

Thailand's Policy Discourses during the Thaksin and Prayuth Governments, as Perceived by Thai Academics

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Abstract

This study aims to compare and contrast the policy discourses of Thailand's Thaksin and Prayuth regimes in terms of perceptions, social impacts, and preferences. The rationale for the study is that Thaksin's populism and Prayuth's civil society policies have intriguing policy shifts, continuity, and a distinctive discourse policy personality. Researchers could use poststructuralist discourse theory and critical policy analysis as a post-positivist approach to compare and study the diverse discourse set. Thirty academics from six Thai universities were interviewed for this project, and their utterances were used to analyze and interpret the discursive power of the two policy approaches. Another rationale that researchers about populist policy in developing countries in the past, especially Baykan, Gürsoy and Ostiguy (2021), said that the populist change in Thailand, Venezuela, and Turkey didn't work. Still, the populist program might have survived due to its much more dominant power. This addition tries to back that up. How did this happen, and what caused it? The study shows that Prayuth's policies on civil society could not fully replace the popular programs of the Thaksin government. Civil society was one of the most critical factors in replacement failure. The first only appears in the name; it doesn't appear in their implementation. The second reason is that the Prayuth government didn't think that appealing to the people would work as a populist strategy. Surprisingly, they didn't make poor people in rural

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areas the goal of their policies or try to change how ordinary people asked to give themselves power in policies.

Keywords: Thailand, populism discourse, civil society as policy discourse

Introduction

"Pra-Cha-Ni-Yom," which translates to "people in favor," is the Thai term for populism. It does not, however, have a clear significance for goods, people, or the environment. It generally signifies support for a politician or populist policy. Except for the source and impact of popularity, populism in Thai is not all that different from English.

By and large, academics know populism in Thailand as a policy discourse at the start of the Thaksin Administration in 2001-2006. Thaksin used populist policies on a massive scale, not only in individual programs or projects with a narrow scope as in past governments. Chuan Leekpai, the previous government, had tried to form a populist policy, but it lacked political support. The Thaksin government also focused on political tactics, such as seeking votes from low-income people. The populist policies in this era include the 30 Baht to Cure All Diseases, which is the most famous of Thaksin's policies, not only got strong support from the poor and the health care professionals who directly interacted with the mass target population as the core of the policy design.

Furthermore, other prominent of Thaksin's policies are The Village Fund, the Urban Community Scheme, and the Debt Payment Suspension for Farmers. All those policies are non-systematic welfare policies or non-systematic fiscal policies. The government formulated policies according to their ideas and the political pressure at that time. These policies focused on getting the voter turnout, especially from the masses involved in Thai politics that were beginning to open to a general election. They did not do much concerning the budget sources. In terms of economic rationality, populist policies are both rational and irrational.

On the one hand, populist policies were necessary to rescue vulnerable people from social difficulties. Birdsall and Haggard (2000: 3-5) viewed populism as a social safety net in East Asia. However, it indicated two root problems in their society: crony capitalism and the shortage of social contracts on social welfare and policy. Another positive of populist policy regarding Keynesian economics is government intervention in the economic system for recovery. On the other hand, they may be causing many problems in the countries, such as public and household debt, increasing extravagant expenditure in the people sector, and quickly growing inflation. The one negative impact of the populist policy was examining the later government. All the successive governments later had to create populist policies.

Otherwise, they did not get any favor from the voters. Until the Prayuth government, from the coup in 2014 and the end of power in 2023, tried to alleviate the populist approach by many measures, such as that policy had to identify the source of the budget, including the 20 years of national strategies definitive that the next government will do procedures in the frame of the long-range plan and setting up a committee to regulate governments under the program. Also, Prayuth's civil society policies started in 2018, spent much more budget than Thaksin's populism policies, at least only A Government Welfare Card Scheme in six years of Prayuth era, disbursing funding 257,618.4700 billion bahts as Table 1. But Prayuth's endeavor was a success or failure and is still questioned.

Table 1. Budget Expenditure on A Government Welfare Card Scheme between 2018-2023

Fiscal year	Budget Expenditure*
2018-2019	102,603
2020	40,000
2021	49,500.8342
2022	30,000
2023	35,514.6249
Total	257,618.4700

* in million baht

Source: Budget Bureau

Moreover, the Prayuth government also has many other programs and projects. For example, in early 2020, economic and societal recovery programs from the COVID-19 virus impacted round one. The Prayuth government legislated a loan decree with a budget of 1 trillion baht. The statute composted programs and projects under the budget frame to recover the economy and society in a budget of 400,000 billion baht. Subsequently, on May 8, 2021, the cabinet approved round two and round three plans in a budget of not more than 700,000 billion baht and 150,000 billion baht, respectively. (ThaiPublica, 2021)

Civil society policies of Prayuth's government have a name in Thai, "Pra-cha-rat." A general source claims that it comes from some words in the Thai anthem (Atudhya & Urabunnualchat, 2020). Some claim that Pra-cha-rat is the civil state in English. (Kesanuch et al., 2007). But there is so ambiguous and

quite no meaning in the theories of the democratic state that it has a paradigm shift from pluralism to neo-pluralism. The most important figures of the new paradigm are Dahl (1971 cited in Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009: 132), whose polyarchy concepts focus on freedom, individual rights, and competitive elections. Also, Lindblom (1977: 170-188 cited in Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009: 133-134) developed the privileged position of business in polyarchy, which means businesses were crucial actors in running the economy in liberal capitalist systems. They have to have significant discretion in their own business. In the paradigm, the civil and the state must separate. For that reason, the state would be minimal. Consequently, the civil society will be stronger. Still, it has the exact meaning of "the state of the people," which means "civil society" in English, meaning that the civil sector is the state's principal. Some Thai academics, such as Laothamatas (2006) and Bun-Mee (2004), have translated to Thai as "Pra-charat" and "Pra-cha-sunk-khom" or "the strong society", respectively. In contemporary political theory, civil society signified extra organizations from the public sector, such as nongovernmental organizations, businesses, and people-centered organizations. Its roots could track back from the rise of the Solidarity movement in Poland to the era when communist states began to disintegrate in the 1970s. There is the reclaim that people have the right to participate in public business and policies, including asserting their rights to mobilize citizens in every public sphere. (see Elliott, 2003).

Furthermore, there is no distinction between Thaksin's populist policy and Prayuth's civil society approach when analyzing the social policy dimension, as both were partial welfare policies constrained by a limited government budget. Most policies are transfer payments designed to distribute income to urban and rural residents. In addition, the public budget and debt provide a substantial portion of funding. Numerous general fiscal and finance institutes have observed that, since the Thaksin administration, the central budget for emergency plans has gradually increased. During the Thaksin administration in 2004, it was 2.66 hundred-thousand billion baht, or 22.8 percent of 1.16 trillion baht, compared to 3.65 hundred-thousand billion baht under Prayuth. But it fell to 13.6 percent of 2.78 trillion baht when calculated using the ratio term for 2006. However, in the twenty years from Thaksin to Prayuth, governments used a central budget of 14.5 percent of 34 trillion baht. According to fiscal and finance theories, the cost of establishing the central budget also implies that any government could freely use the funding to meet its needs without reapproval from the legislative council. Someone means the government will receive a blank check (ThaiPublica, 2016).

We cannot analyze Thaksin and Prayuth's policies as a conventional approach, such as a cycle or system model, because there is slight variation in policy processes or actors. Both policies, for instance, emanate from the elite or institution and have an implicit political purpose. As well as, we could not detect secret information and covert agendas concerning institutes or actors involved in the policy process. As much as we could discern from official sources alone, it was routine and insufficient for insight. Additionally, some researchers have utilized the policy process approach in their studies. However, they had no conclusions regarding the distinction between populism and the civil state policies of Thaksin and Prayuth (Kesanuch et al., 2007). Therefore, we intend to utilize another framework, discourse policy. The primary concern is why both approaches share similar process and actor characteristics but have distinct discursive power over their client. Why and how?

As for populism in Thailand, Phongpaichit and Baker (2001) noted that the populist policies in Thailand during the Thaksin era could gain widespread support in three steps: firstly, the achievement of a top business of Thaksin, Thaksin, probably the few new billionaires, survived the economic crisis during almost 2000s period. Second, Thaksin went down to play politics during the Thai transitional period from the aristocracy or technocrats polity to democracy, and third, last but not least, Thaksin decided to side with Thai people in the countryside, the poor, and the marginalized people who later became the most prominent political group in Thailand.

However, in politics, critical policy studies, and political theory, populism results from several factors. There are numerous requirements for gaining popularity. Panizza (2005: 1-9) describes populism as (1) a mode of identification in which a leader must demonstrate that they are on the side of the people. Examples include intellectuals siding with peasants in Soviet Russia's Narodnik movement in the 1860s and 1870s, William Jennings Bryan siding with the underprivileged in the United States in the 1890s, and Juan Peron siding with labor in Argentina in the 1940s and 1950s. (2) a naming procedure refers to the boss. It denotes that the leader uses their names as a political ploy to aid them. (3) a political dimension denotes that the leader implements their strategies through a political procedure, such as a grassroots movement, a political campaign, or policy lobbying.

In addition, Panizza discusses the methodology for analyzing populism, which consists of (1) empirical generalizations. (2) historicist narratives and (3) symptomatic readings. The empirical study seeks to conclude populist ideologies from the actual political occurrences in one or more nations. On

the other hand, historical accounts analyze politics in light of the period. Both symptomatic readings conclude discourse with an example of populism discourse formation. In the modern age, Juan Peron of Argentina, Getulio Vargas of Brazil, Lazaro Cardenas of Mexico, and Alberto Fujimori of Peru qualify as populist leaders. Every leader employs the tactic of dividing their followers into people and others. These divisions represent an anti-status quo discourse in terms of rhetoric. Their nations thus experience political divisiveness and hostility. According to Canovan (cited in Markou & Lasote, 2015: 2), populism has two characteristics: an overt appeal to the masses, an anti-elitist stance, and an offensive attack on an opponent. Laclau (2005: 32-38) demonstrates that populism can succeed under up to two circumstances. The first is the logic of equivalence, and the second is the logic of difference, which involves bringing disparity to light and pressuring people to change or abolish the hegemony of the leader in their society.

Although populism rhetoric can control its subjects, Mudde and Kaltwasser (cited in Lasote, 2020: 86) referred to it as a thin-centered ideology in terms of political philosophy. Populism cannot exist alone because it is not a single political theory. As a result, it incorporates into other ideologies like democracy, socialism, communism, or hybrid systems. Additionally, populism has self-interests, at least with the leader's crony.

The following explains why populism generates political and social problems in countries. First, populism encourages communication between socially opposing groups. Because the populist leader could provide for them, the poor and oppressed chose to be his subjects. Till they could afford to pay them, they did not decide to back the leader's rival. As a result, populism fosters a culture of clientelism and dependency on the ruling class. In addition, populism results in a lack of political spirit and divisiveness. Most politicians care about only winning an election, and the third populist policy is a patchwork one that only considers their clientelism. It didn't give the government much time or money to make plans or implement those ideas. Since the guidelines didn't do an excellent job of comparing costs and benefits, they caused the middle-range and long-range growth and development plans to go the wrong way. Countries have extracted problems that are difficult to solve in the long term, like many developing countries, like rent-seeking, elite capture, and state capture. The democratization problem is complicated because there are leaders and inhibit tactics in the middle way to democracy.

Further, the period in which real populism existed in Thailand from 2001 to 2006 was during the Thaksin government. They are in two categories.

First, the 1997 economic crisis, which caused the sudden stop problem, in which money flowed back outside the country instantaneously, and a severe scarcity of foreign currency, is the empirical cause of all issues in present political Thai history, according to the first point. In exchange for 1.7 billion dollars in IMF requirements at the time, including financial system restructuring, privatization, and changes in the public and private sectors, the Thai government pushed the country to impose project restrictions. Alternatives, such as a broad localist agenda, are not very important. After all, it was utopian to uphold the agricultural community and limit the amount of the country's produce (Hewison, 2001: 229). Including in connection with a closed-country concept is challenging to use in practice.

The opposition attacked the previous administration's economic sovereignty over foreigners in response to the 1997 financial crisis and the previous administration's failure. The Thai Rak Thai or TRT party leader, Thaksin Shinawatra, is initially prevented from pursuing populist politics or ideas. Thaksin created a populist platform to appeal to the underprivileged and people in rural areas. (Hewison, 2007: 238-239) The TRT swept to victory in the general elections of 2001 and 2005, taking over for five years. When Thaksin became prime minister, he encountered a public enterprise protest movement and was accused of corruption by many of his allies due to the privatization agenda. The TRT prevailed because they could withstand the demonstration and uphold their convictions. The other long-lasting protest in 2005–2006 was led by the People's Alliance for Democracy, or PAD.

When the military ousted the government of Thailand in September 2006, the country was embroiled in a complicated conflict (Hewison, 2007: 240-242). The administrations that followed the Thaksin era held power for only a relatively short time: the Surayuth administration ruled from October 1, 2006, to January 29, 2008, and the Samach government for 223 days from January 29 to September 9, 2008, and the Somchai administration for only 75 days. According to the constitutional court's decision, Somchai Wongsawat, the former prime minister, resigned when his People's Power Party was disbanded. Some organizations that once supported Somchai now support the Democrat Party's leader, Abhisit Vejjajiva. Finally, Abhisit took over in 2008. However, the red-shirt protest movement confronted the Abhisit administration in 2009 and 2010, which triggered the 2011 general election. This time, Yingluck Shinawatra, the leader of the Pheu Thai party and Thaksin's younger sister, triumphed decisively.

General Prayuth Chan-o-cha overthrew the Yingluck administration, and the coup junta's leader has been in charge ever since. After five years of the coup, the first general election took place in 2019, and General Payuth governed till the last general election in 2023 when his party lost the majority vote. Nowadays, the Pheuthai party has come back to power. However, his government made anti-populism visible when Prayuth was in political management between 2019 and 2023. As part of long-term planning, they established a committee to guide government policy under the strategy and produced a strategic plan for the next 20 years. A new party statute that controls the political party's agenda is also adopted and implemented. A political party must disclose its financing source and obtain approval that the idea is valuable enough to receive public funds before it supports a populist program.

Second, policy discourses, as described by Lasote (2020: 87), are a communication process to suggest a conceptual framework for altering politics and society. Populist and civil society discourses, which protest against populism, are the two discourses in Thailand. Thaksin's discourse was populist, as Markou and Lasote (2015: 3) explained. The elite, aristocracy, and royalists were the first group, and the grassroots and the non-privileged people were the other. Then, Thai society diverged into two opposing camps due to the power of populism. However, Baykan, Gürsoy and Ostiguy (2021: 793) discovered that the Prayuth government's civil society policy is the same as that of Venezuela and Turkey, both anti-populist coups. They also point out that populist policies might endure and continue to have a mighty discursive power, which is why the anti-populist coup's strategy failed. This finding of Baykan, Gürsoy and Ostiguy was significant for further study to this study's comparison of policy discourses from the Thaksin and Prayuth eras, which also explains why it was hard to eliminate the populist policy.

The primary informant group of this study consists of 30 academics from six universities. The research focuses on two preliminary questions: (1) the perception of academics and their level of knowledge on the policies of Thaksin and Prayuth. (2) What is the extent of the discursive influence exerted by the methods of both policies on academic opinion relative to the disparity between Thaksin and Prayuth's policies, their social consequences, and academic preferences? The main objective of this comparison study is to examine and understand the discursive power influence of Thaksin and Prayuth's policies.

Concepts and Theories

Meaning and Importance of Discourse

"Discourse" is a lengthy historical study dating back to the 14th century. Its Latin root is "Discursus," which signifies discussion (McArthur, 1996: 316). However, there are generally three interpretations (Carter, 1993: 42): (1) the subjects in a particular context, like a sacrifice in prehistoric human history. (2) a unit of language analysis longer than a sentence, and (3) words or statements that speak out. On the other hand, Political science is more concerned with specific discursive power, particularly the ruler's hegemony in discourses about social processes and knowledge. Foucault defined discourses as claims that the subject systematically creates to control the position of the object, concept, and object. After that, Foucault concentrates on the subject and object, particularly their power dynamics. For instance, patients, medical professionals, or developed and developing nations. To repress or denigrate their targets, medical professionals use the phrase "patient," or developed countries use the terms "underdeveloped" or "backward." (Diaz-Bone et al. cited in Ziaj, 2016: 71). Discourses, however, were fundamentally altered by society. To investigate how a conversation changes, Laclau and Mouffe (cited in Miscoiu, 2008: 17) looked at the discourse-forming, -transferring, and -confronting agent, as well as the networks that replaced, displaced, and restructured the discourse.

Discourse is a tool we use to speak with one another. Therefore, it naturally becomes a component of language. Except for discursive power, it is a requirement for discourse to dominate individuals since they are unaware of the subjection. Discourses are significant in the following ways (Blommaert, 2005: 202-233)

(1) As an instrument of power. The phrase "as an instrument of power" refers to discourse's capacity to rule over and judge the will of the obedient. Social scientists, particularly political scientists, are the main focus of this dimension.

(2) As constitutive of social identities, speech develops group identity, such as yellow shirts and red shirts, although all are the same as the people.

(3) As essentially ideological, speech produces stories, histories, and societal ideologies that become ingrained in people's minds and take the form of a doctrine or religion.

(4) A discourse as semiosis: A signifier fabricated through conversation. Then, transmit it to people who adhere to or hold it—for example, red, yellow, or blue camps.

(5) A discourse as a venue for ideology also refers to speech as a source of doctrine; for instance, communism has its roots in Europe.

(6) A discourse as a location for inequality means the utterance denotes a high, moderate, or low language level of people, which was a social cognitive meaning.

(7) A discourse as practice. For example, "Go out" refers to using language to push someone away from us.

(8) A discourse is socially conditioned and constitutive. This dimension designates something that is not natural; it is the result of human thinking. For example, homosexuals and lesbians, as well as men and women in general, all derive from the social constitution and use it as a criterion for living, making decisions, and carrying out various actions, such as getting married.

(9) A discourse as Texts. Texts that can be studied and understood by students or others include texts such as the communist manifesto, post-structuralism, and modernization theories.

Policy Discourse

Policy discourse can also refer to the theory and practice of policy analysis that uses discourse analysis as a theory. Its origins could be traced back to Lasswell, whose post-World War II ambition was to develop policy science and use it to solve societal issues. Following that, many pursue studies in policy schools, initially considering the policy linear, as in the case of policy process analysis. The policy-making process, however, disregarded internal political issues and actors. Lastly, Fisher and Forester (1993 cited in Savski, 2016: 3-6) were the first to reveal how policy studies had changed in the 1980s and 1990s to focus on a policy argument. They are curious about the rhetoric and argument surrounding policy, which the statement might put into effect, why, and the outcomes. This method became known as the "argumentative turn" and marked the start of the study of policy speech.

According to Foucault (cited in Bezverkha, 2015: 9), academics should examine a discourse practice in a particular place, time, and circumstance. In addition, MacDonald (cited in Bezverkha, 2015: 9) advises that academics should consider policy discourse as a component of a more extensive communication system. Politics, national identity, racism, social exclusion, communication, and public opinion are some themes where policy discourse is prevalent today.

Torfinn (2005: 5-9) separated discourse analysis into three methods, namely, the linguistic method, which focuses first on semantics, is divided into five branches: (1) sociolinguistics, (2) content analysis, (3) conversation analysis, (4) discourse psychology, and (5) critical linguistics. Second, two branches of critical discourse analysis are (1) the general critical discourse and (2) Foucault's critical discourse.

Fairclough, Reisigl, Wodak, and Van Dijk are academics who led the critical public discourse. The steps of Fairclough's technique, for instance, are (1) descriptive, (2) interpretation, and (3) explanation, according to this school's division of analysis methodology. On the other hand, Foucault uses genealogy and archaeology as his methodologies. Third, a growing school of post-modernism rejects institution and structure analysis and employs deconstruction to dismantle outdated theories. They contend that there is no perfect speech and that the ideal address will always defer.

Regarding the post-positivist approach in policy studies, another strategy that developed from Foucault and Habermas's concepts and diverged from positivism, which focuses only on policy process with rational, cycle, or system model but the post-positivism approach focuses on policy change and continuity and politics in policy such as an argument and struggle on the concept of policy. From Foucault and Habermas's viewpoints up until now, academics in post-positivist schools viewed policy as not only a concept but also discursive power or subjection power via verbal or written to dominate the policy audience. Therefore, the policy discourse was the primary technique to study in today's policy world. Policy discourse studies try to explore policy's concept and dominant power. According to Howarth and Griggs (2015: 111-113), there are three steps to studying policy discourse: (1) the analysis of texts and talk in contexts, (2) the work of structural linguistics, and (3) drawing on poststructuralists like Derrida, Foucault or Lacan, meaning that deconstruction the texts and the structure of the texts.

As a result, the policy discourse studies in this study have a limited scope of analyzing texts from the interviewees and the structure of the texts and trying to deconstruct the texts. As for deconstructing in this study, it means only trying to shake the logocentric or out-of-date of the old theories and concepts.

Populist Discourse

Populism has two features as a discourse. First, populism refers to the rhetoric of people who disagree with leaders because they believe they are being ignored and unresponsive by them. Second, populism is the rhetoric used by politicians or political parties who assert that they represent the people's will in opposition to the exclusive and out-of-touch elite. Laclau's (2002: 78 cited in Matijasevich, 2008: 3) logic of difference and equivalence provides the basis for analyzing populist discourse. The first argument is a dominant political tactic. Individuals are being denied access to things like schools, water, and health. A leader will gain hegemonic power if they can respond to them.

In contrast, the leader could not address the crowd; eventually, individuals will learn that the neighborhood shares the same dissatisfaction. If dissatisfied people developed into intolerant, they would band together and gather to oppose the leader. This collected group became the center of the chain of equivalence's logic of equality. However, people will recognize a significance in themselves due to the procedure, which will give them a sense of the hot topic if they are still outside a chain of equivalence. It suggests that not everyone knows their importance, leaving others in the dark. Laclau, an empty signifier, indicates that individuals are on the periphery, far from authority or democracy. They continue to be reliant on the populist ruler. The three stages of populist discourse are summarized above. First, people are cut off from the old leader by internal conflict. Second, people express how they are comparable to others. Third, because they can put together a large force, individuals can exert influence over the former leader (Matijasevich, 2008).

Methodology

This study uses qualitative research and collecting data by interviewing Thai academics, 30 people from 6 universities, i.e., Burapha University, Nakhon Phanom University, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Sakon Nakhon Campus, Udon Thani Rajabhat University, and Srisaket Rajabhat University. Data analysis uses a discourse analysis framework and presents data by research objectives.

Moreover, in the data analysis steps, the researcher planned to sort out data from interviews and transform them into text using the table for analysis. Question no.1 about perceptions was testifying whether the interviewees knew Thaksin and Prayuth's policies as researchers speculate or not. Questions no.2-4 signified the discursive power of both policies' approaches so that key informants could show their explicit direction and opinion to the procedures in terms of how different the two policies are, what the extent to impact society, and the last point was whether they favor which policies.

The rationale for selecting the critical informant group of this study was the interviewees who talked about the policy, in comparison to the examination, must first have some qualifications of a policy analyst, at least know about the compared policy if they had experience with them, it much richer information to talk about and could express their explicit viewpoints on the policies because it

has to analyze the procedure and was hardly to ask about the policy with the ordinary people. Second, they should be willing to give an interview, which takes a long time and much more contemplation. So, researchers use their university academics as key informants at first. Then, the next step is to find some academics in other universities that they could communicate with. Additionally, researchers all agree that university academics not only know how to answer the questions but also may be neutral in attitude to policies as most minor as the ethical code of academics.

Results

Here are the four conclusions of the results:

First, the Thaksin and Prayuth governments are well-known to the interviewed academics. They said that the projects of the Thaksin government are: (1) "30 Baht to Cure All Diseases," (2) "OTOP," (3) "Housing the Poor with Kindness," (4) "The Village Fund and the Urban Community Scheme," (5) "SML" (6) "Debt Payment Suspension for Farmers," (7) "The First Car," (8) "Rice Subsidy Scheme," (9) "Bank of the People," and (10) "One Scholarship for One District." The projects of the Prayuth government, on the other hand, are (1) a "50-50 Co-Payment Scheme," (2) a "Cash Giveaway and Rebate," (3) "A Government Welfare Card," (4) "Welfare for Students," (5) "Aid for Older People," (6) "We Are On the Road to Travel Together," (7) "Help with an Electric Bill Payment" (8) "A Store for Civil Society" (9) "Mother of Civil Society." (10) "Free Marijuana," and (11) "Bureaucratic State." However, the Yingluck government is behind a few overlapping policies, like the Rice Subsidy Scheme and the First Car project. Some academics may criticize the Prayuth government by pretending to talk about their unfriendly policies, like the Free Marijuana and the Bureaucratic State.

It was fascinating to note some points in the texts from question no.1: firstly, key informants could identify the names of the policies of Thaksin and Prayuth well. Second, they may have a little overlap with populist policies in the Thaksin and Yingluck Governments because two policies they named Thaskin policies also were Yingluck policies, that is, the Rice Scheme and the First Car project, mainly the last policy put into effect after the significant flood crisis in Bangkok and the near provinces in 2011. Also, the Rich Scheme started in 2004, the Thaksin era, and continued to the next government until it scaled up to massive projects in Yingluck in 2011. Finally, she was accused and convicted of performing duty illegally, so she flew abroad and has stayed there until now. Third, Free Marijuana was a policy in

the Prayuth government. There was contemporary controversy in Thai society on how to scope the usefulness of Marijuana in medical treatment because most academics saw its widespread use in universities and schools. Hence, some academics tried to mock this Prayuth policy by deliberately naming it as Free Marijuana, which means it is accessible to everyone and everywhere to use, not restricted only in the medical circle. Likewise, the Bureaucratic state was not a government policy but a significant problem in Thailand since Riggs modeled the unique characteristics of Bureaucratic Polity in Thailand and Indonesia in the middle of the 20th century. In the theories of the state, all states have evolved and transformed statism to a minimal state, known in modern terms as "Governance." Henry (2010) then adds his paradigm of Public Administration in his book, "Public Administration and Public Affairs," since Edition 2010, as the sixth paradigm: governance, from 1999 to now. The academic said that a bureaucratic state was Prayuth's policy; implicitly, Prayuth's government attempted to expand bureaucracy instead of scaling it down as universal.

Second, according to Thai academics, the two policies vary in the initial sum of money expended. Most persons the researchers spoke with (28 out of 30) believed Thaksin paid more than Prayuth. However, the Prayuth Government would probably pay much more than Thaksin when compared with each year they are in power and volume of average money per year. After examining the programs' implementation, most key informants (28 out of 30) concluded that the Thaksin government could manage affairs more effectively than the Prayuth government. Later, only an academic indicated that Prayuth always lost his temper in front of a crowd, while Thaksin was skilled at speaking to people in public and handling public relations. Lastly, a scholar has a viewpoint on how recent a policy is. He stated: "Thais are enthusiastic about the populist policies that the Thaksin government is implementing as part of the country's first wave. The Samach government is under the second wave, followed by the Abhisit government in the third place, the Yingluck government in the fourth place, and the Prayuth government in the fifth place. As populist measures become the norm in Thailand, nothing new or intriguing is left.". According to another academic, "some of Thaksin's policies teach people how to use money wisely. Still, on the other hand, policies in the Prayuth regime only encouraged economics by sowing cash into the social system. People who use it continue using it indulgently. When money was running out, they encountered hardship. They could not earn money by themselves, only waiting for assistance from the government".

Consequently, most interviewees (28 out of 30) believed that Thaksin populist policies spent public expenditure much more than Prayuth's policies reflected. Most of them preferred Thaksin's approach to Prayuth's policy, according to Dror's concept of the capacity to govern using public policy (Dror, 2002), implying that Thaksin can handle more than Prayuth. Moreover, the power of favor can build the myth that Thaksin pays much more than Prayuth, though it might be invalid.

Third, most academics (27 out of 30) believed that the Thaksin government's policies had more societal implications regarding policy impacts than those of the Prayuth government. "In the Thaksin era, citizens had more income, and the government focused on income distribution," one academic described it. Because of this, the poor fared better, while the wealthy had to pay higher taxes. In contrast, under the Prayuth government, people waited for government assistance, which made them weaker, the employment rate fell, and free Marijuana had a strikingly negative impact on society and our children. According to another lecturer, "The Prayuth policy did not have any clear strategy; merely giving out money to people will erode people in the future. Still, the Thaksin policy was a people basis to lessen social inequality in the long run."

Unsurprisingly, most believed Thaksin's policies impact more than Prayuth's because Thaksin handles policies in effect to a rural area. Still, Prayuth has no focus on the site, primarily operating in the city more than the countryside. One notice that Prayuth rarely has policy innovation, such as client-centered management and inverted hierarchy service delivery systems such as the Village Fund and the Urban Community Scheme or SML Project of Thaksin. Prayuth's civil policy operations amble in the monotonic style of bureaucracy.

Fourth, most academics (27 out of 30) prefer Thaksin's populist civil society policies to Prayuth's. Thaksin used the road map as his electoral campaign and promoted education, career development, and group building. Prayuth failed to increase compensation for new bachelor ventures, civil society mothers, and workers. In all his experiences, he emphasizes investing and expecting immediate returns. Another academic said, "Thaksin policy applies to traditional Thai society," His approach is unique because it recognizes how crises affect people and that programs like the 30 Baht to Cure All Diseases program significantly reduce medical costs. The other academics said populist Thaksin administration policies like the Debt Payment Suspension for Farmers program, the Bank of People project, and the Village Fund program could affect them. However, the Help with an Electric Bill project, the New Cycle

of Encouraging Economics, the Government Welfare Card, and the Prayuth administration are inferior Thaksin-inspired projects.

Most academics (27 out of 30) assert that the Prayuth administration's civil society program could not displace Thaksin's populist strategy. Two critical factors can explain the condition described above. First, the Prayuth regime refers to civil society by name. Still, almost all activities are underway by regular bureaucrats, and people outside are at least participating in it, except as recipients of policies. As mentioned before, civil society refers to the state's extra-governmental organizations. For instance, nongovernmental groups, community organizations, real civil society organizations, and philanthropic organizations should all be at work so that the state becomes a minimal state. However, the Prayuth policies all function according to statism.

However, three key informants negatively oppose Thaksin's populist policy. The reason is that first, policies were full of corruption from participants at all levels. Second, Thaksin's populist policies focus on the roots of political loyalty, using political marketing much more than genuine policy content. Third, one academic said that Prayuth intended to do the real thing for people rather than Thaksin.

Most key informants (27 out of 30) acknowledged that the Prayuth government did not regard popular appeal as a potent populist strategy. In terms of planning theory, they didn't designate a target population for their policies, significantly the impoverished and underprivileged, and they tried to show they would not need to seek favor from people. There, they didn't use political tactics of populist policy to communicate to people to give their policies discursive power. In contrast, Panizza's procedures of populism focus on three steps. (1) siding with people experiencing poverty, (2) connecting their names with the work that helps people experiencing poverty, and (3) using policy as a means to seek voting. Thaksin's populist policy has all of them, But Prayuth does not.

As a result, most scholars (27 out of 30) agree that the Prayuth government had inferior policy implementation compared to Thaksin and lacked a clear target audience and strategy. Nearly all the academics the researcher looked at concluded that Prayuth's civil society had minimal influence on Thai culture and only had short-term economic benefits. The populist initiatives were then unsuccessfully resisted by Thai civil society policies. For Thai society's top strata, the Prayuth government's civil society measures have drawn criticism because, in the short term, money will

inevitably flow back to the wealthy, as urged by economic theory. There was more social disparity than before.

Discussion and Conclusion

From the comparative study of favor between Thaksin and Prayuth policies, the research found that nearly all academics interviewed (27 out of 30) concluded that they favor Thaksin's populist policies over Prayuth's civil society policies and also indicated that the civil society policies could not effectively displace the populist policies of the Thaksin regime. The conclusion shows implications in policy discourse studies that:

First, the populist approach of the Thaksin administration continues to impact Thai society. This first finding is consistent with Matijasevich's (2018: 5-8) discovery that populism in Thailand arose as a result of the rural population of the North and Northeast increasing demands on the hegemonic governing bloc, and the ruler at the time ignoring and failing to respond. When Thaksin came to power and addressed their concerns, his popularity increased. It also corresponds with Laclau's analysis of populist discourse as the initial step by which Thaksin could construct a logic of difference and a popular subject. The principal cause was the inability of civil societies to respond to the rural population. During the Prayuth era, there was also an outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. The government of Prayuth must implement an emergency plan to combat the disease and invest a substantial amount of money and time to resolve the issues.

Second, the anti-populist coup in Thailand failed. As Baykan, Gürsoy and Ostiguy (2021: 804-805) put it, "Although seemingly more successful than the Turkish and Venezuelan cases, the coup in Thailand still ultimately failed to defeat the populist spirit, instead feeding its resentment and hope for an imminent comeback while continuing to be a challenge for the ongoing military-dominant regime in Thailand at the time of writing." The detail of feeding people resentment is why this research found: First of all, the Prayuth government did not have a tangible effect on a universal style of civil society. They just called it in their name. Second, they did not affect the mode of identification that they are on the side of people experiencing poverty anymore.

Third, if we look at the history of populism in Thailand, Phongpaichit and Baker (2001) identify the primary cause of the achievement of Thaksin's populist policies: Thaksin decided to side with people experiencing poverty. From this point, we could discuss the theories of populism that are significant problems simultaneously because Prayuth was not concerned and conceded that he and his government were on the same side as the poor and underprivileged. So, the Prayuth Government does not have much more hegemonic power than Thaksin.

However, Prayuth had more political authority due to the coup that began with totalitarian management. Therefore, the ultimate truth is that no government can disregard policy's discursive power. According to Dror's theory, it is also a crucial government lesson that policy formulation and implementation depend on governing capacity.

There were numerous methods for reducing populist policies. On the one hand, we must choose ideologies or policy discourses, i.e., (1) neoliberalism, (2) social democracy, and (3) the third way (Giddens, 1998: 18). On the other hand, we should have planned carefully to address the country's root problems, as suggested by Robert (2003: 13-20): (1) reinvigoration of party systems, (2) strengthening of civil society, (3) combating corruption and institutionalizing checks and balances, (4) international safeguards of democratic procedures, and (5) reduction of social inequalities.

Though Thailand has some of its plans, like combatting corruption, it still ignores others, like genuine civil society, institutionalizing checks and balances, significantly reducing social inequality, and planning systematic social policies. As a result, Thailand has been hesitant to choose an alternative until now. They are still embroiled in political strife and conflict with generations and ideologies, such as red and yellow shirts and political rights. When is it appropriate and courageous to make any future decision?

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