

## ผลวัดของการปฏิรูประบบเลือกตั้งในนิวซีแลนด์และไทย

### บทคัดย่อ

นิวซีแลนด์และไทยมีการปฏิรูประบบเลือกตั้งในช่วงทศวรรษ 1990 ก่อนหน้าการปฏิรูประบบเลือกตั้ง ก่อนหน้าการปฏิรูประบบเลือกตั้ง ทั้งสองประเทศใช้ระบบเลือกตั้งแบบเสียงข้างมากธรรมด้า และเปลี่ยนมาใช้ระบบเลือกตั้งแบบผสม เหมือนกัน ที่แตกต่างกันคือ นิวซีแลนด์เปลี่ยนไปใช้ระบบเลือกตั้งแบบผสมสัดส่วน ส่วนไทยเปลี่ยนไปใช้ระบบเลือกตั้งแบบผสมเสียงข้างมาก บทความนี้ต้องการศึกษาว่าทำไม่เจิงเกิดการปฏิรูประบบเลือกตั้งในสองประเทศ และทำไม่นิวซีแลนด์ ถึงยังคงใช้ระบบเลือกตั้งแบบผสมสัดส่วนต่อไป ในขณะที่ไทยยังคงเปลี่ยนองค์ประกอบของระบบเลือกตั้งแบบผสมเสียง ข้างมากถึงสองครั้ง ผลการศึกษาพบว่า การปฏิรูประบบเลือกตั้งในนิวซีแลนด์เป็นกระบวนการการมีปฏิสัมพันธ์กันระหว่าง ชนชั้นนำ-มวลชน ส่วนการปฏิรูประบบเลือกตั้งในไทยเป็นกระบวนการที่ชนชั้นนำมีบทบาทสำคัญในการกำหนด

**คำสำคัญ :** การปฏิรูประบบเลือกตั้ง, ระบบเลือกตั้งแบบผสมสัดส่วน, ระบบเลือกตั้งแบบผสมเสียง ข้างมาก, นิวซีแลนด์, ไทย

## **Dynamics of Electoral Reform in New Zealand and Thailand**

### **Abstract**

Electoral reform took place in New Zealand and Thailand during 1990s. Prior the reform, both countries used the plurality system then changed to mixed-member electoral system. However, New Zealand changed to Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP), while Thailand changed to Mixed-Member Majoritarianism (MMM). This paper aims to study why the electoral reform took place in both countries, and why New Zealand still keep supporting the MMP while Thailand changed the components of the Parallel Voting twice. The result found that electoral reform in New Zealand is the 'elite-mass' interaction reform, while electoral reform in Thailand is the 'elite imposition' reform

**Keywords :** Electoral Reform, Mixed-Member Proportional, Mixed-Member Majoritarianism, New Zealand, Thailand

## Dynamics of Electoral Reform in New Zealand and Thailand<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Changing the electoral system was a phenomenon in some countries during 1990s. New Zealand and Thailand are also among the countries that the electoral reform took place. Prior to 1996, New Zealand used the plurality system or 'First-past-the-post' electoral system. But the turning point for democracy in New Zealand was in 1992 and 1993 referendum. In 1992 referendum, a majority of New Zealand voters voted to change the electoral system and Mix-Member Proportional system (MMP) was voted the most preferred electoral system to replace First-past-the-post. Then in 1993 referendum, MMP was voted by a majority of New Zealand to replace First-past-the-post. MMP was first introduced in the 1996 general election, then followed by the general election in 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2011. And during the 2011 election, a referendum was held again in order to keep the existing MMP or not. Again, a majority of New Zealand voters voted to keep supporting of MMP.

On the other hand, prior to 1997, Thailand was previously used First-past-the-post as well. The change came after the official promulgation of the 1997 constitution, which was described as 'people's constitution'. Electoral reform in Thailand was a part of constitutional reform. Under 1997 constitution, it changed from First-past-the-post to 'Mixed-Member Majoritarianism' (MMM), some literatures named this type of electoral system as 'Parallel Voting' or known as 'Supplementary Member' in New Zealand. MMM was introduced first in the 2001 general election, then followed by 2005. But democratic politics must be stopped after the military coup in 2006. The military junta abolished the 1997 constitution and appointed the Constitutional Drafting Assembly to write a new constitution. The new constitution was declared in 2007, which changed to reintroduce 'Block Vote' (BV), an electoral system that was used before 1997 constitutional reform. Block Vote was used in the 2007 general election, the first election after 2006 military coup. After a series of political crisis during 2008-2010, the new election was scheduled in 2011. Again, the Democrat-led coalition government amended some components of the electoral system before going to the poll.

<sup>1</sup> This paper was edited from the research paper submitted as a part of the course "POLS-353 Growing Pains: New Zealand politics 1975-present", trimester 2/2013, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

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The interesting question is why the electoral reform took place in both countries. Moreover, after changing the electoral system, why New Zealand still keep supporting the MMP while Thailand changed the components of the Parallel Voting twice? This paper aims to answer these two questions.

### Approach to study electoral reform

This research primarily focus on the pattern of electoral system change in New Zealand and Thailand. Therefore, it should begin from the contemporary approaches that have been used to study on electoral reform in order to provide frameworks for this research. There are three existing approaches to study on the electoral reform: the power-maximization, the contingent and inherent factors, and the role of politicians in the reform process.

To begin with, the power-maximization approach assumes that politicians control the choice of electoral system and that they are motivated to maximize their power. This approach can be found in Benoit's work in 2004. From his perspective, electoral systems result from the collective choice of political parties linking institutional alternatives to electoral self-interest in the form of maximizing seat shares. Changing electoral system will take place when a political party or coalition of political parties supports an alternative which will bring it more seats than the status quo electoral system, and also has the power to effect through fiat that institutional alternative. Electoral systems will not change when no party or coalition of parties with the power to adopt an alternative electoral system can gain more seats by doing so.<sup>3</sup>

The second approach, the contingent and inherent approach, found in Shugart and Wattenburg's work in 2001, which they argued that electoral reform is a mix result of inherent and contingent factors. This approach focuses on either the interparty or intraparty dimension contain within themselves the preexisting conditions that generate reformist pressures. However, inherent preconditions for reform do not necessarily result in reform. There must be some triggering event contingency. And electoral reform is not the only possible of an extreme system.<sup>4</sup>

The latest approach has been developed by Renwick. In his work in 2010, he argued that the traditional idea that major electoral reform will occur only in response to systemic rupture must be rejected in the light of the fact that six major reforms have occurred in unbroken democratic contexts since 1980. Hence, because politicians usually control the electoral system and those who benefit from it and want to keep it unchanged. This implies two potential routes to electoral reform: either the politicians in power do decide that they want reform; or those politicians lose control over the decision process. If the politicians can control the reform process, it can be a reform by *elite majority imposition or reform* by *elite settlement*. But if the politicians lose control of electoral

<sup>3</sup> Benoit, Kenneth (2004). **Models of Electoral System Change**. Electoral Studies, 23: 363-89

<sup>4</sup> Shugart, Matthew Soberg (2001). "Extreme" Electoral Systems and the Appeal of the Mixed-Member Alternative. In Shugart, Matthew Soberg and Wattenburg, Martin P. (eds.). *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?* Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp.25-54.

system, there are four possibilities that cause the reform: judges, experts, external factors and ordinary citizens, so called the reform by *elite-external interaction, elite-imposition, elite-mass interaction and mass imposition*<sup>5</sup>

## Two types of mixed-member electoral system

Basically, mixed-member system is defined as the electoral system that operate with either a 'plurality principle' and 'proportional principle'<sup>6</sup>. However, this definition is too broad. This paper will use the classification of mixed-member electoral system by Shugart and Wattenburg, in which they define mixed-member electoral system in his work in 2001 as 'a subset of the broader category of multiple-tier electoral systems. An electoral system employs multiple tiers if seats are allocated in two (or more) overlapping sets of districts, such that every voter may cast one or more votes that are employed to allocate seats in more than one tier'.<sup>7</sup> Under mixed-member electoral system, voters usually cast two separate votes. First voting for a constituency seat and second for party list.

Mixed-member systems are thus a variant of such multiple-tier system, with a specific proviso that one tier must entail allocation of seats nominally whereas the other must entail allocation of seats by list. The distinction between nominal and list voting is based on the nature of the vote cast by the voter and how it is employed to allocate seats. Under nominal voting, voters cast votes for candidates by name and seats are allocated to individual candidates on the basis of the votes they receive. List votes, on the other hand, "pool" among multiple candidates nominated on a list submitted prior to the election by a party, alliance, or other political organization. There are various hybrids possible, of course, but in general electoral formulas break down into nominal vs. list systems. In a mixed-member system there are (at least) two separate overlapping tiers, one of which employs allocation of seats nominally, while another employs allocation to party lists. Typically, each voter is provided with the option of casting separate votes in each tier, which in this volume we shall call the nominal vote and the list vote. However, there are cases in which the voter casts only a nominal vote. In such cases allocation of seats in the list tier is based on an aggregation of nominal votes on the basis of party.'

<sup>5</sup> Renwick, Alan (2010). **The Politics of Electoral Reform: Changing the Rules of Democracy**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Nohlen, Dieter (1984). **Two Incompatible Principles of Representation**. In Lijphart, Arend and Grofman, Bernard (eds.) *Choosing and Electoral System: Issues and Alternatives*. New York: Praeger.

<sup>7</sup> Shugart, Matthew Soberg and Wattenburg, Martin P. **Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: A Definition and Typology**. In Shugart, Matthew S. and Wattenburg, Martin P. (eds.) (2001). *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The best of both worlds?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.9-24.

## Electoral reform in New Zealand: From Westminster's plurality system to

New Zealand' political system was once described as 'The purest example of the Westminster model of government'<sup>8</sup> Under First-past-the post, New Zealand is two-party system. Only Labour and National could win an absolute majority and formed one-party government. And with unconsolidated and largely unentrenched constitutional law<sup>9</sup> ,New Zealand political system is lacks of check and balance. One-party dominant government was criticized as unaccountable and 'elective dictatorship'<sup>10</sup> . The general election in 1978 and 1981 sparked an idea of electoral reform. National Party led by Robert Muldoon won two consecutive elections by winning the most seats (51 seats in 1978 and 47 seats in 1981). However, if looking at the votes,Labour got more votes than National (40.4% in 1978 and 39.8%, while National received 39.8% in 1978 and 38.8% in 1981). It reflected that the plurality system , which produced 'wrong-winner'<sup>11</sup> to take a power, is unfair. Apart from whether it is fair rule or not, the public opinion and trust in political parties and politicians declined.'Rogernomics', the economic liberalization policy imposed by the Fourth Labour Government, and continued by Ruthanasia by the Fourth National Government caused dramatic changes to New Zealand society. And in terms of representation, New Zealand indigenous Maori and the women has been under-represented for a long time, though New Zealand is the first nation which granted women rights to vote. Under plurality system, it was too difficult for Maori and women to get elected.<sup>12</sup>

The Royal Commission on the Electoral System, which was appointed by the Fourth Labour Government in 1985, has studied how to reform the electoral system. One year later, the commission published the 'Towards a Better Democracy' report, which set 10 criteria for a new electoral system including fairness between political parties, effective representation of minority and special interest groups, effective Maori representation, political integration, effective representation of constituents, effective voter participation, effective government, effective parliament, effective parties, and legitimacy.<sup>13</sup> Finally, The commission recommended changing to MMP because

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<sup>8</sup> Lijphart, Arend (1987). **The Demise of the Last Westminster System?Comments on the Report of the New Zealand's Royal Commission on the Electoral System.**Electoral Studies, 6: 97-103.

<sup>9</sup> Vowles, Jack (1995). **The Politics of Electoral Reform in New Zealand.**International Political Science Review, 16(1), pp.95-115.

<sup>10</sup> Mulgan, Richard (1992). **The Elective Dictatorship in New Zealand.**In Gold, Hyam (ed.) New Zealand Politics in Perspective. Auckland: Longman Paul.

<sup>11</sup> Renwick, Alan (2009). **Do 'wrong winner' elections trigger electoral reform? Lessons from New Zealand.**Representation, 45:4, 357-367.

<sup>12</sup> Denemark, David (2001). **Choosing MMP in New Zealand : Explaining the 1993 Electoral Reform.** In Mixed-Member Electoral Systems : The Best of Both Worlds?.eds. Matthew Shugart and Martin P. Wattenburg. Oxford : Oxford University Press. 70 - 94.

<sup>13</sup> Royal Commission on the Electoral System (1986).**Report of the Royal Commission on the Electoral System: Towards a Better Democracy.** Wellington: Government Printer.

(1) fairness between political parties, because of the Commission's concern to achieve a fairer reflection of party support in choosing a government

(2) effective representation for significant minority and special interest groups, given the Commission's concern that elected representatives reflect a broad set of interests and characteristics of the electorate

(3) fair and effective Maori representation, given the Commission's criticism that New Zealand's indigenous people had been under-represented for more than forty years

A referendum on the electoral system came to effect during the Fourth National Government in 1990 after winning the election. They promised to hold a referendum on the electoral system after the public opinion did not trust the Labour Government, which earlier promised to hold a referendum but finally broke their promises. As the result of the 1992 indicative referendum, 84.7% of voters want to change the electoral system and 70.5% want to change from the plurality system to MMP. This led to the second referendum in 1993, which is the binding referendum. Again, a majority 53.9% of New Zealand's voters want to change to MMP. The 1993 general election was then the last election under the plurality system. And MMP was first introduced in the 1996 general election since then.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 1.1 The result of 1992 Indicative Referendum**

| Part A: Status Quo or Change    | Votes            | %          |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Retain the plurality system     | 186,027          | 15.3       |
| Change the electoral system     | 1,031,257        | 84.7       |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>1,217,284</b> | <b>100</b> |
| Part B: Preferred Alternative   | Votes            | %          |
| Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) | 790,648          | 70.5       |
| Single Transferable Vote (STV)  | 194,796          | 17.4       |
| Preferential Voting (PV)        | 73,539           | 6.6        |
| Supplementary Member (SM)       | 62,278           | 5.5        |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>1,121,261</b> | <b>100</b> |
| Turnout 53.5%                   |                  |            |

**Source: Jackson and McRobie (1998: 252)**

<sup>15</sup> Jackson, Keith and McRobie, Alan (1998). **New Zealand Adopts Proportional Representation: Accident? Design? Evolution?** Aldershot: Ashgate/Christchurch, NZ: Hazard Press. 252,255.

**Table 1.2 The result of the 1993 Binding Referendum**

|                                | Votes            | %          |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Retaining the plurality system | 884,964          | 46.1       |
| Mixed Member Proportional      | 1,032,919        | 53.9       |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>1,917,883</b> | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Turnout 82.6%</b>           |                  |            |

**Source: Jackson and McRobie (1998: 255)**

After introduced MMP, New Zealand held 6 elections in 1996, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2011. In the latest general election in 2011, the referendum on the voting system was also held. As shown in table 1.3, a majority of New Zealand voter's still keep supporting MMP.

**Table 1.3 The result of the 2011 Referendum on the Voting System**

| A : Should New Zealand keep the Mixed MemberProportional (MMP) voting system? | Number of Votes  | % of valid votes | % of total votes |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Keep  | 1,267,955        | 57.77%           | 56.17%           |
| Change  | 926,819          | 42.23%           | 41.06%           |
| <b>Total Valid Votes</b>  | <b>2,194,774</b> | <b>100%</b>      | <b>97.23%</b>    |
| <b>Informal Votes</b>   | <b>62,469</b>    |                  | <b>2.77%</b>     |
| <b>Total Votes</b>  | <b>2,257,243</b> |                  | <b>100%</b>      |

| B: If New Zealand were to change to another voting system, which voting system would you choose? | Number of Votes  | % of Valid Votes | % of Total Votes |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| First Past the Post (FPP)  | 704,117          | 46.66%           | 31.19%           |
| Preferential Voting (PV)   | 188,164          | 12.47%           | 8.34%            |
| Single Transferable Vote (STV)   | 252,503          | 16.73%           | 11.19%           |
| Supplementary Member (SM)  | 364,373          | 24.14%           | 16.14%           |
| <b>Total Valid Votes</b>   | <b>1,509,157</b> | <b>100%</b>      | <b>66.86%</b>    |
| <b>Informal Votes</b>  | <b>748,086</b>   |                  | <b>33.14%</b>    |
| <b>Total Votes</b>   | <b>2,257,243</b> |                  | <b>100%</b>      |

**Source: Electoral Commission - Overall result - 2011 Referendum on the voting system.** Accessed 10 October, 2013 [http://www.electionresults.govt.nz/electionresults\\_2011/referendum.html](http://www.electionresults.govt.nz/electionresults_2011/referendum.html)

Following the referendum, the Electoral commission conducted the review of MMP in 2012 and submitted the recommendation to the government. In the summary of the final report, it proposed 9 importants point needed to be amended; which are

- 1) The party vote threshold should be lowered from 5% to 4%
- 2) There should be a statutory requirement for the Electoral Commission to review the operation of the 4% party vote threshold and report to the Minister of Justice for presentation to Parliament after three general elections
- 3) If the one electorate seat threshold is abolished, the provision of overhang seats should be abolished
- 4) Consideration should be given to fixing the ratio of electorate seats to list seats at 60:40 to help maintain the diversity of representation and proportionality in Parliament obtained through the list seats
- 5) Political parties should continue to have responsibility for the selection and ranking of candidates on their party lists
- 6) Political Parties should be required to give a public assurance by statutory declaration that they have compiled with their rules in selecting and ranking their list candidates
- 7) In any dispute relating to the selection of candidates for election as members of Parliament, the version of the party's rules that should be applied is that supplied to the Commission under section 71B as at the time the dispute arose
- 8) Candidates should continue to be able to stand both an electorate seat and be on a party list at a general election
- 9) List MPs should continue to be able to contest by-elections <sup>16</sup>

### **Electoral reform in Thailand: constitutional reform, coup d'etat and new political arrangement**

Electoral reform in Thailand was a part of political reform. After a long series of political failure and especially a military coup in 1991. Thailand has faced a political turmoil for a long time. It led to a drafting a new constitution. In 1996, the Constitution Drafting Assembly (CDA) was set up to write a new charter, which was called 'the people's constitution' because of the astounding attempt to bring the people into the constitutional drafting process. By doing this, each 76 provinces elected their drafter plus 23 leading Thai scholars who specialized in public law, constitutional law, political science and public administration. The 1997 constitution aimed for fundamental reform including to make elected politicians more accountable and provided greater

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<sup>16</sup> J The Electoral Commission. **Report of the Electoral Commission on the review of the MMP Voting System**. Accessed 10 October 2013 <http://www.mmpreview.org.nz/sites/default/files/pages/uploads/Final%20report%202012%20review%20of%20MMP.pdf>

transparency in the political process.<sup>17</sup> In late 1997, the new constitution was approved by the parliament and became effective with its promulgation on 11 October 1997. It is the 16th constitution of Thailand.<sup>18</sup>

The new electoral system, Mixed-Member Majoritarianism (MMM), was introduced in the 1997 constitution. It increased the number of seats in the House of Representatives from 392 to 500 with two types of members: constituency and party list MPs. Of these seats, 100 MPs were elected from a nationwide party list and 400 on a single-member constituency basis. Simultaneously, the constitution introduced a separation of powers between party-list MPs and constituency MPs<sup>19</sup> : the former are ineligible to become ministers, the latter are not. The party-list provision includes a 5% threshold to limit the number of parties in parliament and to make access for splinter groups more difficult.<sup>20</sup>

MMM was first used in 2001 general election. Thai Rak Thai Party (TRT: English-Thai Loves Thai ) led by a Thai telecommunication billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra nearly won an absolute majority, 248 out of 500 seats. Thaksin became the 23rd Prime Minister of Thailand and his government was the first civilian government which served full 4-year term. A new election was held in February 2005. However, this time TRT won a landslide victory with 377 out of 500 seats and Thaksin retained his power for the second term. But his administration lasted only one year, he was ousted by a military coup in 19 September 2006 after a long demonstration by the Yellow Shirts which alleged his corruption and authoritarianism. The military junta revoked the 1997 constitution, appointed the ex-army chief and privy councilor General Surayud Chulanont as the 24th Prime Minister and set up a new Constitution Drafting Assembly to write a new charter. In August 2007, the 2007 constitution was approved by the national referendum and officially promulgated

According to the 2007 constitution, the House of Representatives consists of 480 members. The previous 400 single-seat constituencies were combined into larger districts of varying magnitudes. There are now four single-seat constituencies, 63 constituencies with two seats, and 90 with three. The number of PR list seats has been reduced to 80 and they are now proportionally allocated to political parties in eight regional constituencies of roughly equal population (8 million). The 5% threshold has been removed. Each party has to submit a list with 10 candidates, all of whom can only be listed once and may not also contest constituency seats. The constitution drafters reintroduced 'Block Vote' (BV), an electoral system that was used in Thailand prior to 1997. It aimed to make it more difficult for Thaksin and his allied-party to obtain an absolute majority in the legislature. Voters still

<sup>17</sup> Nogsuan Sawasdee, Siripan (2006). **Thai Political Parties in the Age of Reform**. Bangkok: Institute of Policy Studies.

<sup>18</sup> Pankaew, Attasit (2010). **Expectations versus Realities: An Assessment of the Impact of Mixed Member Electoral Systems in New Zealand and Thailand**. Paper presented at the 81st Southern Political Science Association Annual Conference, Atlanta Georgia.

<sup>19</sup> McCargo, Duncan (2002). **Thailand's January 2001 General Elections: Vindicating Reforms?** In McCargo, Duncan (ed.). Reforming Thai Politics. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, p.90.

<sup>20</sup> Croissant, Aurel and Dosch, Jorn (2003). **Parliamentary elections in Thailand, March 2000 and January 2001**. Electoral Studies 22: 153-193.

cast separate ballots for constituency seats and the list seats, but the electoral procedure has been changed considerably.<sup>21</sup>

BV was used in the 2007 general election, the first election after a military coup. People's Power Party (PPP), a Thaksin-allied party led by a right wing 74-year-old veteran politician Samak Sundaravej, won a nearly absolute majority 233 out of 480 seats. PPP formed a coalition government and Samak became the 25th Prime Minister of Thailand. However, his administration was faced the large demonstration by the Yellow Shirts, a royalist group who oppose Thaksin. Samak was dismissed from his post in September 2008 after the constitutional court said he violated the constitution by hosting a TV cooking show while in office.<sup>22</sup> Somchai Wongsawat, a brother-in-law of Thaksin was elected by the House as the 26th Prime Minister of Thailand. Somchai's administration was then faced the Yellow Shirts demonstration again and lasted only 67 days. PPP was dissolved by the constitutional court after found an electoral fraud action and Somchai was dismissed automatically from the post.<sup>23</sup> The Democrat and opposition leader Oxford-educated Abhisit Vejjajiva who never won an election was elected as the 27th Prime Minister of Thailand and the fourth premier within one year. A series of political crisis was still going on. The Red Shirts, Thaksin's supporters, staged a demonstration against Abhisit administration in 2009 and 2010. They alleged that Abhisit government was illegitimate because the military paved a way to power for Abhisit and forced the Thaksin's former coalition parties to join Democrats-led government. This led to a military crackdown, left 91 death and more than 2,000 injuries.

Democrat-led coalition government dissolved parliament early in May 2011 and announced to hold an election in 3 July. Before departing, they made a few amendments to the mixed-member majoritarian electoral system that was used in the previous 2007 election. The majoritarian element was switched from multi-member to single-member constituencies. This element was also reduced in size, the number of constituency seats falling from 400 to 375, with an increase in the closed-list proportional representation element from 80 seats to 125 seats and there is no 5% threshold.<sup>24</sup> After the election, Pheu Thai Party (PT: In English - For Thais), led by Thaksin's youngest sister Yingluck Shinawatra won an absolute majority. Yingluck became the 28th Prime Minister of Thailand since then.

### What caused the electoral reform in New Zealand and Thailand?

There are main 2 factors prompted electoral reform in New Zealand. The first one is the previous system, plurality system, was disproportionated system which led to the unfair competition among the parties. The 1978 and 1981 general elections are the best example that reflected this unfair competition. Generally

<sup>21</sup> Schafferer, Christian (2009). **The parliamentary election in Thailand, December 2007.** Electoral studies, 28: 141-173.

<sup>22</sup> CNN. **Thai PM fired over cookery show.** Accessed 10 October 2013 <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/09/09/thailand.pm/>

<sup>23</sup> BBC News. **Top Thai court ousts PM Somchai.** Accessed 10 October 2013 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7759960.stm>

<sup>24</sup> Na Thalang, Chanintira (2012). **Parliamentary elections in Thailand, July 2011.** Electoral Studies, 31: 613-639

speaking, it is unreasonable for a party which won a percentage of votes but did not win an election because they lost in terms of seats. But the party which won the most seats did not win the most votes. This incident happened to Labour and a 'wrong winner' National in 1978 and 1981. Moreover, plurality system caused the over-representation for big parties and under-representation for small parties. The unfair party competition is a main factor led to the electoral reform in New Zealand. The second factor, in terms of political and social context, New Zealand faced the dramatic changes during 1980s economic liberalization policy 'Rogernomics', continued by 'Ruthanasian' in early 1990s. These changes also prompted the sense of electoral reform among the public because felt that the political system fail. Lack of check and balances in political system, unaccountable government and the 'elective dictatorship' reflected the failure of plurality electoral system. Hence, the unfair party competition and political and social context are a mix condition that prompted the electoral reform in New Zealand.

On the other hand, Thailand is more complicated than New Zealand because it changed the electoral system for 3 times. It could be analyzed that 2 factors contribute electoral reform in Thailand. The first factor, in the first reform in 1997, is the attempt to create a greater more transparent and build a strong electoral politics. At that time Thailand suffered from a long series of political crisis since 1991 military coup that led to a military crackdown in 1992. The initiative for political reform was then occurred, to solve the failure of political system and create a new transparent politics. The failure of Thai political system has been known as 'vicious cycle' of constitution, election and coup. Electoral reform then was a prominent issue for drafting a new constitution in which to end that vicious cycle and build a strong electoral politics. However, after MMM was introduced, it exceeded the drafters' expectation. Thailand got a strong, powerful and high leadership like ThaksinShinawatra. He won a majority in 2001 election, and a landslide victory in 2005. His power was seen by the traditional elite like military. Then he was ousted by a military coup in 2006. And the age of political reform in Thailand was over. Simultaneously, the age of social division and prolonged political conflict has begun.

The second factor, in the second and third electoral reform in 2007 and 2011, is the attempt to take advantage by the old elite by using electoral system as a political tool. After 2006 coup took place and the military revoked the 1997 constitution. Electoral reform, as a part of the new constitution drafting by military-appointed drafters, is not about how to build a strong electoral politics and democracy. By contrast, this time electoral system was designed just to block Thaksin's party not to win a landslide majority and dominate the parliament by changing from MMM to Block Vote, and changing from national party list to regional 8 constituencies. Again, the third electoral reform in 2011 before the general election is about how Democrats would get more seats by reducing constituencies seats from 400 to 375 and increasing party list seats from 80 to 125 seats. The two electoral reform after the 2006 coup could be analyzed that it is the old elite's way to maximization power and taking advantage from the new electoral system. Unfortunately, whether changing the electoral system or not. Both Thaksin-allied party People's Power Party and Pheu Thai won two consecutive elections.

Why New Zealand stabilized with MMP, but Thailand still struggle with MMM?

Why New Zealand tends to be stabilized with MMP but Thailand is not with MMM? It could be said that there are 3 factors in each case that contributed the stabilization. The first one, in case of New Zealand, is the 'public support'. Public opinion played a significant role before the national referendum on electoral system took place in 1992 and 1993. Changing electoral system in New Zealand has a support base from the public. Public support, through a national referendum, is important because it gave a 'legitimacy' and reflected the consensus of the society in which electoral system they want. Electoral system is important in the political system because it is the first gate for choosing the representatives who work for the voter, and also choosing the government, and choosing the politics they want. Although some politicians don't like MMP, but it has a strong support from the public. A result of referendum in 1992, 1993 and 2011 can show this. Therefore, electoral reform in New Zealand is not just a business among the politicians but also public involvement. The second reason is electoral reform in New Zealand has the clear objectives. Towards a Better Democracy report by the Royal Commission on Electoral System in 1986 and MMP Review report by the Electoral Commission in 2012 has studied academically and proposed the solution for MMP.

By contrast, Thailand has no public support base for the electoral reform, although at first it has such support when Thai voters elected the 1997 constitution drafters because the political atmosphere at that time facilitated the reform process to pass through. Thailand has never held a national referendum until 2007<sup>25</sup>. But after the 2006 coup, electoral system is just a political tool by traditional elite. The second factor, in terms of political context. Nowadays Thailand is deeply divided society not because of races, ethnic or religion. But it was divided by the extreme political ideology and belief. 'Yellow Shirts' is a group of people who claim themselves as royalist, nationalist and oppose Thaksin because he is a corrupted politician and authoritarian leader who abuse of power. However, 'Red Shirts' is a group of people who support Thaksin and claim themselves as the fighter for democracy and oppose military coup. They allege that the traditional elite like the military and the palace involve and intervene politics. So, it is hard to reach a consensus in society. Election is not end-result that everyone respect. Parliamentary politics is less effective than 'street politics'. So, political problems in Thailand is not just about the electoral system.

Lastly, in terms of political culture, it must be said that New Zealand and Thailand is much different. New Zealand has been known as the long-established democracy. But Thailand's democracy is just 81 years old since the revolution in 1932. Egalitarianism, freedom of expression and the rule of law are the main political culture in New Zealand, but Thailand still lacks of this. Because political culture is a base to build a strong democracy, although the strong political institutions are created but their culture is not suit. One day it will collapse. The military coup in Thailand is a good example.

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<sup>25</sup> The first national referendum in Thailand was held to adopt the new military-drafted constitution in 2007. However, the legitimacy of this referendum was doubted. Because at that time Thailand was under 'red-zone' martial law nationwide.

## Conclusion

New Zealand and Thailand changed its electoral system in nearby times. But the dynamics of the electoral system in these countries has resulted differently. New Zealand tends to be stabilized with MMP while Thailand is still struggle with MMM. According to Renwick's approach, The electoral reform in New Zealand can be analyzed as the elite-mass interaction reform because the reform process involved both politicians and a referendum by voters. But in case of Thailand, it is the elite imposition because the elite has a significant role to control the electoral system. However, though the elite can control the electoral system, but they cannot determine the election result.

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