A Framework for Analysis of Budgetary Politics in Thailand*

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An inquiry into the political structure and process of a country is the study of, in the classic words of Harold D. Lasswell, "who gets what, when and how" in that country. These concepts are also true in Thai politics. This article does not aim to analyze extensively the politics in Thailand, but rather to propose an analytical framework from which, hopefully, further studies may be pursued. The proposed framework deals largely with the budget appropriations and the implications concerning how they have been arrived at within the political decision-making process of the government of Thailand.

Premises and Assumptions

A budget statement or policy is among the most important statements or policies of a government. It contains clearly expressed governmental plans and purposes with price tags attached. Moreover, it is a formal expression of the government's decisions about the authoritative allocation of resources in a political system. Therefore, an inquiry into government budgeting is an analysis of role interrelationships among components of the governmental process and the larger political system. Accordingly, an understanding of the factors that influence the level and distribution of budget appropriations should illuminate such interrelationships within both the formal governmental process and the larger political system.

Important questions must be answered, if one is to examine the budgetary allocations and appropriations. These include: Who has the authority and responsibility for decisions about allocations of public funds? What factors influence those authorities in making budgetary decisions? How does the budget policy as an output of the political system reflect the characteristics of the political and governmental processes?

Financial resources for political decision-making are very limited in most countries. A government's budget decisions often reflect efforts to allocate such limited funds through the political process.[1] Therefore, a budget must record the outcome of the political struggle over "who gets what." The outcome must mirror the political strengths of the major governmental institutions. Thus, Aaron Wildavsky states:

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1) Political process is defined as a process of struggle over which preferences are to prevail in the determination of policy.

Since the amounts requested often have an effect on the amount received, budget proposals are often strategies. The total sum of money and its distribution among various activities may be designed to have a favorable impact in support of an organization's goals. As each participant acts on the budget he receives information on the preferences of others and communicates his own desires through the choices he makes. Here a budget emerges as a network of communications in which information is being continuously generated and fed back to the participants. Once enacted a budget becomes a precedent; the fact that something has been done before vastly increases the chance that it will be done again [Wildavsky 1968: 192].

The Approaches

Several factors originating from within and from outside the boundaries of the political process affect the authoritative allocation of scarce resources. Systems theory provides a means for analyzing these factors. Systems theory views public policy (such as budget policy and appropriations) as a response by the political system to forces brought to bear upon it from the environment. Forces generated in the environment are viewed as *inputs* of the political system. The environment is any condition or circumstance existing outside the boundaries of the political system. The *political system* (blackbox) consists of groups or interrelated structures and processes through which inputs are authoritatively allocated for a society. The authoritative allocations are

then defined as *outputs* of the system, and these outputs constitute *public policy*. Feedback occurs as the outputs influence the environment in a way that affects the inputs going from the environment to the political system. Through the process of feedback, decision-makers can evaluate their decisions and activities and hence may adapt new decisions and activities as a reaction to the assessed effects which earlier outputs had upon the environment.

Systems theory portrays the budget as an output of the political system. As David Easton writes:

[A political system] is a terminal point in the intricate process through which demands and supports [inputs] are converted into decisions and actions [outputs]. To use the simple analogy of a manufacturing system...the outputs were viewed as the products forthcoming from the conversion operations performed on the mixture of items going into the system [Easton 1965: 344].

Accordingly, a comprehensive analysis of the budget would entail the description and explanation of both causes and consequences. This involves (1) a description of the content of the budget, (2) an assessment of the impact of environmental forces on the budget's content, (3) an analysis of the effect of various institutional arrangements and political processes upon the budget, (4) an inquiry into the budget's consequences for the political system, and (5) an evaluation of the budget's impact on the society [Dye 1972: 3]. This means that budget appropriations can be conceived of either as a *dependent* variable (asking

what and how the environment and the political conversion process shape its content) or as an *independent* variable (asking what impact or consequences the budget has on the environment and the political system).

Because of the severely limited data collection and statistical records available in Thailand, a comprehensive analysis of those reciprocal linkages among the environment, the political system, and budget policy is not possible. Consequently, the proposed framework given in following paragraphs is limited to linkages between governmental institutions and the budget.

Systems theory renders us a technique for systematically studying governmental decision-making in terms of budget policy. Most political decision-making activities, however, can be described and explained in terms of a smaller structure than the entire political system.[2] The political system is not only closely interconnected with other systems such as the economic system but is also a subsystem of the social system. Similarly, within the political system itself there exists a number of subsystems, such as political parties, interest groups, and the bureaucracy. Many times budget decisions are described as interactions among these subsystemic actors of the political system.

An analysis of budget policy should ascertain the characteristics, roles, and contri-

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2) See Michael A. Weinstein, *Systematic Political Theory* (Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Company, 1971), Chapter 3; Robert A. Dahl [1965: 9, 30–37]; Oran R. Young, *Systems of Political Science* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 17; Yehezkel Dror [1968]; and Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell, *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966).

butions of the major subsystems involved in the budgetary process. The politics of these subsystems are the politics of function, where the issues are handled immediately and directly [Redford 1969: 96–106]. "The quality of aggregative policymaking," writes Yehezkel Dror, "depends in part on the quality of the discrete policy-making carried on by these substructures...." Hence, continues Dror, "The characteristics of the separate contributions of these substructures and their relative weights greatly determine the quality of public policymaking; therefore, they constitute an important criterion of great practical usefulness" [Dror 1968: 54].

One must, however, do more than describe these subsystems; one must also consider how much autonomy they enjoy. Obviously, political systems will "vary a great deal in the extent to which various subsystems within their boundaries enjoy autonomy" [Dahl 1965: 35]. The two extremes for subsystemic autonomy would be the democratic political systems such as the United States and Britain and the modern tyrannies. In the democracies, a great variety of their subsystems have enjoyed considerable autonomy in handling various issues. In the tyrannies, such as Uganda under Idi Amin, all political subsystems were agents of the systemic dictatorship. A major point we obtain from these two extremes is that in contrast to Uganda where the self-interests of President Idi Amin have prevailed over the public, the democracies have attempted to represent the public interests by encouraging all interests to compete openly with

other interests [Redford 1969: 102–106].[3]

Thailand's political system falls somewhere between these two extremes. As will be discussed later, the Thai political system is classified in terms of subsystems' autonomy as being between the democratic and totalitarian extremes. It is often labeled a "bureaucratic polity"—defined by Fred W. Riggs as a polity in which the official class as a ruling class has dominated the entire system even though formal constitutional charters have given the people modern ideas of popular sovereignty—since a great variety of the subsystems have been arranged and are closely supervised by the powerful bureaucracy.[4] This is primarily due to the lack of institutionalized "extra-bureaucratic political institutions," i.e., political parties, interest groups, a stable legislative body, and an independent judicial body which are able to check and balance the powerful bureaucratic establishments. The Thai bureaucracy has thus enjoyed a high prestige and considerable autonomy

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3) Emmette S. Redford [1969] summarized four propositions concerning the autonomous subsystems in a democratic political system as follows: First, subsystems provide stability for existing equilibriums among interests. Second, subsystems provide continuous access and superior opportunities for influence to high-quality, aggregated interests. Third, subsystems provide some access and presentation to interests that are not dominant. Fourth, substantial changes in the balances among interests served by subsystems can be expected to occur only through macropolitical intervention that modifies the rules and roles operating in the systems.

4) For a discussion of this fact, see Fred W. Riggs, "Bureaucracy and Political Development: A Paradoxical View," in *Bureaucracy and Political Development*, ed. by Joseph LaPalombara (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

and has become the dominant group exercising power over all other political groups. Even though the Thai bureaucracy is, by definition, a substructure of the larger political system, it nevertheless plays the dual roles of making policy and implementing policy.

The proposed framework set forth hence will treat the Thai Budgetary appropriations particularly during the period of 1960–1980 as "dependent variables." The relationships among components of the government process and the larger political system will be "independent variables." This leads us to two broad perspectives of analysis. The first perspective is that Thai budgetary appropriations represent the allocation decisions of the Thai bureaucrats. In this case, the government's ministries and agencies with strong bases of political support will acquire larger shares of these budgetary appropriations. The second perspective is that the Thai budget policy and the appropriations are results of economic, governmental, and political phenomena within the society. These two distinctive perspectives are explained in the remainder of this article.

Perspective 1: Subsystemic Politics and Incrementalism

The first perspective assumes that the political system of contemporary Thailand has been dominated by its bureaucratic subsystem. This uniqueness is a consequence of the historical evolution in Thai political and administrative systems. The

tradition of absolutism left the lines of authority clear. The king, who was a god-like monarch, had absolute power; the bureaucracy was the king's tool, a passive administrative instrument that could be used at his discretion. This differentiation between the role of the king and the role of the bureaucracy lead to a system of nepotism. The king, being absolute, often appointed his relatives and high nobles to high and prestigious positions in the Thai bureaucracy, e.g., governor. Moreover the traditional system equated rank and position with the status and wealth of each bureaucrat. Although administrative reform introduced important structural improvements in the traditional system, the reforms did little to deter the practice of nepotism.[5]

The Revolution of 1932 did not transform the country into a modern democratic state. Democratic institutions were created, yet the political system that emerged was practically the same as before. The king's absolute power was divided among three branches as was required by the first constitution of 1932. The constitution made clear, however, that the executive branch was to be superior and that the bureaucracy would be a tool of the executive. The Thai political system remained authoritarian, and the public continued to believe that "authority comes from above."[6] Consequently, the public, in the predominantly agrarian Thai economy, was politically apathetic, and "extra-political"

institutions—political parties and well organized interest groups—failed to develop. As a scholar comments:

> When the monarchy faltered and royal authority was overthrown, …the rather alien idea of popular control of the state was substituted for the ancient and admittedly limited and outworn monarchism. But parliamentary democracy, as a process wherein diverse aroused social interests are expressed through organizations outside the government and are synthesized by representative institutions into a statement of the public power, has not emerged in Thailand. Interest groups, such as they are, remain weak because Thailand rests firmly on a traditional agrarian socio-economic base [Wilson 1967: 277].

The political system has continued to be authoritarian. The system is dominated by a bureaucratic oligarchy that plays the dual roles of making and administering policy. This oligarchy, which has usually had a majority of military officials, has controlled the Council of Ministers (Cabinet). The Council "is the institutional focus of power in the Thai political system, both in law and in fact" [*ibid.*: 143]. Furthermore, as Riggs indicates:

> Without external centers of power capable of controlling the bureaucracy, the main arena of political rivalry in Thailand has come to be the cabinet as a ruling committee of the effective heads of the ministries with their respective departments, including the armed forces, which form the apex of bureaucratic authority [Riggs 1966: 380].

5) See William J. Siffin [1966].
6) See Thawatt Mokkrapong, "The June 1932 Revolution: A Study of Political Behavior" (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1960).

Another unique characteristic of Thai political practice is what is called "politics of cliques." A clique consists of individuals who are bound together by personal love, loyalty and respect that is based upon a hierarchical relationship between a leader and followers. The leader is at the apex of the hierarchy. The politics are thus power struggles among competing cliques [Wilson 1967: 116]. The motivation for these conflicts is often simply the higher status that will accrue if the clique can influence or control the cabinet.

Cliques will be found not only in the cabinet but also among high ranking bureaucrats who aspire to cabinet status. Riggs observed that almost all cabinet members had at one time been bureaucrats who had aspired to political eminence. Once they became cabinet members, these former bureaucrats were much more responsive to their bureaucratic constituents, who were also members of their clique, than to the populous as a whole. Consequently, the cabinet has tended to respond to the demands of the bureaucracy instead of the demands of interest groups, political parties, or even the representative assembly.

Wilson summarizes the situation as follows:

> ...the role the cabinet plays in policy formulation and implementation...arises from [their relationships with the bureaucracy] which in turn is determined by the character of the power complex in Thai society. The ruling clique seizes the seats of power by a sudden coup and then uses these positions to establish and maintain its authority. But the constituencies of the members of the clique are

of the bureaucracy itself. These are primarily the military...[and], to a greater or lesser extent, all agencies. A minister, when he steps into his ministry, possesses the traditional authority of the office, and he can expect to get the deference, respect, and obedience from his subordinates which tradition demands. He is obligated by tradition to look out for these subordinates, however. In order not to disturb his authority and perhaps that of the whole clique, he must look to this obligation. His ministry then becomes his constituency, and he represents it in the cabinet. He fights for its budget, and he protects its employees. The success with which he does this depends upon his relative position within the ruling clique, although the best he can expect is a compromise with his fellow ministers [*ibid.*: 161].

These characteristics of Thai politics are what some scholars have labeled, "bureaucratic politics" in a "bureaucratic polity."

Subsystemic Politics: Its Norms and Values

The Thai bureaucracy, then, is the major subsystem of the larger political system and of Thai society. Presumably, the network of supportive arrangements within this important political subsystem reflects the central values of Thai society. These values will include the norms and criteria by which political and administrative behavior is regulated. A dichotomy between politics and administration does not exist since cliques provide a means through which the bureaucracy is involved in policy for-

mation as well as policy implementation. Since diverse and potent forces outside the bureaucratic establishment are lacking, the discovery of the dominant social value orientations of the Thai bureaucracy will be the key to understanding the intrinsic characteristics of the bureaucratic polity.

W. J. Siffin found that hierarchical status, personalism, and security are the three dominant social values of Thai bureaucracy [Siffin 1966: 161–163]. Hierarchicalism has been inherited from the traditional rule. Its presence is evidenced by the fact that "the bureaucratic system is to a considerable degree organized and operated to give meaning and support to status" [*ibid.*: 161]. This has a consequence for the administrative structure of government. All governmental functions are formally integrated in the hierarchical structure of several ministries; each ministry is hierarchically divided into departments, divisions, and sections. This hierarchical structure discourages lateral interdependence among the ministries and the departments. Furthermore, the departments tend to be self-contained operational units that are staffed by civil servants with stratified positions, ranks, and status.

The second dominant value of the Thai bureaucracy is personalism. Bureaucratic behavior in Thailand is primarily informal and personal. Personal ties and face-to-face discussions are emphasized instead of formal rules and regulations and the impersonal discharge of duties that are key elements to Weber's ideal bureaucracy. In Thailand personalism coupled with hierarchicalism becomes the basis for author-

ity. "[T]he source of authority is personal; the response is personal; ...and the substantive concerns of the parties to the relationship are to some degree status-centered rather than achievement-oriented" [*ibid.*: 167].

Security or the "desire to preserve one's membership" is the third eminent value of the Thai bureaucracy. Its significance, wrote Siffin, "lies partly in the fact that the bureaucracy is a way of life and a source of status, and that there are few, if any, attractive alternatives to the bureaucracy within the large society" [*ibid.*: 162]. Overstaffing of agencies is thus an accepted practice.

These three dominant social values are closely intermingled and very supportive of each other. As Siffin says:

...hierarchical status, personalism, and security are all reflected in the arrangement by which personnel and other resources are procured for the Thai bureaucracy. Status is a potent force which makes the bureaucracy attractive in the face of more renumerative alternatives which are available outside it. Advancement in hierarchical status is usually the key to increased material rewards for members of the system. There is little or no real conflict between status norms and productivity norms in the procurement of resources, simply because authority is inherent in status, and status is not determinantly linked with productivity [*ibid.*: 175].

Politics of Budgeting

The politics of cliques and the bureau-

cratic polity's values of hierarchical status, personalism, and security affect budgetary politics. A budget allocates limited financial resources to governmental agencies. Budget proposals by agencies tend to be strategies for maintaining or increasing the amount of money available to the agency. The budgetary process can thus be conceptualized as a network of interactions or communications among the agencies, rather than as a rational means for achieving the stated objectives of the governmental regime.

Three norms tend to guide the Thai budgetary process [*ibid.*: 171–172]. These norms provide the rules of the game by which the politics of budgeting is played. The first norm is that "only high status persons may properly propose significant changes in, or additions to, the established pattern of resource assignment." At times, an agency's budget request is significantly altered by the individual minister who submits the final budget proposal, even after the request has been screened by the Budget Bureau. Since the Thai political system lacks extrabureaucratic power centers that can bring systematic pressure upon the government for budget changes and since the value of hierarchical status prevents the agency from demanding significant changes in its budget, only ministers and other highly placed bureaucrats have the status to propose significant alterations in the allocation of resources.

The second norm is that "adjustments in the existing pattern of claims on resources tend to be made on a personal basis." Most budgetary decisions are made informally during face-to-face discussions. Consequently, even though national interests such as national symbols, prestige, and survival are often mentioned, favoritism toward members of one's clique is widespread. Specific program goals are not as compelling as they are supposed to be for allocating the governmental resources.

The third norm is that "little or no justification is required for the continuation of established resource allocations so long as governmental revenues do not shrink." Although the Budgetary Procedure Act of 1959 established a basis for performance budgeting, the bureaucracy has customarily failed to generate the data that is necessary for the continuous and systematic assessment of competing budget proposals. Instead of analyzing existing programs, these established resource allocations are accepted as being legitimate. This guaranteed funding base provides security for the participants in the bureaucratic system.

Within these norms each governmental agency emerges in strategic activities to secure its budgetary goals. These budget strategies "are the links between the intentions and perceptions of budget officials and the political system that imposes restraints and creates opportunities for them" [Wildavsky 1969: 63]. Budgetary strategies are, as Wildavsky suggests, of two types. The first is ubiquitous strategies. The second type is contingent strategies [*ibid.*: Chapter 3].

Because of the rapidly changing environment of the Thai political system, no ubiquitous budgetary strategies exist. Emphasis upon national development and

modernization of the budgetary system has kept government agencies in a state of flux. The volatility of cabinet level politics (systemic politics) compound the agencies' difficulties in developing an ubiquitous strategy that will guarantee the desired funding level.[7] Outcomes of the politics of budgeting in Thailand can thus be analyzed as "bureaucratic allocations." According to this view the budget decisions reflect the relative power positions of bureaucratic elites rather than the pressures of public demand. The Council of Ministers is the major political arena in which the conflicting and expanding claims over public funds are settled. Since compromise, bargaining, and logrolling are the means used to settle the conflicts, it would be expected that the budgetary process in Thailand would be *incremental*.

Independent Variables

Bureaucratic Polity
and
Subsystemic Politics $\Big\}\longrightarrow$

Dependent Variables

Budget Policy and
Appropriations: Bureaucratic
Allocations and Incrementalism

In incremental decision-making only modest changes in the previous year's appropriations are discussed. In this way decision-makers narrow the range of goals preferences, alternatives as well as information that is necessary for making decisions. Incrementalism is a political expedient. Compromise over various claims becomes

easier because all participants concentrate on incremental modifications only. Participants, in this case the bureaucratic elites, are more likely to be satisfied with incremental increases than with nothing. Consequently, political conflicts among bureaucracies are reduced, and a certain stability in government is maintained in spite of the numerous regime changes that have occurred. Bureaucratic allocations give the Thai political system the continuity which is necessary for its survival.

Perspective 2: Systemic Politics and Rationalism

The second perspective assumes that Thai budget policy and appropriations are blended results of economic, governmental, and political phenomena within the society. In this regard, the first perspective of analysis is not comprehensive. As a result, recent research indicates that "bureaucratic allocations" do not satisfactorily explain the Thai budgetary process [Samudavanija 1971]. They do not explain, for example, what and how environmental factors and conditions of the system affect or determine the contents of budget policy. Moreover, the first perspective ignores any considerations the government has used in planning and developing its budget priorities. The impact of factors such as these cannot be satisfactorily explained by the processes of bureaucratic allocations and incrementalism.

Like other budgetary systems, the Thai system is complex. Interrelated structures of policymaking are influenced by factors and conditions both in and out of the

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7) See explanation and description on those employed strategies in Chai Anan Samudavanija [1971].

political system. To simplify analysis, systems theory perceives the political system as a "blackbox" receiving public demands and then converting them into policy outputs. During this conversion process, the "blackbox" must not only synthesize demands but also articulate the national goals and political objectives by which the demands can be analyzed. The budget policy is the single most important policy of the government as it explicitly expresses national goals and political objectives. Accordingly, budget formulation and authorization is highly political and the appropriations must reflect maximization the stated political objectives and priorities of the government in power. But who is the "blackbox"?

According to Emmette S. Redford, macro-level politics "arises when the community at large and the leaders of the government as a whole are brought into the discussion and determination of policy" [Redford 1969: 83]. In the American political system, those identified macropolitical actors are the two national parties, the President, the department heads (the Cabinet), and the congressional leaders [*ibid.*: 107–109]. In the British parliamentary system the instruments are the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister, the national parties, and the Parliament. These are the instruments of the conversion process of the "blackbox" in the systemic analysis. In Thailand, the political system has failed to maintain the stability of a parliamentary system; the Thai Cabinet and the Prime Minister have exercised power over other potential instruments of

macropolitics such as the legislature and the political parties. Thus, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet are the only purposeful macropolitical agents and represent the "blackbox."

The identification of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet as purposeful agents "involves a simple extension of the pervasive everyday assumption that what human beings do is at least 'intendedly rational,' an assumption fundamental to most understanding of human behavior" [Allison 1971: 28].

Accordingly, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet must think of their decision-making as "intendedly rational." Such rationality must exhibit (1) "consistency among goals and objectives relative to a particular action," and (2) "consistency in the application of principles in order to select the optimal alternative" [*ibid.*: 29]. In short, the macropolitical or systemic political process involves "choice behavior." The leaders of the government are rational and must decide among alternative courses of action.[8] Thus, to choose rationally "is to select the most efficient alternative, that is, the alternative that maximizes output for a given input" [*loc. cit.*]. The rational decision-maker must select the best possible means whose consequences maximize the political values of the regime. Therefore, "rationality refers to consistent, value maximizing choice within specified con-

8) See Robert H. Salisbury, "The Analysis of Public Policies: A Search for Theories and Roles," in *Political Science and Public Policies*, ed. by Austin Renney (Chicago: Markham, 1968), pp. 152–154; and Dror [1968: Part IV: An Optimal Model of Public Policy Making].

straints" [*ibid.*: 30].

A historical review of Thailand's political evolution since the ancient regime verifies the above messages. Under the ancient, absolute regime (prior to 1932), a king totally controlled the government. The government's goals were whatever the king prescribed. Such absolute rule often resulted in a rational decision-making process whose purpose was to maximize the king's values and objectives.

This traditional mode of political leadership, with decisions made at the highest levels, remained even after the 1932 revolution. Several political coups have followed. These coups were under strong military leadership. Since the 1932 revolution, Thailand has experienced ten military coups and has been governed under eleven different constitutions. The military, particularly the army, has ruled and played a dominant role in the politics of Thailand. They were, moreover, made legal by their self-proclaimed constitutions. Thus, the 1932 revolution was actually the coup which can best be viewed as a bureaucratic revolt against the absolute monarchy, not against authoritarian rule.

During the period of 1960–1980 Thailand experienced seven different political regimes: (1) military dictatorial regimes, 1960–1968; (2) a military constitutional regime, 1968–1971; (3) another military dictatorial regime, 1971–1973; (4) civilian constitutional regimes, 1973–1976; (5) civilian authoritarian regime (with military support), 1976–1977; (6) military dictatorial regime, 1977–1979; (7) military constitutional regimes, 1979–1980.[9] While the

1968–1971 regime was a step forward in terms of constitutional development, the 1971–1973 was a step backward. The 1973–1976 regimes were other moves toward a genuine democratic system in which the influence of the military was kept at a minimum. However, the civilian rule was incapable of maintaining support and was overthrown by another military coup in 1976. The authoritarian government set up immediately after the 1976 coup, under a civilian's leadership, was replaced by another military dictatorship in 1977. The new military government under the premiership of Army General Kriengsak was peacefully replaced by another constitutional regime but with the General remaining as its Premier. Parliamentary support of the second Kriengsak government was so rapidly decreasing by early 1980 that the General had to resign from the post. Shortly after, the General's Minister of Defense, General Prem Tinsulanond, was overwhelmingly supported by the Parliament and the public to take charge as the new Prime Minister.

Presumably, those authoritarian regimes with different political leaderships were not the same in their purposes and priorities.

9) However, during the period 1960–1980 there have been altogether 11 different governments:
   1. Sarit's dictatorship government
   2. Thanom's dictatorship government
   3. Thanom's contitutional government
   4. Thanom's dictatorship government
   5. Seni's civilian democratic government
   6. Kukrit's civilian democratic government
   7. Seni's civilian democratic government
   8. Thanin's authoritarian government
   9. Kriengsak's dictatorship government
   10. Kriengsak's democratic government
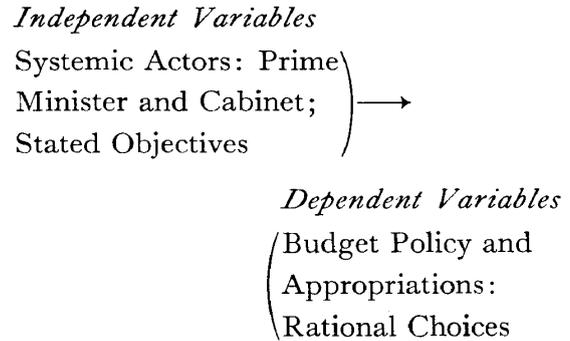   11. Prem's democratic government (present)

Decisions of an individual regime must therefore reflect its purpose and priority that should be expressed in its budget policy.

Differences in goals and priorities were also results of the four five-year development plans promulgated, each of which emphasized various development priorities with estimated total expenditures.

During the years from 1960 to 1980 the government appropriated large financial resources to development. Budget financed development expenditures, which were fixed at 1,798 million baht or 22 percent of the total expenditures in 1962, rose almost ten times in 1971 to 16,457 million baht or 57 percent of the total expenditures, and in 1980 to 45,899.5 million baht or 42 percent of the total expenditures. The total sum of development expenditures for the First Development Plan (1961–1966) was 32,646 million baht as compared to 65,791 million baht for the Second Plan (1967–1971), to over 100,000 million baht for the Third Plan (1972–1976) and to 252,450 million baht for the Fourth Plan (1977–1981).

Thus, if the budget policy represents rational actions, the budget appropriations must maximize the stated objectives of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. Changes in the goals and objectives of the government would bring about changes in budget priorities. Therefore, an analysis of the content of Thailand's budget policy and appropriations during the period 1960–1980, which covered seven different political regimes and four promulgated development plans, should disclose shifts in budget priorities. The budgetary allocations of

each government should reflect the putative purpose of that government. This perspective is diagrammed as follows:

Independent Variables
Systemic Actors: Prime Minister and Cabinet; ⟶ Stated Objectives

Dependent Variables
Budget Policy and Appropriations: Rational Choices

The above proposal is still incomplete without an illustration of budgetary process in which the macropolitical actors are in control.

Basic guidelines for the budgetary process in contemporary Thailand is the Budget Procedure Act of 1959. Under its provisions, the Budget Director is directly responsible to the Prime Minister and has the sole responsibility for directing and managing his staff in formulating the government budget policy. The Budget Director must also determine an appropriate ceiling for expenditures and must prepare an appropriation bill so that the Prime Minister, after consulting with his cabinet members, can submit the draft to the legislature for approval or revision. Ironically, in the Thai Cabinet system the Prime Minister is in theory first among equals, but in practice he is the leader whose decisions are unlikely to be questioned in the Cabinet meeting; hence he is in control of the Cabinet's decision-making.

Upon receiving the draft, the legislative body sets up an *ad hoc* committee to review the proposal before passing it onto the

floor of the legislative assembly. Because of the executive domination of the Thai government as discussed, the legislature has been unable to exert much influence over budgetary decisions.

Conclusion

The foregoing brief examination of Thai budgetary politics suggests two distinct models of analysis. The first model emphasizes an influential aspect of the budgetary politics, i.e., subsystemic politics and bureaucratic allocations. This perspective leads us to expect that budget decisions will be incremental. The second model focuses upon macropolitical actors, particularly the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, and leads us to expect that budget decisions will be rational.

To date a systematic study of Thai budgetary appropriations is lacking. These two models hence suggest examining Thai budgetary appropriations to see if the outputs of the budgetary process are incremental and/or rational. This means that four findings are possible: we may find that budgetary decision-making of the government of Thailand is (1) incremental, (2) rational, (3) both incremental and rational, or (4) neither incremental nor rational.

The modernization of budgetary process in 1960 introduced two major categories of appropriations: functions and ministries. Annually, the Budget Bureau publishes the government budget document called "Budget in Brief," in which these two categories of appropriations are reported.

Line items are also reported but they have fewer implications for political analysis. Therefore, in the first model we suggest that budgetary appropriations by ministerial category are examined to see how incremental budgeting decisions tended to be. In the second model, budgetary appropriations by functional category are examined to see how rational budgeting decisions tended to be.

One problem still remains. That is: how can these two contradicting principles be simultanously applicable to the Thai case as suggested. Is not rational decision-making the antithesis of incremental decision-making? The answer is "Not necessarily." The key reasons are that rational decision-making needs not preclude incrementalism, and the two principles occurred at different levels of analysis. The question of how rational budgeting decisions tend to be, is a systemic question. The question of how incremental budgeting decisions tend to be, is a subsystemic question. The two analyses have different units of analysis, different actors, different stimuli, and different time references. Not surprisingly then, these two different conceptual lenses lead to two different conclusions. In short, by analyzing budgetary appropriations at both the systemic and subsystemic levels, one will have a much more complete picture of how the politics of budgeting is conducted in contemporary Thailand.

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