



# From Reform to Reversal: Emerging and Persisting Thai Local Networks

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- Factors lead changes

What

How

- can local forces sustain their power and survive under undemocratic rules?

# Background of Thai politics

## Pre-1997

Centralized Government

Local Strongmen

Personal Relationships

## Post-1997

Decentralization

Local Politicians

Grassroots Movements

Higher Degrees of People's  
Participation

# What caused change: Enabling Factors

- Establishing from the provinces to the villages with the authority and responsibility
- Direct election with a large budget

Decentralization

New Technology  
and Social Media

- Encouraging and connecting active citizen participation
- Borderless and beyond control of information
- Less need for face-to-face communication in patron-client ties

- A growing number of new political actors at national and local levels
- A higher level of competition and cooperation among forces

New Political  
Landscape

# Changing Forms of Power Relations

## Patron-Client Tie

- traditional relationship

## Political Network

- multi-directional patronage
- clientelistic cluster network

# Motivating Factors : The 2006 & 2014 Coup

2006-2007

**National Level**

**Local Level**

The deposed government was investigated

banned parties' leaders

dissolved political parties

The martial law was declared in many provinces

2014-Present

**National Level**

**Local Level**

Judiciary under the coup

Control of public activities and media

Arrest and detention of prominent figures

Ban on Political Activities / Privacy

Encourage the roles and authorities of provincial officials from provinces to villages

New regional & provincial military units

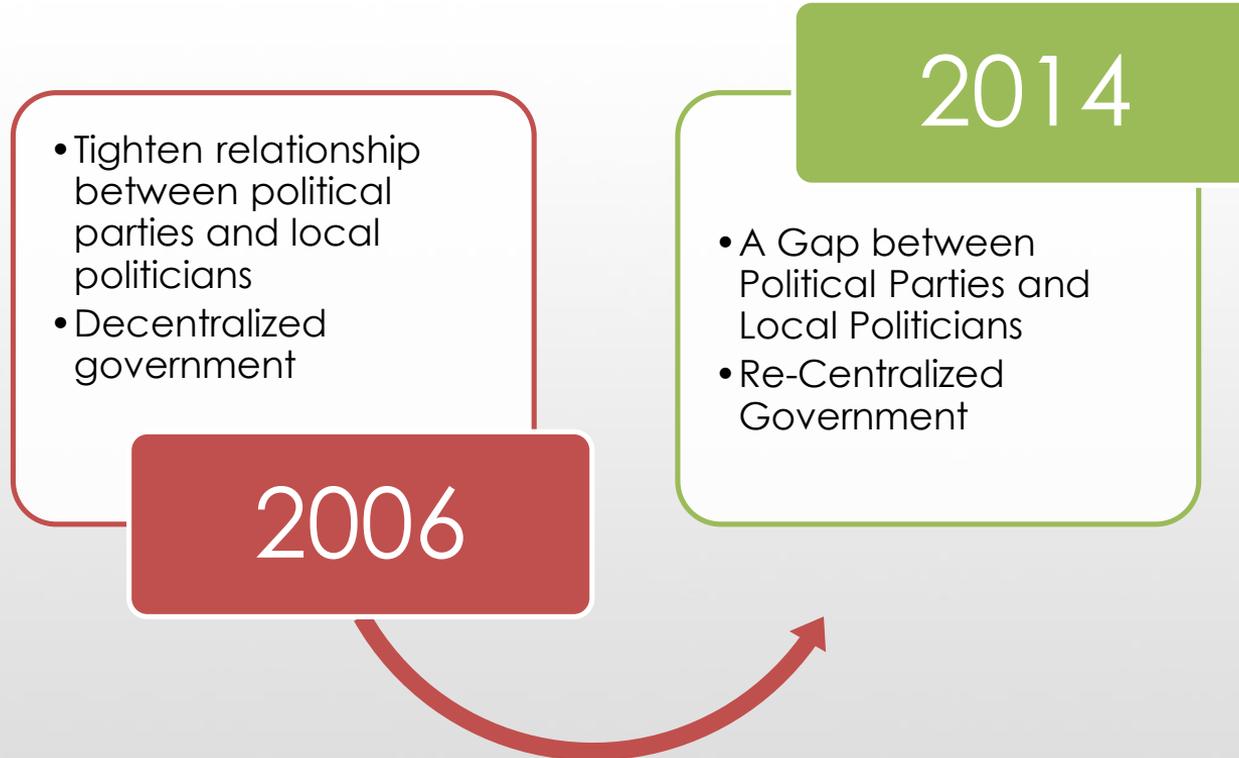
removed and monitored local politicians & influenced officials

ban all local elections

degree of control

length of the military rule

# Outcomes on Local Politics



Bureaucratic Powers

-long period of military control  
-extension of the Junta's mechanics

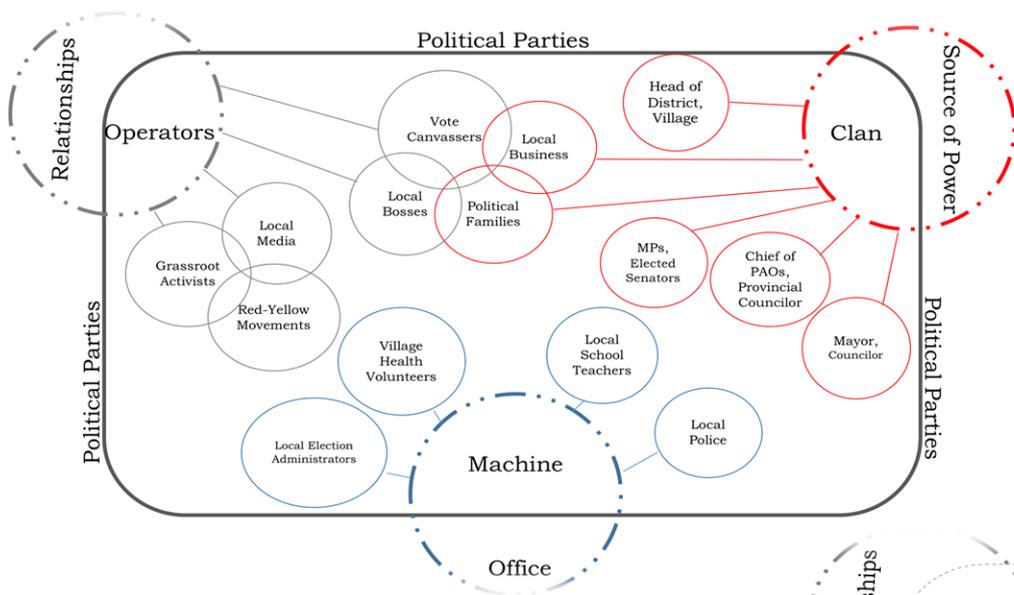
-budgetary powers  
-leading roles in development plans

Electoral Powers

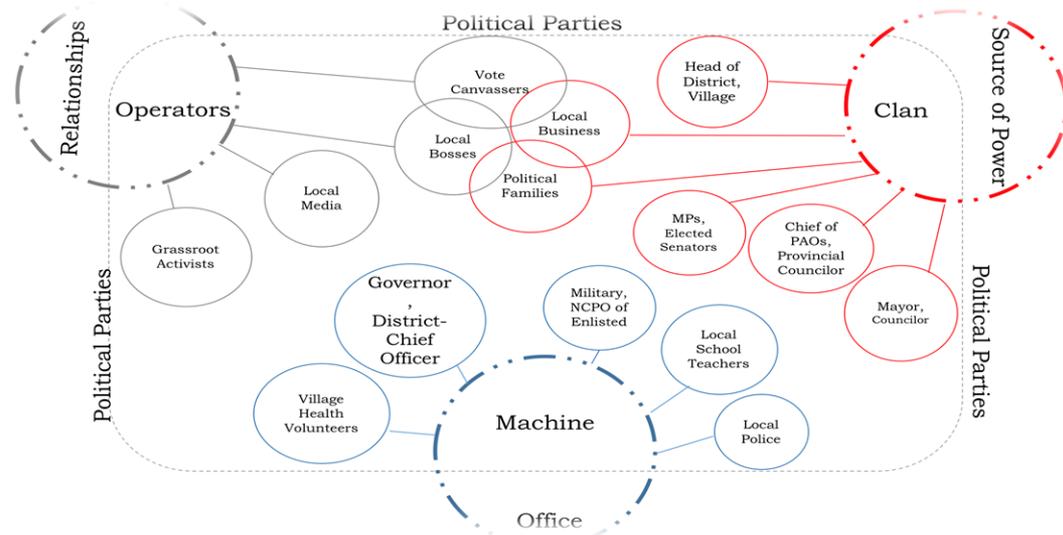
*“Under authoritarian rules which run by military and civil servants, we can directly access sources of power in the government and relevant ministries. Its outcomes seem much more effective than the period of elected governments.*

*It could say that this is a great opportunity to enhance leading role of local politicians which independent from members of parliament in constituencies and political parties.”*

Mayor in Mahasarakham Province



Applied Model of Thai Local Clientelistic Cluster Network after 2006 coup



Applied Model of Thai Local Clientelistic Cluster Network after 2014 coup



# Pheu Thai : Political Family Alliances

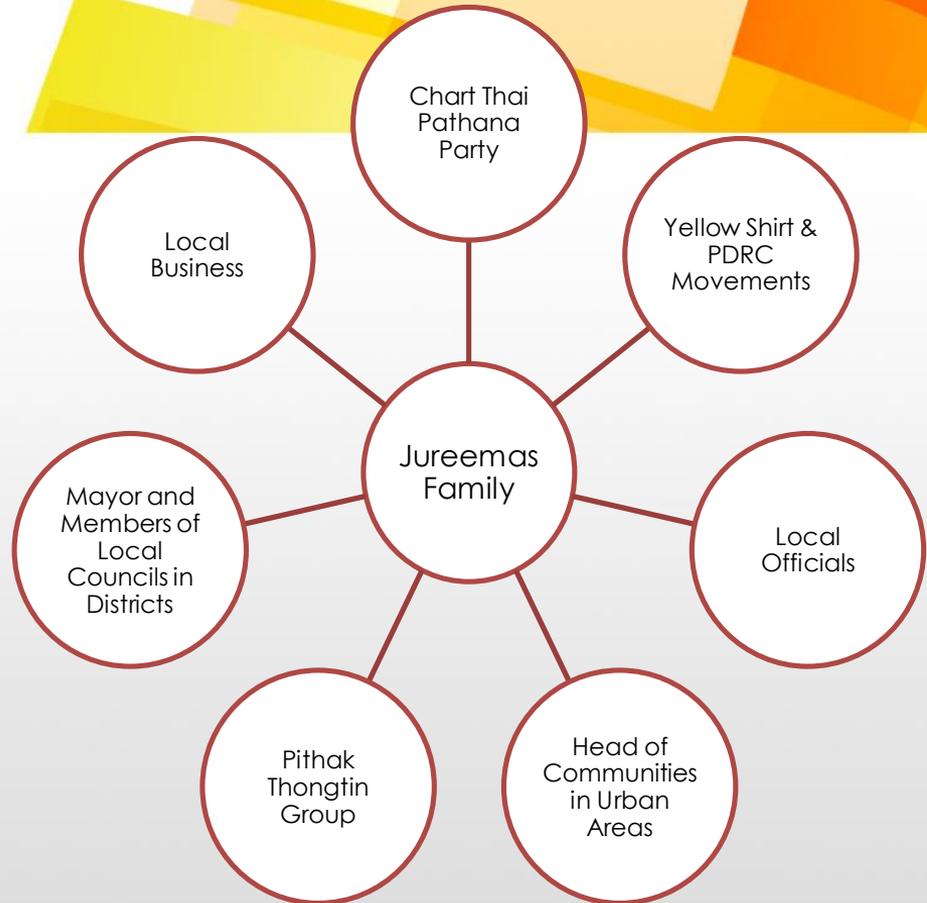


Former MPs were highly prioritized for selecting a candidate

Red powers continually supported Pheu Thai, but also spread out to support candidates from other political parties

Party loyalty slightly loosened, families' influence in districts remain

# Anurak Jureemas : The Old Clan Revives



# Nature of Thai local clientelistic cluster networks



They can be both dependent and independent from other forces and also change their positions or functions.



The existence of local powers is dependent on their ability to adjust and annex themselves as a part of the network, thus allowing them to survive.



# Factors “Glue” and “Divide” Local Networks

# What's Next?

*“No matter what the political situation will be.*

*The next generation will continue the political role of our clan inevitably.  
Because of the resources invested in previous generations, it's a great value.”*

- Local Politician in Kalasin province

*“Informal power networks never die, they are waiting for the right time.  
Then, you will see how great they are.  
Even the Junta also notices that”*

- Politician in Khonkhean province