Causes, Effects, and Forms of Factionalism in Southeast Asia

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Leibniz-Institut
für Sozialwissenschaften

Mitglied der
Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

Causes, Effects, and Forms of Factionalism in Southeast Asia[1]

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Abstract

This paper is the introduction for a special issue which examines intra-party factions and factionalism in competitive party systems of Southeast Asia, looking at the cases of Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste, in that order and rounding up with a comparative conclusion. The study centres primarily upon one query: in competitive party systems of Southeast Asia, what accounts for the rise of factionalism in some party systems relative to others? The paper at hand frames this special issue, reviewing the literature and examining the causes, effects and forms of factionalism in general and more specifically in Southeast Asia.

Keywords

factions, factionalism, parties, coalitions, Southeast Asia

This special issue examines intra-party factions and factionalism in competitive party systems of Southeast Asia. The study centres primarily upon one question: in competitive party systems of Southeast Asia, what accounts for the rise of factionalism in some party systems relative to others? This research question and indeed a study about factionalism is substantively because it focuses attention on the evolution of political parties

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and party systems as crucial building blocks for democracy and democratisation in unconsolidated democracies (using the case of Southeast Asia). Moreover, there are relatively few studies on the evolution and the structure of party organisations. The aim is to show what gives rise to different variants of factionalism in parties and party systems of Southeast Asia. Given that parties and elections have become ever more important in Southeast Asia amidst democratisation, we need to better understand the dynamics of parties, party systems and electoral systems (Hicken, 2008). Yet, the literature is sparse and often under-theorised. A recurrent theme is that most political parties in Southeast Asia are dysfunctional, badly institutionalised, characterised by "money politics," weak programmatic platforms, low membership figures, over-centralisation, and undemocratic decision-making (Dalton et al., 2008; Hicken and Kuhonta, 2014; Liang Fook and Hofmeister, 2011; Sachsenroeder and Frings, 1998; Tomsa and Ufen, 2013). This exaggerates the chronic problem of bad governance; it hinders democratisation and stifles the effective representation of societal interests.

Because of the great number and variety of competitive party systems, Southeast Asia is particularly suitable for comparative research. The country cases of intra-party factionalism selected for this special issue include both electoral authoritarian and electoral democratic polities in Southeast Asia, that is, Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia, Singapore, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste.[2]

Compared with the literature on party development and organisation, particularly the study of intra-party factions has remained underdeveloped. This is partly due to factions' temporal and fluid nature. It is difficult to measure the extent of factionalism because of its often informal character. Factionalism is understood as the interplay of collective actors within parties, competing for power resources. Factions are "the often temporary grouping together of politicians and their support groups both within and apart from an overarching party structure. Relationships within factions are often based on a central personality or financier who maintains his power through dependency relationships with faction-based politicians" (Chambers, 2003). Zariski (1978) stressed a sense of common identity and purpose and of collective activities to fulfil certain interests (Zariski, 1978). In Italy, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, and Japan, to name only four examples, factions have been highly institutionalised, some of them with platforms, names, offices etc. Especially in Japan, factions have been more important than political parties.

To be sure, this form of faction institutionalisation is very rare in Southeast Asia. Here, factions are often mere temporary groups without clear organisational structures, mostly based on informal links between party stalwarts, but not necessarily so. In Indonesia, for example, splits and splinters were common, but the biggest parties are relatively well institutionalised and stable (Ufen, 2008). There is ideological and clientelist factionalism within most parties (Sugiarto, 2006), but the predominant view of political scientists suggests that factions are not nearly as important as they are in Thailand (Mietzner, 2013; Tomsa, 2008). Parties in Thailand have remained quite regionalised and decentralised, with factions playing a major role in politics (Chambers, 2005, 2008; Ockey, 2003).

Factionalism can have both positive and deleterious effects on parties and party systems regardless of the level of party system institutionalisation (Gillespie et al., 1995; Köllner and Basedau, 2006: 21 ff). Intra-party factionalism can keep parties – and by extension, even coalitions – together. Alternatively, factions can make parties splinter and coalitions fall apart. Thus, in many party systems throughout the world, intra-party factions can determine patterns of stability or instability. Factions can represent disparate voices within parties or politically significant intra-party cliques. Especially in parties operating in democracies, factions can act as a transmission belt for bargaining, conflict resolution, and consensus building.

Where parties are less developed, factions have often more successfully inhibited the authority and effectiveness of party leaderships, in some cases even forcing the latter to formally acknowledge factions in party statutes (Samuels, 2004). Though it can allow more voices to be heard within the party, a degenerative form of factionalism can also lead and has led to party volatility, party fragmentation, and a lack of party cohesion (Boucek, 2009; Gunther and Hopkin, 2002). Party factionalisation also affects the ability and incentives of politicians to develop meaningful and credible party labels, and it shapes the capacity of voters to collectively hold politicians accountable for their actions in office. Finally, the degree of party factionalisation affects the policymaking environment – influencing both the decisiveness of government and the breadth of constituencies to which policymakers respond. Put starkly, all else being equal, highly factionalised party systems tend to be associated with less decisive policymaking and a higher reliance on intra-party factions.

Factions are difficult to operationalise. One early attempt (Janda, 1980) sought to measure factional coherence. Much more recently, there have been efforts to more quantitatively measure intra-party factions (Chambers, 2003, 2008; Ono, 2012). Other studies have constructed typologies of factions (Beller and Belloni, 1978; Belloni and Beller, 1978; Boucek, 2009; Hine, 1982; Morgenstern, 2001; Rose, 1964; Sartori, 1976) or examined how parties have sought to manage factionalism (Chambers and Croissant, 2010). Types of factions range from institutionalised and/or programmatic ones on one side to much more fluid and/or clientelist on the other.[3] This can be true in different parties at different times within the same party system. Factions may last for decades or vanish after a few days. They may be deeply rooted in society or function merely as elitist groups (Beller and Belloni, 1978; Belloni and Beller, 1978; Köllner and Basedau, 2006).

Causes of Factionalism

Institutions

Features of the system of government, the electoral system, and party laws have been identified as possible factors for the emergence of factionalism (Beller and Belloni, 1978; Grynaviski, 2004; Köllner and Basedau, 2006; Morgenstern, 2001). Party laws encompass rules against party hopping which is a disincentive for faction building as is the introduction of electoral thresholds that may prevent party splits.

Parties in the Philippines, for example, are often quite ephemeral and tend to be shallowly structured (Hicken, 2009: 152; Landé, 1996). Party-switching is rampant as are party mergers and splits. Immediately after the presidential election, parliamentarians tend to switch to the president's party that then dominates the party system and weakens factionalism; but only until mid-term elections and, especially, the following presidential and parliamentary elections when the cohesion of the president's party starts to crumble and lawmakers again look for other options (see Teehankee, in this special issue). Anti-party-hopping laws could prevent these volatilities, but comprehensive reforms have been stalled for years in the Philippines.

Another way to inhibit factionalisation is the introduction of electoral thresholds. They promote unity within parties because the establishment of new parties after a party split is very risky (see Fionna and Tomsa, in this special issue). Moreover, candidate and party leader selection methods determine to a large extent the degree of factionalism (Cox and Rosenbluth, 1993). In Singapore, the People's Action Party (PAP) has been able to stifle factionalism effectively, and this probably more so than any other party in Southeast Asia (Tan, 2014). Although the PAP is nominally organised as a mass party, it is de facto a secretive cadre party with centralised candidate selection – according to Lee Kuan Yew modelled after the Vatican.

In Malaysia, it was precisely the introduction of competitive intra-party elections in combination with the rise of business people that triggered factionalism and a split within the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in the late 1980s (see Ufen, in this special issue). Factions emerge because they strive to somehow organise around a party leader who intends to get elected at the next party congress. Internal elections are thus incentives for the establishment of small groups challenging incumbents. This is the reason why UMNO later hampered contests for the top positions. This authoritarianism stifles intra-party opposition. Moreover, if undemocratic parties are led and financed by an oligarch, with the help of monetary might he/she may build clientelist linkages in order to fend off protest and impede factional strife.

Within the literature, it is often argued that some electoral systems are more prone to further factionalism than others, in particular candidate-centred systems. This is quite obvious when candidates from the same party compete with each other in multi-member constituencies (such as in Indonesia and Thailand). The electoral system has also an effect on the type of factions, that is, whether they are more localised or organised at the national level. Locally or regionally based factions tend to develop within majoritarian systems, outstanding examples in Southeast Asia are Thailand and the Philippines. In the Philippines, a form of bifactionalism was typical for politics in the 1950s when in many constituencies two old established families would fight each other in the competition for political positions (Landé, 1965). The bifactionalism was then, according to Machado (1974), transformed into a kind of machine politics (see also Teehankee, in this special issue). In Thailand, the commercialisation of politics in the 1970s and 1980s drove businesspeople, often those with links to the underworld, into party politics because political positions were economically profitable (see Chambers and Waitoolkiat, in this special issue). Therefore, factions in Thailand often have a distinct regional foundation. Yet, it is

still open to question to what extent the degree of administrative centralisation or federalisation is connected to the preponderance of either regional or national factions.

Another potential factor regarding the intensity of factionalism is the system of governance. According to Samuels and Shugart (2010), the strict separation of the executive and legislative branches of government within presidential systems means that presidents do not have to permanently seek the backing of their parties. This "enhances the incentives for politicians in different branches *of the same party* to go their own way" (Samuels and Shugart, 2010: 9). In a parliamentary system, in contrast, party cohesion is usually bigger and personalisation less pronounced. Yet, to what extent presidentialism or parliamentarianism affect factionalism is unclear.

Political Economy

A focus only on institutions would be highly reductionist. The political economy of party politics tends to be neglected, this also with reference to Southeast Asia. This is all the more surprising because the financing of political parties and campaigns of candidates demands a lot of money and public funding is usually not available or insignificant.

If a candidate needs private money to get selected and to finance his/her campaign, maybe also to buy votes, and has to pay back his/her financiers once in office, clientelism is a natural outcome. MPs will be at least as dependent on their financiers as to their own parties. If the party leader finances the party (or controls the sources of financing), he/she will be able to centralise decision-making and prevent opposing factions from arising. Examples are parties serving as vehicles for presidential candidates in Indonesia (see below), some highly personalised East Malaysian parties, and the TRT ("Thais Love Thais") party in Thailand. Former prime minister and billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra was not only able to pay MPs out of his own pocket but also to buy whole factions from other parties and even to initiate the merger of other parties with the TRT (Pasuk and Baker, 2009). In this case, the centralisation of party funding was instrumental. The chairman acts as the owner of a business conglomerate.

Particularly ruling parties often have direct access to the state apparatus and can siphon off money to finance party work and campaigns. In Malaysia, UMNO was a party of teachers, bureaucrats, and aristocrats until the late 1960s, but became a vehicle for entrepreneurs afterwards. In Thailand, many businesspeople began to run as candidates from the 1980s onwards, in Indonesia after 1998, but particularly since the mid-2000s. In the Philippines, landholders and industrialists have always been able to dominate party politics. In Singapore, in contrast, the PAP is a meritocratic cadre party preventing private businesspeople from taking over the party and determining policies. Electoral campaigns in Singapore are tightly controlled and expenses are relatively low. In Cambodia, the ruling Communist party is so close to the state apparatus that party funding seems to be more like unofficial state funding.

All in all, the way party and candidate financing translates into factionalism is also dependent on many other factors. The financing of candidates and parties hinges not only on the wider socio-economic environment but also on legal regulations, for

example, the availability of direct and indirect subsidies, caps on spending and donating, the strength of supervisory bodies, the effectiveness of sanctions, etc. (Ufen, 2014).

Party System Characteristics and Party Types

Party type is important for the type of factionalism that may evolve. In Indonesia, as an example, there are at least three types of parties. Those rooted in social milieus such as the Islamic/Islamist parties and the nationalist, mostly secular PDI-P (Indonesian Democratic Party–Struggle), catch-all parties such as the former regime party Golkar, and parties that predominantly serve as vehicles for prospective presidential candidates such as Gerindra, Hanura, Partai Demokrat, and Partai NasDem (Fionna and Tomsa, in this special issue; Mietzner, 2013). The vehicle parties are highly personalised ad hoc organisations that have ready-made platforms and centre around a leader who often possesses charismatic qualities. Programmatic factionalism is weak, but although clientelism is widespread within these parties, the very strong party leader is able to hinder clientelist factionalism from arising.

Programmatic parties are often more solid because they have a common ideology. Examples for programmatic parties are those based on ethnicity, religion, nationalism, etc., maybe even some form of (reformed) socialism or communism. On the one hand, ideologies may enhance solidity, and on the other hand, strict ideologies may aggravate infighting. Especially, religious fundamentalism often gives rise to a plethora of antagonising subgroups.

The link between authoritarian ideologies and factionalism is complex. On the one hand, ideological cohesiveness in some Islamist parties, for example, could be connected to a religious rigidity that renders criticism of the so-called religious scholars almost blasphemous. On the other hand, inflexible orthodoxy may lead to intolerance, the emergence of competing groups and, thus, factions.

The existence of factions also depends on the structure of coalitions and the way parties compete with each other within a party system (Belloni and Beller, 1978; Zariski, 1978). The incentive to coalesce is high in systems where coalitions have to be solid. In Malaysia, both coalitions, the ruling National Front (Barisan Nasional) and the opposition coalition, need to effectively co-operate in order to enhance their chances in first-past-the-post elections. Especially, the ruling Barisan Nasional member parties know well that only unity guarantees longevity. It consists of mostly ethnically based parties and is itself registered as a party. Therefore, coalition member parties function to an extent as factions within the coalition. Another instructive example is Indonesia. After the fall of Suharto in 1998, an electoral democracy with a competitive multi-party system was introduced. Today, the fragmented party system tends toward the building of huge "rainbow coalitions." The most important cleavage within the party system divides secular and Muslim parties (Ufen, 2012) but the competition between them is usually not fierce because the whole system is centripetally oriented (Mietzner, 2013). The centripetal dynamics of the party system weakens factionalism.

Legacies

The role of historical legacies, critical junctures, and path dependencies is a recurrent theme in this special issue. Historical legacies are contextual conditions, which, once created, become self-reproducing and entrenching (Collier and Collier, 1991). In this sense, "legacies of the authoritarian past linger over the years of democratic transition and precondition the behavioural propensities and interactions of collective actors under democratic politics" (Lee, 2011: 20). Such legacies can thus lead to path dependence (Pierson, 2004) and may tend to help build and reproduce factionalism.

According to Panebianco (1988: 49 ff) and his genetic model, for example, the origins of parties determine their objectives and structures for a long time. The party organisation is either built by territorial penetration via a central group or by territorial diffusion via local groups. Important is also whether an external "sponsor" exist so that activists primarily feel obliged to the sponsoring organisation (such as a trade union or a religious organisation). It may be added that the presence of different sponsors within a party may cause factional strife and that territorial diffusion can promote factionalism if certain local or regional groups continuously compete with each other.

In the preindependence experiences of many countries, cadre clubs existed within colonial legislatures that would later become factions within political parties after independence. Often, party ideologies and structures are determined at the beginning of party development such as some Islamic and nationalist parties in Indonesia who were established in the 1920s, long before national independence was achieved.

Sometimes, political parties are the outcome of guerilla movements. After independence in Timor-Leste (East Timor), the different groups within the Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor-Leste (FRETILIN) started to build their own parties. Today, after three successfully held national parliamentary elections, the FRETILIN party and the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT), a split-off of FRETILIN, are the dominant parties (Shoesmith, 2012; Shoesmith, in this special issue).

In Thailand and the Philippines, entourages around local bigwigs were useful as extensions of the bureaucratic state to help preserve its power in localities. These leaders were either urban or rural business elites, retired military or civilian bureaucrats, former rebels or ethnic leaders. Once post-colonial or post-authoritarian democracy has commenced and parties begin to be founded, prefaction affiliations – now party faction affiliations– were the natural building blocks.

The Cases

Because of country-specific trajectories of party development and the unique legal-institutional and socio-economic environment in each country, general statements on causes, types, and effects of factionalism are fraught with difficulties. This special issue thus contains articles on factionalism in Southeast Asia, leaving out only country cases where either single party domination prevents an analysis of factionalism (Vietnam, Lao PDR) or post-independence absolute monarchy has always wielded power (Brunei). To

shine light on the relative scale of factionalism in the countries cases herein, the following questions are examined in each paper.

- On the scale of low, medium, and high factionalism, how would you categorise your country?
- Does that vary over time? How?
- Does that vary by party? How?
- To what extent have factions proved destabilising or problematic for governance?
- What methods have parties used to prevent or contain factionalism?
- What are the main reasons for the level of overall factionalisation and the variation across parties and across time?

Turning to the papers themselves, following this introduction, Sorpong Peou discusses intra-party factionalism in Cambodia. He argues that the hegemonic-party system of Cambodia emerged after the violent removal of First Prime Minister (Norodom Ranariddh) in July 1997 but remains far from liberal and stable. The system has become less factionalised over time, especially since late in the first decade of the 21st century and can now be characterised as moving from high to medium factionalism. Throughout the 1990s and early in the first decade of the new century, the political party system had grown highly factionalised for various reasons, including party ideology, history, and strategy. The party system has since that time become less factionalised and more stable. But it is far from mature. This development has resulted from the growing domination of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and the weakening of the opposition parties, such as FUNCINPEC and the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP). FUNCINPEC has splintered and become irrelevant in Cambodian politics. The CNRP, before its dissolution by the courts in 2017, was divided into two factions based around two former parties, namely, the Sam Rainsy Party (led by Sam Rainsy) and the Human Rights Party (led by Kem Sokha). In contrast, the CPP has become less factionalised as Prime Minister Hun Sen has successfully consolidated power at the expense of his political opponents outside the party and inside. Historical institutionalism sheds light on the variation of political development within parties, beginning with how each party emerged and evolved. But individual party leaders have behaved as rational actors to promote their power and pursued different rational strategies to maximise their power.

Ulla Fionna and Dirk Tomsa analyse factionalism in Indonesia. They contend that party politics in Indonesia's current democratic regime takes place within the parameters of a heavily fragmented multi-party system. Factionalism exists in most of the ten parties currently represented in parliament, but the influence of factions on internal party dynamics is only weak to moderate. Where factions exist, they are usually driven by clientelism and patronage rather than the representation of social cleavages, ideological differences, or regional affiliations, although traces of programmatically infused factionalism also persist in some parties. The intensity of factional conflicts in Indonesia's young democracy has varied significantly over time and across different parties. While temporal variations are mostly related to changing institutional incentive structures,

disparities between individual parties can be attributed to different organisational histories and structures as well as divergent levels of rootedness in social cleavage structures. It is noteworthy that several Indonesian parties have relatively deep roots in society and, in some cases, close links to long-established civil society organisations that preceded party formation. Given these constraints on more severe factionalism, damaging effects on governance have been fairly limited. The most debilitating effects of factionalism have been felt within the parties themselves, whereas government effectiveness and coalition stability has, ironically, sometimes benefitted from factional disputes.

Andreas Ufen examines factionalism within ruling and opposition parties in Malaysia, with a focus on party splits and/or the toppling or near-toppling of dominant factions at the national level. Political parties are either composed of clientelist or programmatic factions or represent hybrids that combine clientelist and programmatic factionalism. This is demonstrated with reference to United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) (hybrid, clientelist-programmatic factionalism), some coalition partners of UMNO such as the Malaysian Chinese Association (clientelist factionalism), and Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) (programmatic clientelism). The strength of programmatic factionalism depends on policy space which is wider if a political party is based on a "thick" basic ideology (like the Islamist PAS or like parties with strong ethnic ties to their voters) combined with relative independence in the party system, especially in relation to other parties in the coalition. Clientelist factionalism is higher if a party is not centrally organised (in terms of a centralised party bureaucracy or strong personalist leaders able to control groups within the party) and when there is high competition for patronage resources.

Robert Taylor scrutinises factionalism in Myanmar, arguing that since 2011, it has been modulated by strong leadership but when it has occurred, it has focused around conflicting strategies about how to deal with authoritarian legacies. In earlier periods of the multi-party government, both colonial and immediately postcolonial, factionalism arose for similar reasons as well as fierce leadership rivalry. Ethnically designated parties which have arisen since independence tend not to be factionalised severely but there are usually two or more which claim to represent the respective ethnic group, often demonstrating factionalism within the ethnic group itself. Between 1922 and 1962, there was a meteoric founding and splintering of highly factionalised parties, excluding the World War II period. Since 1990, the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) have dominated party politics. The NLD has experienced less factionalism than the USDP. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has managed to keep NLD factions under her personal control while the military-aided USDP has been divided between factions of Gen. Thein Sein and Gen. Shwe Mann. Factionalism is also prevalent in several minor parties. But in all parties, to differing degrees, discipline remains a challenge.

Julio Teehankee looks at the highly factionalised Philippine party system. He contends that factionalism has been an enduring feature of its party politics since the Nacionalista Party (NP, the country's Grand Old Party founded in 1907) split into two factions twice in 1922 and 1933. In the post-war period, the Liberal Party emerged from

a faction which split from the NP. Since then, a multitude of parties has been organised around political factions that have shaped the current multi-party system. Local factionalism formed the organisational base of national parties. Party organisation in the Philippines shifted from bifactionalism (1946–1972) to multi-factionalism (1986–present). However, dependence on local political clans as the vehicle for clientelist exchanges by national-level politicians (i.e. president and senators) provides a strong disincentive for the institutionalisation of political parties. Clans, not parties, have been the building blocks of politics. Through the years, the adaptive strategies of the political clans have mirrored the country's shifting contours within the socio-economic and political terrain. More than the seemingly immutable and unequal socio-economic structure, continuing clan dominance is both the reason for and a product of the failure to develop a truly democratic electoral and party system.

Netina Tan investigates factionalism in Singapore. She observes that Singapore's PAP has withstood economic crises, leadership successions, and the death of its founding leader in 2015. How does the PAP avoid the debilitating effects of factionalism and maintain cohesion over the years? She argues that a set of incentives and constraints institutionalised at the party and national levels foster elite co-operation and deter defections. Then, based on a historical institutionalist approach, she traces the critical junctures in the PAP's early formative years and the struggles between the left wing and moderate factions that led to the adoption of a cadre party model to maintain party cohesion. At the party level, she contends that a centralised and regularised cadre recruitment and candidate selection that co-opt like-minded elites into the higher echelon of leadership ensures party loyalty and self-renewal. At the national level, the PAP's dominance over the Westminster parliament facilitates the introduction of legislations that deter party switching and the rise of party alignment based on ethnic or religious consciousness. Together, these processes and mechanisms have deterred the rise of factions that challenge the ruling party elites.

Paul Chambers and Napisa Waitoolkiat explore factionalism in the case of Thailand. They contend that though Thailand from 2014 until 2019 was under military rule, it previously possessed a highly factionalised, competitive party system under a defective democracy. The country's high level of factionalism across parties and across time owes to a long history of regionalised and decentralised parties which have invariably been dependent on finance from faction leaders and which have rarely been reined in by laws to limit factionalism. Such hyper-factionalism also persisted because the country's frail democracy was constantly interrupted by military coups that prevented either the enactment or longevity of any laws pertaining to the strengthening of parties and party systems. Since 1979, evidence of hyper-factionalism can be found in the fact that it forced ruling coalitions from office on four occasions and brought new coalitions to office on two occasions. Nevertheless, the extent of intra-party factionalism across parliament has varied over time, partly because of rules or party strategies. Some parties have also been more adept at reining in factionalism than others because of faction-management styles that emphasise inclusiveness and collegiality. Only under Thaksin Shinawatra (2001–2006), did factionalism diminish in importance on a national level owing partly to 1997

constitutional alterations. Following a 2006 coup and the 2007 adoption of a military-endorsed constitution, a high level of factionalism returned in both large and small parties. Though the 2014 coup again ended a period of intra-party factionalism, the 2019 election brought highly factionalised parties back to the fore of Thai politics. As a result, in 2020 Thailand's party politics remains highly unstable.

Dennis Shoesmith assesses the development and operation of Timor-Leste's political party system and the scale of factionalism in terms of its historical development, the institutional framework of post-independence politics, the predominance of the political executive over the parliament and therefore weakened autonomy for the party system, under-representation by parties, parliament, and individual MPs of their constituents in a single national electorate with a party list system, and the dominance by party leaders in a highly personalist political system. Factionalism has operated at the lower end of the scale in the two major parties, FRETILIN and the CNRT, since independence. The party list system removes the opportunity for factionalism in elections. FRETILIN has a strong, centralist structure under the Secretary-General and the Central Committee. This suppresses factionalism with the exception of the factional challenge during the political crisis of 2006. The CNRT, which has governed since its formation in 2007, has had a low level of factionalism for a very different reason: the personal dominance of the party by its founder Xanana Gusmão. His retirement as prime minister and the formation of a government of national reconciliation in 2015 could encourage higher levels of factionalism in both parties in the lead-up to the 2017 parliamentary election. Inter-party rivalry rather than intra-party factionalism has characterised the party system. The paper explains how this has worked since independence and how the major changes in the party system in 2015 may now encourage a rise in factionalism in the two major parties.

At the end, Allen Hicken and Netina Tan compare the country cases using answers to the questions asked in this introduction.

Ultimately, this special issue aims to raise greater awareness about factional influence in the internal politics of political parties, which can ultimately affect democracy and public policy in Southeast Asia. Yet, the study also highlights how factionalism is different in various country cases of the region. It is hoped that these papers can be potential starting points for even deeper research into factions in the Southeast Asian party systems. In addition, perhaps future studies can use the theory and method of this special issue to examine party systems in other parts of the world in order to expand understanding about the causes and effects of intra-party factionalism.

Notes

1. This study is the product of a workshop with eleven political scientists who specialise in the study of intra-party factionalism in different countries of Southeast Asia. Each presented their findings at Naresuan University in Phitsanulok, Thailand in 31 July–2 August 2016 under the auspices of Naresuan University's College of ASEAN Community Studies (CACS) (the workshop host) and the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) as well as the Asian Political and International Studies Association (APISA). CACS and GIGA generously funded the workshop.
2. Elections within electoral authoritarian systems are inclusive and pluralistic, but these elections are placed under tight authoritarian controls. Electoral authoritarian systems are different from closed authoritarian systems where there are no competitive elections and from electoral democracies with better ratings on civil liberties and political rights. Electoral democracies still suffer from some deficiencies (such as human rights violations, strong veto actors like the military, high levels of corruption, etc.) and are, thus, different from liberal, usually old democracies with very high ratings for civil liberties and political rights. See Howard and Roessler, 2006; Schedler, 2013.
3. See in this special issue the articles by Fionna and Tomsa and Ufen, respectively, who refer to Sartori's (1976: 76) distinction between "factions of interest" and "factions of principle." The latter are based on policy beliefs whereas the former are oriented towards gaining access to patronage sources.

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