9	27,7	38,7	24,4

Table 7: Importance of economy and democracy checked for differences because of education presented in percentages

In 2006 some 25% of Thai with secondary level education or some university degree state that democracy is more important than economy. That being said, economy is found more important than democracy by more respondents. The difference between the perceived importance of democracy and economy has narrowed for Thai with a higher than primary education and for Thai with an income between 5,001 and 10,000 baht.

Overall both in 2002 and 2006 more Thai found economy more important over democracy than the other way around. However, where the amount of Thai that rates economy above democracy decreases from 2002 to 2006 more Thai began to find democracy more important than economy. Next to what Thai mention to be more important economy or democracy also the state of the economy is believed to influence for the support for democracy. Table 8 relates the respondents' views on the overall economic condition to their preference for democracy.

How would you rate the overall economic condition	Very good		Good		So So		Bad		Very bad	
	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006
Which comes closest to your own opinion?										
under some circumstance authoritarian can be preferable	7,7	3,6	10,4	3,8	10,1	3,4	9,6	1,8	17,5	0,0
for people like me it doesn't not matter	3,8	18,1	2,1	15,0	5,8	12,9	4,9	12,0	5,8	17,4
democracy is always preferable	88,5	62,7	87,5	69,7	84,1	74,1	85,4	76,8	76,6	73,9

Table 8: Preference for democracy because of overall economic condition presented in percentages

Dedication to democracy in 2006 is higher amongst Thai that rate the economic situation of the country worse than other Thai. Authoritarian rule as an alternative is less appreciated in 2006 as in 2002 for all respondents. However, 3% of the respondents that rate the overall economic situation in 2002 as good or even

better say to prefer democracy no matter the situation whereas ¾ of the respondents that rate economy 'so so' or worse say to prefer democracy always. In 2002 the dedication to democracy seems stronger among Thai that believe the overall economy is not doing well. Stated differently, Thai that perceive the overall economic situation as good or very good have a lower appreciation of democracy than Thai that have a less positive perception of the overall economic situation. This finding is unique to 2002. An explanation could be that Thai perceiving the overall economic situation as good or better might hope for some kind of redistribution of wealth, or influence in political decisions. The absence of such an experience could result into an emotion as that democracy does not deliver the well being as was expected or hoped. This 'under achievement' of democracy then would lead to lesser appreciation of democracy in 2006. It might also be that Thai rating the overall economy in 2002 as good might fear the redistribution of wealth and political influence as described before. Such an emotion points at a rather anti-democratic attitude among those that have ample influence. Also remarkable is that regardless the opinion on economic performance support for any type of regime has decreased between 2002 and 2006.

Next the economic situation at family level is looked at to test the next hypothesis, H_3 : *The better economic experiences meet individual expectations, the higher the dedication to democracy will be.* This hypothesis is based on Welzel's finding that the household economy is important for the appreciation of democracy (Welzel, 2008).

As for your family, how do you rate the economic situation today	Very good		Good		So So		Bad		Very bad	
	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006
Which comes closest to your own opinion?										
under some circumstance authoritarian can be preferable	28,6	3,4	15,9	3,8	10,2	2,7	9,0	3,0	11,3	0,0
for people like me it doesn't not matter	14,3	3,4	6,5	11,5	4,1	14,1	6,5	11,4	8,1	26,7
democracy is always preferable	57,1	75,9	77,5	70,2	85,7	72,2	84,4	78,0	80,6	73,3

Table 9: Preference for democracy because of economic condition of the household presented in percentages

Table 9 clearly supports Welzel's finding if looked at 2006. Only for those Thai that rate their household economy as very good the preference for democracy has increased from 2002 to 2006. These Thai are the only class where the indifference to the political system has not increased. A possible explanation for the increasing indifference for the political system might be the economic system touched by globalization. Economic liberalization raises barriers to effective political participation by citizens. The demand for citizens to work long hours limited the time and resources available to participate in political activities. On the output side political and economical critical decisions are less and less taken by political people because of privatization.

Privatization and deregulation have resulted in a decline of influence of political actors, surely on economic topics. As the economic system undermines effective influence through political action by citizens an understandable reflex is for them to be indifferent about the type of political system (Kurtz, 2004; Springer, 2009). Also interesting is that for Thai that rate their personal economic situation as 'so so' or worse authoritarian rule is not experienced as a valuable alternative. One can conclude here that H_3 has to be accepted. If the economic experiences meets ones expectations, one is more dedicated to democracy.

Although the gap narrowed between 2002 and 2006 more Thai remain to find the economy more important than democracy than democracy is found more important than economy. The preference for democracy over types of rule has decreased among Thai from 2002 to 2006. Except for those that experience their personal economy as very good. The preference for authoritarian rule has dropped to less than 5% for any of the investigated groups.

9. TRUST AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

Trust plays a crucial role in the emergence and survival of democracy (Welzel, 2008). The trust that citizens place in governmental institutions that claim to represent them is also significant for the legitimacy and effectiveness of newly democratized regimes. Examples of such institutions are the government, parliament, armed forces and, courts (Sil, 2004: 349-350). Therefore the development of appreciation or trust in government as a whole and in several institutions specifically is important to understand the proceedings in Thailand between 2002 and 2006 (Mishler, 1996: 566). In order to discover if the support for democracy is linked to the trust Thai have in government institutions a hypothesis is formulated. H_4 : *Decrease in support for democracy equals or exceeds the decline in trust in government as a whole.*

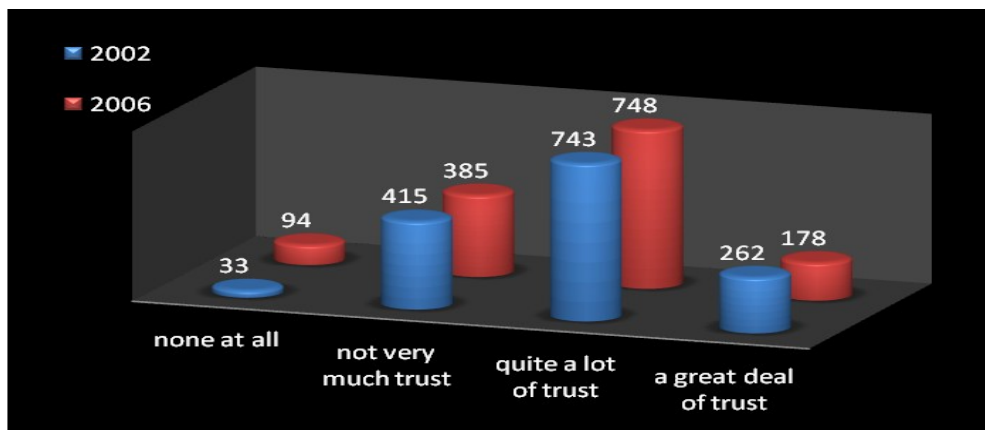


Figure 5: Trust in national government in Thailand in 2002 and 2006

Figure 5 clearly indicates that Thai lost trust in the national government in the period running from 2002 to 2006. The loss is some 10 percent points. The decline in trust is around the same as the decline in support for democracy if measured by the suitability of democracy for Thailand and the preference for democracy above any other type of regime (figures 1 & 2). The suitability of democracy dropped 9 percent points while the preference for democracy went nearly 12 percent points down. This means the hypothesis

must be accepted as the decrease in support for democracy equals the decrease in trust in the national government.

The decline in trust in national government appears in nearly all groups identified in this thesis. Although not displayed in tables, analysis of ABS-data learned that only amongst the top earners and highly educated Thai the trust in national government has grown marginally by three to four percent points. This finding is in line with table 6 that shows that the group highly educated and high earning Thai is unique regarding their increasing acknowledgement of democracy as being suitable for Thailand. Also these findings underline Welzels statement that the quest for democracy is made primarily by those with ample economic and cognitive resources (Welzel, 2008).

The absence of public anger against the military coup in 2006 could imply that the military is trusted more than other, democratic institutions in Thailand. Such indications were brought forward by Albritton (Albritton, 2002; 2004). The hypothesis H_5 : *The difference between trust in the army and trust in other governmental institutions has risen between 2002 and 2006* will check the validity of that statement.

How much trust do you have in ..?	National government		Parliament		Courts		Military	
	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006	2002	2006
none at all	2,3	6,1	5,5	3,2	2,7	2,1	2,6	1,9
not very much trust	28,6	24,9	34,0	28,4	23,9	16,4	17,4	16,7
quite a lot of trust	51,1	48,4	46,3	50,1	49,0	54,0	50,4	55,2
a great deal of trust	18,0	11,5	14,3	8,8	24,4	15,3	29,6	19,4

Table 10: Trust of Thai in government institutions presented in percentages

First finding to be taken from table 10 is that from 2002 to 2006 Thai lessened their trust in all governmental institutions looked into for this question. Earlier in this thesis it was found that Thai lowered their preference for any type of government, be it authoritarian or democratic. Such a decrease in appreciation for rulers seems not be unique for the type of government but in line with the decrease in support for the governmental institutions. In percent points the army is second in loss of trust, although it remains the highest trusted government institution by Thai. If measured from a negative point of view it ranks as good as the courts as it is found at the bottom of distrusted institutions. However, this hypothesis is to be rejected as the army outruns other institutions in trust lost.

The finding that the army is the most trusted government institution and one of the least distrusted institutions indicates that despite the years of military rule Thai respect the army more than any other part of the government. The loss of trust in government institutions is part of an overall decline in trust in Thailand between 2002 and 2006.

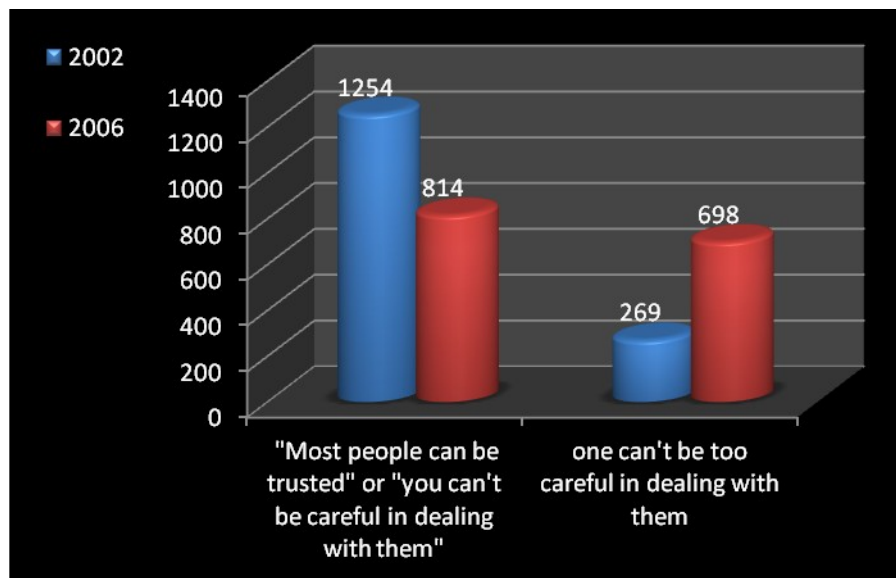


Figure 6: Trust in other Thai in 2002 and 2006

Although not directly related to the research questions this feature of Thai society is worthwhile mentioning as it enables one to draw an image of changes in Thai society next to its political landscape. Figure 6 and table 11 shows the change in interpersonal trust. The figure shows the numbers from both waves. Table 11 shows the percentages. The positive element to be said about trust is that in 2002 and 2006 the majority of Thai answers that most people can be trusted. True as that may be the drop in interpersonal trust and the raise of distrust between 2002 and 2006 is severe. The decrease in trust in other Thai is over a third while distrust nearly tripled. This finding is important, especially as this chapter started with emphasizing the importance of trust for democracy to survive. Trust is a prerequisite for democracy because both participation in the democratic process and adhering to the rules of democracy depend on it (Inglehart, 2000). Civil society, a prerequisite for democratic consolidation according to Diamond and Rose (Diamond, 2000; Rose, 2001) also requires interpersonal trust. As such, the lack of trust in other Thai poses a problem for Thai democracy. The picture of a society of rather disassociated individuals complicates the finding of political solutions to overcome conflicting social cleavages. And this thesis already identified three of such cleavages in Thailand.

How much do you trust other Thai?	Thailand	
	2002	2006
most people can be trusted	82,3	52,7
one can't be too careful in dealing with them	17,7	45,1

Table 11: Interpersonal trust in Thailand presented in percentages

The distrust is the strongest in rural Thailand and amongst lowest earning and lowest educated Thai. Among urbanites distrust has tripled between 2002 and 2006. What has happened in Thailand between 2002 and 2006 to cause this collapse of trust in other Thai is not part of this research. However, table 11 clearly indicates that

the decline of trust in government institutions is not isolated but part of a wider development in Thai society. Elaborating from Welzels emphasis on the importance of trust for the survival of democracy the decline in interpersonal trust and the decline in trust towards all government institutions is an indication of a worsened context for Thai democracy to survive. It seems that the decline in trust had an impact on the chances for democracy to survive in Thailand. The exact impact and what caused the decline in interpersonal trust is not within the scope of this thesis.

10. SOCIALIZATION AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

Focusing on the importance of adolescence for political attitude this chapter and the next hypothesis deals with the change in support for democracy by first time voters in 2001 in relation to older generations Thai. The hypothesis H_6 : *The change in support for democracy from 2002 to 2006 among first time voters in 2001 differs significantly from older generations Thai* is based on the assumption that volatility among adolescents is higher than among other Thai because adolescents have not yet a set political attitude. To check for the influence of socialization first time voters are separated from other voters in analyzing the ABS-dataset.

Which would you think democracy is suitable for your country?	1st time voters		Other voters	
	2002	2006	2002	2006
Democracy is completely unsuitable (1-3)	0,0	2,9	1,8	1,8
Democracy is somewhat suitable (4-7)	17,1	25,7	17,1	23,5
Democracy is perfectly suitable (8-10)	82,9	71,4	81,2	74,7

Table 12: Suitability of democracy according to first time voters presented in percentages

The difference between first time voters and other Thai is next to unnoticeable concerning the suitability of democracy for Thailand. Socialization under democracy does not seem to influence the opinion on the suitability of democracy for Thailand among first time voters in 2006.

Which comes closest to your own opinion?	1st time voters		Other voters	
	2002	2006	2002	2006
under some circumstance authoritarian can be preferable	15,9	4,9	10,5	2,8
for people like me it doesn't not matter	9,1	13,4	5,0	13,2
democracy is always preferable	75,0	74,4	84,6	72,6

Table 13: Preference for democracy by first time voters presented in percentages

As with suitability of democracy for Thailand also for the preference for democracy first time voters differ not a great deal from other voters in 2006. As well among both groups support for authoritarian rule has declined to a very low level. However, the preference for democracy is stable for first time voters while among other voters the preference for democracy have decreased by 12 percent points. Contrary to what was expected a higher volatility on the preference for democracy is found amongst experienced voters instead of amongst first time voters. This means that according to the answers to the questions used here volatility in preference for democracy cannot be related to experiences as a voter. Therefore H_6 is rejected. The rejection of the hypothesis means that socialization cannot be identified as a cause for mental volatility or otherwise deviating political behavior of first time voters.

11. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Although proving causation is not aimed for in this thesis, the validity of the descriptive statistical analysis should be beyond doubt. To that purpose a multiple regression model containing the dependent variable and all independent variables is constructed to check both correlation and significance for each of the independent variables. The regression is performed on the dependent variable leaving out the missing values and the 'raw' independent variables. Raw here means before any classification of the independent variables was performed. The raw variables have been recoded from categorical, interval and numeric values into values between 0 and 1. The recoding enables a comparison of the coefficients of the independent variables and their impact on the dependent variable, the suitability of democracy for Thailand. This paragraph deals with the model itself and the main findings within that model.

Dependent Variable: Do you think democracy is suitable for your country?	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Beta	p-Value
(Constant)	8,96		0,00
Overall economic condition	-0,49	-0,06	0,04
Economic condition at personal level	0,63	0,06	0,05
Trust in other Thai	0,33	0,07	0,01
Trust in national government	0,34	0,05	0,09
Geographical location	-0,08	-0,02	0,50
Education	-0,33	-0,05	0,15
Income	-0,29	-0,05	0,13
Age	-0,48	-0,05	0,13

Table 14: multiple regression model for the suitability of democracy for Thailand and independent variables from ABS Wave One in 2002

The p-value for the complete model is 0.00. This score indicates that the model is representative for Thailand in 2002. The r-square gained from this regression model is 0.152. The meaning of r-square is that these

independent variables together result in 15% of the variance of the support for democracy. The cumulative correlation between these independent variables and the dependent variable is rather weak in 2002. However, the model shows clearly that in 2002 the separate independent variables influence the perceived suitability of democracy in opposite ways. If only the independent variables with a p-values below 0,1 are taken into account in this model correlation is strongest between the personal economic situation and the suitability of democracy for Thailand. This finding is consistent with findings in literature stating that among citizens their personal prosperity results in a positive attitude towards democracy. Also trust in other Thai and trust in the national government are positively correlated with the suitability of democracy. Again, these findings coincide with theoretical predictions.

In 2002 a negative correlation is found between the perception of the overall economic situation and the suitability of democracy for Thailand. This regression model confirms this feature of Thailand that surfaced in table 9. One possible explanation is that Thai that believe the economy is doing quite well might hope that democracy would deliver some distribution of wealth or influence. At the same time it might be that well to do Thai fear the redistribution of wealth and political influence. Any redistribution could endanger their favorable position. The finding is also significant with a p-value at 0,05. The other independent variables also correlate negatively with the suitability of democracy for Thailand. Of these variables the geographical location is not of any significance. Education, income and age are statistically less significant than the other independent variables but still interesting enough to look into the results. Remarkable is the finding that higher income and higher education in 2002 lead to lower appreciation of democracy for Thailand. Literature provided opposite indications and there seems to be no obvious reasons in Thai society in 2002 to explain. A possible explanation might be that in 2001 Thaksin's TRT won the elections on a populist program, supported mostly by poor Thai (Kitirianglarp, 2009). If this explanation would be true it might be that high earning and highly educated Thai fear the influence of other Thai. The influence that was partly ousted by the constitutional rule that only Thai with academic degree were allowed to be elected into parliament. The opinion of high educated and well earning would then not be based on the characteristics of democracy but on the outcomes of a feature of democracy, the electoral process.

The multi-variate regression is performed also with data from 2006. The recoding is done exactly the same. The r-square for this multiple regression model is 0.228, the p-value is 0.00. The p-value means that the model as a whole is statistically significant.

Dependent Variable: Do you think democracy is suitable for your country?	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Beta	p-Value
(Constant)	6,74		0,00
Overall economic condition	0,34	0,04	0,17
Economic condition at personal level	1,14	0,11	0,00

Trust in other Thai	0,21	0,06	0,04
Trust in national government	0,84	0,12	0,00
Geographical location	0,07	0,02	0,62
Education	0,55	0,08	0,03
Income	-0,36	-0,06	0,08
Age	0,20	0,02	0,56

Table 15: multiple regression model for the suitability of democracy for Thailand and independent variables from ABS Wave Two in 2006

From the p-value it can be learned that the analysis has produced results representative for Thailand in 2006. As in 2002 the personal economic circumstances correlate strongest in 2006. The impact of this independent variable has increased to 1.14 and with p-value 0.00 also significant. Also trust in national government is significant with a p-value of 0.00 and with a value for the coefficient of 0.84 very relevant. It means that the higher one's trust in national government the higher democracy is appreciated by one. The relative impact of 'trust in other Thai' on the suitability of democracy is slightly lower in 2006 as in 2002, but still significant. The relative impact might of Trust in other Thai have decreased, taken together with the decrease of interpersonal trust the overall trust in other Thai does have substantial impact on the believe of suitability of democracy for Thailand. Also in 2006 geographical location is not significant as explanatory variable as is true for age.

The correlation between the perceived overall economic situation has changed from -0.49 to 0.34. The p-value in 2006 of 0.17 weakens the relevancy of this independent variable in comparison with 2002. However, the change is remarkable. From the data it is not clear what caused this turnaround. A possible explanation could be that, depending one's point of view, the feared or hoped for redistribution of wealth and political influence did not occur from 2002 to 2006. A turnaround likewise to the overall economic situation appears with education. Education is significant as a variable with the p-value at 0.03 and the coefficient at 0.55, contrary to the -0.33 in 2002. The appreciation of democracy by highly educated Thai in 2006 is in line with expectations taken from literature. The turnaround could denote that the prolonged experience with democracy is perceived as positive by high educated Thai. The unique position for high educated Thai being the only group to be elected in parliament might also be an explanation. It could be that Thai with a university degree increasingly found recognition in the democratically taken decisions.

Still negative in correlation with the suitability of democracy in 2006, and more significant as in 2002 is income. A possible explanation for this finding is that Thaksin used the democratic institutions in the period 2002 to 2006 to lead the country with a political agenda containing items of which poor Thai benefit mostly. From that perspective the continued negative correlation between income and the perceived suitability of democracy for Thailand is that wealthier Thai would rather have their economical power convene with political power. The same argument projected on poor Thai would be that poor Thai hope or believe that democracy would serve their needs well, if not noticeable immediately than in the future. The negative correlation between income and support for democracy is peculiar. The peculiarity relates to the fact that the only group that in 2006 showed an increase in support for democracy is that which find their personal economic situation very good. Presumably in Thailand in 2006 income is not the sole influence on the perception of one's personal economic circumstances.

12. CONCLUSION

In the last chapter of this thesis one can read answers to the research questions, explorations of these answers and derived implications for the theories on democratic consolidation.

12.1 ANSWERS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The puzzle from which this thesis started is the astonishment with the absence of public anger after the 2006 coup in Thailand. If democracy was widely supported by Thai one would have expected protests after democracy had been broken down by military leaders. However, the protests were few. The research is conducted to come to understand the absence of anger in Thailand at the moment of the coup. To be more precise, what explanations for the acceptance of democratic breakdown can be taken from literature and, how do these explanations fit on data from surveys on public opinion in Thailand?

The explanatory part of the thesis started by looking into the understanding of democracy by Thai. A different understanding of the concept democracy than the western interpretation might explain why Thai were not furious after the coup (Sil, 2004). The data from public opinion revealed that Thai understood democracy from 2002 to 2006 increasingly in terms of liberal democracy and less as an economic system. The understanding of democracy in terms of liberal democracy means that public life offers citizens at least freedom, rule of law and accountability of the representatives (Diamond, 2002). According to the finding Thai seemed to have understood well what was taken from them in 2006 democratically speaking.

Still, the coup was accepted calmly. Therefore it was expected that the support for democracy must have had declined between 2002 and 2006. The ABS data expresses the expected decline in support for democracy in Thailand from 2002 to 2006. Fukuyama and Mishler both warned against declining support for democracy as it puts democracy at risk. Popular support for democracy is an important feature for the survival of any democracy (Fukuyama, 2007; Mishler, 1996).

Literature on democratic consolidation and on democratic breakdown helped to identify economic development, trust in government and socialization as independent variables to understand support for democracy. From the literature on Thailand three cleavages were derived to find and test explanations for the seemingly acceptance of the coup. These cleavages are the factions within the Thai elite, the civil military relations and, the difference between rural Thailand and Bangkok. Next to these variables also income, age and education were checked for their relevance in understanding the Thai context.

12.2 EXPLORING THE ANSWERS

The support for democracy decreased evenly among all Thai. The Thai were grouped by age, level of education, income and place of residence. A difference between rural Thai and urbanites is nearly unnoticeable. Only the highly educated and high earning Thai increased their preference for democracy.

Mishler stated that next to stable or increasing support for democracy it is crucial for new democracies to have institutions available that can overcome fundamental challenges (Mishler, 1996). A decrease in support for democracy is found in Thailand, drawing attention to the capabilities of the Thai governmental institutions. The institutions were not able to withstand the turmoil in 2006 and so Thai democracy experienced a breakdown. This thesis has not explored Thai governmental institutions other than the trust Thai have in these institutions. An exploration into Thai institutions, the relations between those institutions and the political implications of these relations might be valuable to better understand the breakdown of Thai democracy.

A first recommendation would be to research and explore the functioning of the institutions, the relation between the institutions and the composition of the people and groups working in those institutions. It might be that from the institutionalist approach lessons for democratic consolidation can be learned.

Both support for democracy and for authoritarian rule decreased between 2002 and 2006. It seems that Thai started to lose faith in governmental leaders of any kind, democratically chosen or positioned by force. The outcome that more Thai in 2006 picked the option that for 'people like me it doesn't matter' hints towards a growing indifference towards political leadership of Thailand. Thai citizens might feel that their influence on decisions impacting their life are limited no matter the political system. That emotion might have come in to existence as authoritarian leaders are not expected to listen to citizens anyway but democratically elected leaders should. The elected leaders might have wanted to listen to citizens. However, the dynamics of globalization, privatization and deregulation limited their influence on economic policy. The elected leaders might not have been able to act according to the demands of the citizens. Thai politicians were hampered to moderate the impact of globalization and economic development on everyday life of average Thai. The emotion of average Thai could be that they are not protected by government and subsequently turned away from government. A second recommendation would be to research the expectations of Thai towards their leaders.

Economic performance in Thailand in 2002 and 2006 does not offer a sustainable argument to understand the decline in support for democracy. The preference for authoritarian rule dropped to nearly nil

with those that perceive the overall economic situation as bad or very bad. So, the people that are worst of economically do not believe authoritarianism would perform better as democracy. For them democracy is preferable above an authoritarian regime. Freedman surely wrote that in Thailand “the desire for economic growth overshadows the desire for democracy” (Freedman, 2007: 214). ABS data did confirm that Thai continued to find economy more important than democracy, although democracy gained importance according to the public opinion from 2002 to 2006. The preference for democracy dropped most with those that believe the overall economic situation is good. Thai that experienced their personal economical situation as very good in 2006 are the most positive about democracy. This last finding is coherent with quotes from Freedman and Welzel. Economic desires are supposed to overshadow democratic desires just until then when most or all economic desires are met. That is when it is feasible to turn to democratic desires (Freedman, 2007). Welzel mentioned that the quest for democracy is done by those with ample cognitive and economic resources (Welzel, 2008). The better educated part in Thailand indeed increased their support for democracy from 2002 to 2006. However, the negative correlation between income and the suitability of democracy found in the 2006 multi-variate regression analysis contradicts the theoretical expectations. A rather superficial but possible explanation for this negative correlation is that Thai with a high income defended their private or group interests. These interests were not served well during the Thaksin regime. Thaksin developed and implemented policies of which the poor benefitted most. That experience with the Thaksin administration might well have resulted in a low appreciation of the policy outcomes of democracy by the well earning Thai. The subsequent mistake of to blame democracy as a system for unwanted or despised policy outcomes is not unique to Thailand.

One might notice that so far the factors influencing support for democracy as taken from literature did not deliver the answers to the question why in Thailand democracy did not root. Another identified independent variable is trust in other Thai as is trust in national government. Trust in the national government and trust in other Thai were both statistically significant in 2006 and had a positive correlation to the suitability of democracy for Thailand. The analysis of ABS-data show that trust in national government has decreased among all Thai except for the group highly educated and high earning. The army is in 2006 the highest trusted government institution looked upon for this article, although also a decline is recognized. The decrease in trust in government institutions is in line with an overall decline in interpersonal trust. The decline in interpersonal trust outruns the decline in trust in government institutions.

As trust, either interpersonal or in governmental institutions is known to be important for democracy to survive (Chu, 2001; Lagos, 2001; Mishler, 1996) the decrease in trust seems to be essential in understanding democratic breakdown in Thailand. Some more profound investigation of this finding seems valuable for understanding Thai democracy. The research for this thesis did not address trust by itself neither looked for reasons to understand the decline in trust. It seems necessary that in order to understand the decline in support for democracy comprehensive research into the reasons for the decrease in trust must be started. A second recommendation is to research the causes for the rather sharp decline in interpersonal trust in Thailand

from 2002 to 2006 and its implications for democracy and democratic institutions. The causes could have a background in for example economical, political or religious beliefs and opinions. As a third recommendation for further research into Thai democratic breakdown the impact of decreasing interpersonal trust on support for democracy is to be further investigated.

Having identified trust as an important factor or at least a starting point to come to understand what happened in Thailand from 2002 to 2006 it is unfortunate that the ABS data could not deliver the data to check for the supposed distinction between Bangkok and the rest of Thailand. An identified difference in interpersonal trust between Bangkok and rural Thailand might have resulted in an explanation to understand democratic breakdown. However, apart from the distinction between Bangkok and rural Thailand also other cleavages in Thai society were identified. Especially important seems the relation between the Thaksinites and the royalist elite that is supported by the military. Keeping in mind that “elites choose democracy instrumentally because they perceive that the costs of attempting to suppress their political opponents exceed the costs of tolerating them and engaging them in constitutionally regulated competition” (Diamond, 1994:3) democratic breakdown was the more profitable option in 2006 for specific elements within Thai elite.

For democracy in Thailand to resurrect from the 2006 coup it is important that both the average Thai and the Thai elite are willing to accept the rules of democracy and find solutions for their disagreements. The importance for democracy of interaction schemes between elites and citizens as Geddes brought forward could be useful (Geddes, 1999). These schemes could help to restore trust between citizens and elites, but also between different factions within the elites. A second option is to assist young democracies to consolidate. One approach might be the use of instruments to moderate the transitional or consolidating period of a democracy. The consolidation of any democracy is a process that is difficult and hard for all involved. For those that will have to share power, for those that will be introduced to having some power and, for those active in the institutions of a democracy. The educational part will have to address both the psychological and the intellectual part of democracy. Next to the educational part also the introduction of transitional features regarding the institutions and relations between institutions might be worth considering. The arrangement and competence of institutions in young democracies should be evaluated frequently. It might be useful to have neutralized rather easily ‘non aimed for’ effects of institutional arrangements or those harmful to the well functioning of a democracy. The responsibility for such an evaluation should be brought under scrutiny of the constitution and a constitutional court to improve the survival rate of a young democracy. It is possible that the people in a young democracy are able to go through this process by themselves. However, other countries and international institutions should be willing to assist respecting the sovereignty of that young democracy.

Regardless the possibilities to arrive at establishing a consolidated democracy in Thailand, truth is that since 2011 the opponents seem to be engaged in a new round of the battle that was on in 2006. Thaksin's sister Yingluck Shinawatra won the elections in July 2011 and is prime minister. She is leading a government promoting the same kind of policies that brought her brother wide support (Economist, 2011). Probably the royalist elite thinks about measures on how to regain the rule of the country. But the royalist elite will surely

think as well about how to deal with the royal succession. As the successor is not officially appointed yet, the succession will bring its own and yet unknown dynamics into Thai politics. As the political situation in Thailand not appears to be stable yet it might take some time before Thai democracy can be called consolidated.

12.3 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS FROM THE THAI CASE

The last paragraph of this thesis deals with personal observations taken from dealing with theory on democratic consolidation and data on Thai democracy. The thesis contains clues to suspect that the economic emphasis in modernization theory might be too superficial an explanation for democratic consolidation. First of all, economic development might be valuable if support for democracy rises, it does not explain decreasing support for democracy. Thailand clearly deviates from the GDP standard mentioned by Przeworski. His finding that no country with a GDP per capita over US\$6055 had ever experienced democratic breakdown is put aside by Thailand (Przeworski, 1997). Between 2002 and 2006 in Thailand GDP per capita grew to US\$6890 in 2006. This assumed favorable development did not prevent the military coup. Even when corrected for inflation between 1997 and 2006 Thailand is a deviant case on this finding.

Second, both cultural effects as trust and increased importance of self fulfillment have not appeared in Thailand. The ABS data provide no proof of these theoretical expectations. The functioning of institutions, especially the protection against manipulation institutions for certain purposes and the relations between institutions might be as or even of more relevance than economic development for democracies to consolidate. In the end however, it are individuals and their behavior that are relevant. Institutions and citizens can be manipulated by individuals or groups to meet their private interests. Such interests are not only bound to domestic actors or political actors. Scholars cited in this thesis have analyzed that globalization and neo liberal dogmas as deregulation and privatization are hampering average citizens to become politically active and being politically effective. The gains expected by governments in young democracies from imported economic development might very well be at the cost of the development of democratic society. Together with the economic development are also imported mechanisms that are not supportive to democratic consolidation as these mechanism hamper citizens to become active in their community and have political impact. As an example of an imported mechanism and unexpected result of economic development for Thai democracy might be unconventional political participation. Unconventional political participation as feature of cultural change is believed to be at least partially resulting from the trade in of self-sustainment values for self-expression values (Welzel, 2008). Cultural changes expressed in unconventional political participation might have originated indirectly from economic development. Economic development had Thai gaining knowledge of the effect of unconventional political participation abroad. These effects could be learned from abroad through foreign contacts because of economic development. The unconventional political participation in Thailand existed of protests and blockages. A disruptive example was the weeklong blockade of the national airport in December 2008. The unconventional political participation are used to achieve political change, bypassing democratic instruments as elections, referendums, or judicial actions (Freedman, 2006: 212).

One remarkable finding from the multi-variate regression analysis is the continuity in the negative correlation between income and support for democracy. The literature on democratic consolidation had indicated differently. That makes this finding worth exploring. A first idea for exploration might be to check this finding in other countries. Similar findings in other South East Asian countries, or in other young democracies might shed new light on processes surrounding democratic consolidation. Even if the finding is unique to Thailand it does indicate a topic to explore to understand the development of support for democracy in Thailand.

This thesis focused on Thailand and the possible explanations for the breakdown of democracy stemming from a domestic context. If not solely the Thai domestic context but also South East Asia would have been explored to find explanations for the breakdown the idea of 'democratic clustering' as described by Doorenspleet might be valuable (Doorenspleet, 2008). At first glance the idea seems to fit Thailand. The nation is surrounded by countries that score as low or lower in the Freedom House ratings regarding the state of democracy (Freedom House, 2011). The 1997 Constitution might have isolated Thailand politically from their neighboring countries. Thailand therefore was not able, with none of its neighboring countries, to share experiences on consolidating democracy. The neighboring countries were surely not able, and maybe not willing to support or push Thailand along the way to become a consolidated democracy. ASEAN does not require as the European Union does democratic institutions and legal mechanisms to be in place from new Member States. Any consolidating effect on democracy is not available in Asia in such a way as in Europe

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