

**Theorising Parliamentary Diplomacy:  
A Case Study on the Thai Senate as a Diplomatic Actor**

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*To my parents*

*Dr. Sumpun and Dr. Waree Chaitep*

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## List of Abbreviations

ASEAN Economic Community	AEC
ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Union	AIPA
ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus	AIPMC
African Parliament's Parliamentary Group on International Relations	APGIR
Association of Southeast Asian Nations	ASEAN
Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments	ASGP
Inter-Parliamentary Union	IPU
Joint Commission on Demarcation for the Land Boundary	JBC
Lao National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision	LCDC
Memorandum of Understanding	MOU
Member of Parliament	MP
National Legislative Assembly	NLA
Non-Governmental Organisation	NGO
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	OHCHR
United Nations Development Programme	UNDP
United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation	UNESCO
United Nations Office on Drug and Crime	UNODC

## Abstract

Parliamentary diplomacy is an emerging path in developing international relations. Although parliaments function mainly as legislative producers and scrutinisers, most national parliaments have foreign affairs committees and departments to conduct diplomatic missions. The Thai Senate is part of the bicameral parliament of Thailand, that is active in legislative scrutiny and in diplomatic activities. However, findings from data collection demonstrate that the Thai Senate is yet to become a prominent diplomatic actor, let alone a solid political institution. The duties of the Senate are limited primarily by the Constitutional framework. Therefore, they are required to perform their duties according to the constitutional framework as well as the institutional framework within the limited period of their term in office. The relations between the institution and its actors, the impact of the country's governing system and political culture, as well as the organisational structure are all factors that influence the purposes and outcomes of parliamentary diplomatic practice. The supporting evidence reflects the bureaucracy and the semi-democratic political system in Thailand that underlie the values and performance of parliamentary actors, seen through the international diplomatic duties of senators and their facilitators. This research shows that parliamentary diplomacy is another dimension of building and maintaining international relations in the parliament level. Moreover, the research would act as a critical document in pointing out institutional flaws for future improvement, in terms of the institutional structure and the actors' performance.

## Introduction

Parliamentary diplomacy is a term used to define the representation of parliamentarians from different countries in a foreign convention, as referring to international diplomatic conferences. In this case, the description of parliamentary diplomacy is identical as that of conventional diplomacy. The difference would be the actors involved and the depth of authority in decision-making and policy implementation. The various studies and research on world parliaments and legislatures are often aimed at the role of parliaments in democratisation and legislative scrutiny. There is no necessary commitment to parliamentary forms among the middle class and business groups in the Thai case, as they have not been able to believe that abuse of the democratic process would be inherently self-correcting seeing from the experiences of Thai politicians in the past (Cook, 1997, p.158). Shifting the focus to studies of diplomacy and international relations, this research will specifically examine the role of parliament as a diplomatic actor. The Thai Senate has been used in this study as part of a bicameral parliament which reflects a strong bureaucratic system and is considered, by the researcher, as a good example of a semi-democratic political institution in a developing country.

This research is a case study on theorising parliamentary diplomacy, focusing on the Thai Senate – also known as the Upper House of the parliament of Thailand. Throughout the research, theoretical arguments on diplomacy, sociological institutionalism, and political culture in Thailand will be incorporated to the discussions, as needed. The main reason for selecting this research topic on parliamentary diplomacy is because it has not been widely researched. The focus on parliamentary diplomacy itself, moreover, has received very little attention in scholarly publications date. The limited existing research is mostly focused on

European parliaments, rather than Asian parliaments. Possible reasons for the lack of research in Asian parliaments in the fields of parliamentary diplomacy would be the instability of the political regime, inevitably setting a framework for its governing system. Therefore, this research has been conducted on the Thai Senate, not only to examine the level of parliamentary diplomacy in international diplomatic duties but also to study the relations between the institution and its actors. Moreover, the benefits of looking at the case study on the Thai Senate as a case study of a young semi-democratic institution would also provide a foundation for future studies on Asian parliaments which are shaped by their political regimes and culture. A definition of parliamentary diplomacy will then gradually be developed from conceptualising existing scholarship on diplomacy and international relations, combined with the fieldwork gathered to support the initial hypotheses on the Thai Senate as being a certain sort of diplomatic actor. Positively, this will also enable a better understanding of the institutional political structure, as well as the impact of Thailand's political culture and bureaucratic system as they shape the parliamentary system as well as the performance of parliamentary diplomatic actors. Findings presented in this research may hopefully be able to increase knowledge of parliamentary diplomatic prospects in the long run.

#### *Reasons for conducting this research*

The purpose of conducting this research is to investigate the role and effectiveness of parliamentary diplomacy through the international diplomatic duties of the Thai Senate. There are several reasons for considering the Thai Senate as a case study for theorising and answering questions on Thai parliamentary diplomacy. Firstly, most existing research on parliamentary diplomacy has been limited to studying Western parliaments, more specifically parliaments in Western Europe (Weisglas and de Boer, 2007, Stravidis, 2005). It is true that

the parliamentary structure originated in Europe, however it would be useful to conduct a study on Asian parliaments. Most parliaments in the Eastern continents have adopted the US Congress or the UK Westminster parliament model. Again, it would be an interesting matter to study Asian parliaments as they have adopted the parliamentary structure and adapt the Western-style parliament to their own political culture. The political regime including the selection of parliament members and the organisation of members within the Houses would be reflected through the parliamentary system. Thus, a case study on an Asian parliament would be helpful to provide a detailed research for future studies on developments of Asian parliamentary institutions, and to provide a generic picture of how most Asian parliaments have evolved over time combining the Western parliamentary model with their country's political culture and system.

Secondly, the Parliament of Thailand – as parliaments anywhere – represents a country with a distinctive political culture. The political system in Thailand could be described as semi-democratic, military dominant. Diverse orientations on political culture represent specific attitudes or orientations as to the appropriate relationship of citizens to government (Albritton and Prabudhanitisarn, 1997, p.63). Political institutions reflect an intense patron-client bureaucratic political system. This will be explained in detail along the course of the thesis in chapter 3. Furthermore, studying the international diplomatic duties of the Senate would also lead to an understanding of the institutional structure, inevitably being influenced by the bureaucratic system of government. This research rests on an assumption that the relations between the actors and the institution would affect the performance and outcomes of foreign diplomatic missions. Evidence from data will be able to clarify this point later on in chapter 4 where findings will be presented and discussed.



Thirdly, viewing the Thai Senate as a case study for the purpose of considering parliamentary diplomacy would also point out the limitations of diplomatic practice through parliamentary actors. Members of parliament represent the legislative sector of government. In general, existing scholarly literature on diplomacy does not identify parliaments as major actors in the conduct of foreign affairs and diplomacy. International duties of parliaments, consequently, are either perceived as secondary duties or in certain governments not even part of parliamentarians' duties at all (interview with senator from Committee on Education, March 2011). The researcher's opinion on this matter is that the global course of advanced communication has stimulated new branches of interaction in every social unit. Globalisation is best understood as both an ideological construction and a material effect, being an empirically exogenous variable that provides support for policy change and to which domestic politics must react (Conley, 2001, p.224). This has then enabled people to become more interconnected, and as a result modes of communication and actors involved have gradually emerged in order to build and strengthen international relations. During the course of this research, arguments and discussions will be supported by evidence to demonstrate that diplomatic duties are in fact as important to the functioning of the institution as are domestic legislative duties. Findings will also provide weight to the initial hypothesis on parliamentary institutions as diplomatic actors.

The main purpose of conducting this research is to seek a formal conceptualisation of parliamentary diplomacy by providing the reader with a genuine example of a contemporary diplomatic actor; a national parliament. Moreover, the evidence gathered to support this research will be used to throw light on the initial hypotheses that parliamentary diplomacy can be considered as another channel in building a viable international relations. Other data found through interviews and archival consultation provide evidence on the structure of the

Thai Senate and the Secretariat of the Senate, which in turn help form an institutional model for the research analysis later on. Further, obstacles and limitations that may occur during the conducting of this research may also stimulate improved methods for the institutional system. In addition, examples from other parliaments will be added to the discussion in order to give a general amount of on the institutional structures and policies both of domestic and international duties. This would also constitute a model in order to see whether there are practices of parliamentary diplomacy in other parliaments, in order to make it function more effectively both in diplomacy and in other legislative functions. The findings from fieldwork, are intended to fill in the gaps of the argument by pointing out issues and areas where the procedures of foreign missions can be improved.

The prospects for effective parliamentary diplomacy will be placed in the final part of the thesis. Expectations from findings would be to seek for evidence to explain the level of the Senate's diplomatic duties and define its dimension as a diplomatic actor. The Senate, being a legislative institution, has limited decision-making authorities according to the Constitution. The composition of the Thai senators is also a factor that would determine their level of activeness and responsibility in parliament. Appointed senators have a 6-year term period in parliament, while the elected senators have a 3-year period. In addition, the elected senators are limited to restrictions on certain qualifications in the Senate, e.g. they are not able to stand for Senate Presidential elections. Apart from the constitutional framework and the senators' entrance into parliament, the senators working style and preference in working with secretariat staff or with their personal aides would also reflect their attitudes towards the domestic and diplomatic duties, not to mention the prospective outcomes of these duties. Moreover, the Senate is part of a bicameral parliament which is heavily shaped by a semi-democratic – authoritarian bureaucratic culture. Therefore, the research will start from the

assumption that the Thai Senate is a diplomatic actor within its institutional framework. These facts and assumptions, likewise, will be a basis for the discussions and arguments along the course of the research towards the conclusion. Any additional data risen during fieldwork, whether be positive aspects or institutional flaws, will not only provide a testing of the initial hypotheses but will also encourage parliamentary institutions as representatives of the people to be more conscious about their structure and maintain an efficient system to provide substantial procedures on both domestic and international duties.

The following parts will discuss the methodology of this research and an introduction to each chapter respectively, to provide an outline of the main issues that will be discussed through this research.

### *Methodology*

A mixed-methods qualitative research design is used in conducting this research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted; 17 senators from the 2008-2011 incumbency, 11 Secretariat of the Senate staff in various positions, and 5 professional representatives who are not affiliated with the Thai parliament. The specific period of study (2008-2011) was chosen because of the convenience of data accessibility and spontaneity of research. Moreover, this particular period is a clear example of a transitional period in parliament, thus has direct impact on the functionality of Thai politics. Additional documents including official report summaries on foreign missions of the Senate, courtesy calls, official visits to foreign parliaments and receptions of foreign delegations. Although theoretical arguments on diplomacy, new institutionalism, and political culture specifically on Thai politics and democracy will be incorporated for this research, data analysis is based on grounded theory.

Grounded theory is an organised system for discovering a theory that explains the core variable in a substantive area, thus a set of principles and methodology are developed. Relationships between concepts, incidents, properties, and categories are then explained (Stillman, 2006, p.499). For this reason, the interview transcriptions and the data collected from various official documents are triangulated to see whether there would be any emerging issues apart from the approaches initially adopted in the first chapters of the thesis. New data that emerge from data triangulation among the 3 groups of people interviewed, are then triangulated with the data obtained from official documents.

Apart from semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 1) and document analysis, first-hand information has also been acquired from personal observation from the period of 2007 – 2009, during the time the researcher was working as a secretariat staff in the Bureau of Foreign Affairs. This additional information is also helpful to support the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and the document details. On the one hand there is an advantage from being able to observe individuals and systems while being an insider. The access to people and data were more convenient, as most of the data collected was strictly confidential and would have been difficult for people who are not parliamentary staff to access. However, it is intended to analyse the data from an outsider's perspective to provide readers with a critical, analysis on the Thai Senate as a political institution and diplomatic actor. As a result, evidence is presented to support the discussions from a researcher's perspective rather than an insider from the Secretariat of the Senate. As the research environment is also considered a political environment, there are clear sets of difficulties that can be recognised in conducting research in one's workplace in terms of what the researcher represents in the written thesis and the consideration of the researcher's status within the institution (Drake, 2010, p.86). Further, the similarities between the Thai parliament and

other Asian parliaments, which will be signified later on in chapter 3, is that the Thai Senate has been raised as a case study to highlight its distinctive characteristics in terms of measuring the suitability of democracy and the preference for democracy in shaping the institutional function. The distinction from other Asian parliaments would be that the Thai Senate is still in the process of advancement, combined with other already advanced counterparts e.g. Korea, Japan. Examples and details will be explained further in chapter 4 on findings from data collection.

This research methodology is structured to test my initial hypotheses that the Thai Senate is a important institution in domestic legislative scrutiny, but is yet to develop in becoming an effective diplomatic actor. However, I argue initially that prospects of the Thai Senate in becoming an effective diplomatic actor depend upon the actors' values and perceptions on the importance of international diplomatic duties. A further argument is that senate staff are the steering wheel in parliamentary diplomatic procedures, as they have a better understanding of the process of parliamentary diplomacy than the senators. Senate staff are permanent civil servants while senators are temporary political actors. Therefore, their understandings and experiences on foreign diplomatic duties are different. A final background issue to be explored is that the diplomatic actors in this study, senators and senate staff, perform their duties according to their existing knowledge, professional background, norms and regulations within the institution.

*Structure*

The first chapter will begin with a general definition of conventional diplomatic practice by giving a discussion on the evolution of conventional diplomacy and how the nature of diplomatic practice has evolved during recent decades with the emergence of new diplomatic actors. Diplomacy, in the first chapter, will be discussed in terms of representation, negotiation, and communication. The argument will be made that the emergence of new diplomatic players could be driven by an individual's perceptions and values of international prospects and to fulfill institutional requirements.

In addition, the discussion will carry on as to how the fulfilment of parliamentary diplomatic duties are in a way perceived as an alternative path to increase foreign relations with equivalent counterparts, thus contributing to further studies of emerging diplomatic actors. My arguments will then consider the impact of diplomacy in decision-making and policy implementation, presenting discussions on how the constitutional framework has set limits to the authority of parliamentary actors.

In chapter 2, the discussion will move on to consider several influences that stimulate the functioning of parliamentary diplomacy. The factors that will be raised include political and geographical proximity, economic globalisation, and political culture in Thailand.

“As is often the case in political science, these [academic] contributions [on Europeanisation and democratisation] can be grouped according to whether they mainly emphasise structures or actors. The former models emphasise how geographical proximity, the degree of interdependency, and power asymmetries between the external actor and the target state more or less determine the success

rate of the external influence attempt. The latter arguments, in contrast, accentuate how domestic political elites, on the basis of their main values and calculations of both the internal and external costs and benefits of political change, decide whether or not to give into external demands.”

(Tolstrup, 2012, p.2)

The arguments on the functioning of the diplomatic actors from the Senate in this part will also be supported by the sociological institutionalist approach, focusing on March and Olsen’s theory “logic of appropriateness” (March and Olsen, 2009, p.1). Decisions are shaped by one’s identity, the application of rules, and situational recognition (Weber, Kopelman, Messick, 2004, p.282). The discussion on March and Olsen’s logic of appropriateness will be introduced as an explanation of the bureaucratic system in Thailand, the relationship between actors and the institution. Throughout this thesis, the arguments and discussions will be based on the logic of appropriateness, adding relevant facts on the Thai parliamentary system including the appointment of the senators and details on the political culture in Thailand as a base for the research analysis. This sub-theory on sociological institutionalism will give a reflection on the parliamentary actors’ purposes on international diplomatic duties and examine whether it leads on to affect any outcomes of foreign missions. Institutional logics are constitutive of political orders where the logic affects the formation of political order are adopted to explain principles that regulate interactions, levels of appropriate integration, what mechanisms to apply, and who should be legitimate participants (Batora, 2009, p.1075). Therefore, the adopting of March and Olsen’s logic of appropriateness approach in this chapter will also be used to explain the relationship between the actor and the institution, and also the actors’ performance during the period of their term in office. This would then help to

clarify the initial research questions and hypotheses on the functionality of the Thai Senate in parliamentary diplomacy.

Chapter 3 will discuss the political culture of Thailand as a historical background of this research. My argument will be that the performance of senators – considered to be temporary political actors – is shaped by the patron-client bureaucratic model that underlies the Thai political system. During the administrative reforms in states where bureaucracy was clearly subservient in the late twentieth century, the relatively more autonomous Asian bureaucracies have tended either to pursue minor internal improvements in the face of crisis or reluctantly negotiated a reform program within limited parameters where external demands were strong (Painter, 2006, p.27). Parliamentary reforms, similarly, would reflect the administrative status of the country.

“Politics [in Thailand] is actually moving faster than the traffic these days—and turning a critical corner. People's movements in the city and countryside are significantly expanding their claims on a political sphere long dominated by the civil bureaucracy and the military. Change is coming from the top, in the drafting of a new democratic constitution, and from the bottom, in the shifting of public attitudes and the growth of civil society. There is, however, strong resistance from the establishment, and some intellectuals say true democracy will be impossible as long as the monarchy retains its demigod status.”

(Eng, 1997, p.170)



As Eng notes, Thai politics reflects the patron-client style bureaucracy. As a result, this historical background chapter will give a detailed explanation not only on the Thai parliamentary culture, but also a generalisation on other Asian parliaments in the region eg. Japan, South Korea. Examples of other Asian parliaments are given in this chapter to show the development of new Asian democracies. The selected countries are often showcased as successful countries that have recovered from the Asian crisis of the late 1990s and have stabilised their parliamentary system. When discussing parliamentary politics, there are problems surrounding the transformation of relationship between parliament and government. The institutional aspects at the level of parliamentary composition and representation which redefine the institutional capabilities and political identity of the legislature also add to the structuring of parliament (Verzichelle, 2008, p.35). The adopting of March and Olsen's logic of appropriateness approach in the previous chapter can also be used to explain the relationship between the actor and the institution, and also the actors' performance during the period of their term in office. This will then help to clarify the initial research questions and hypotheses on the functioning of the Thai Senate in parliamentary diplomacy.

In chapter 4, the discussion will be more focused on analysing the Thai Senate as an example of a parliamentary diplomatic actor. In this part, the debate will be more critical and analytically based on the findings from semi-structured interviews with senators, secretariat staff, and professional representatives who are not affiliated with parliament. The analysis of the main theme of the research - the Thai Senate as a diplomatic actor - will be examined according to supporting information from interviews and additional data from official documents from the Secretariat of the Senate, Bangkok. Data triangulation was used to expand and validate embodied meanings of divergent viewpoints, in order to gain fuller

understanding of certain events<sup>1</sup>. However, the epistemological nature of the data collection and analysis is not aimed to prove whether my research questions are right or wrong, as they do not have a correct or incorrect answer, but to gather evidence to support my assumptions. The nature of the qualitative research is based on the context of discovery rather than verification as new practices or behaviours, new forms of social organisation or social structure and new ways of thinking or interpreting processes of socialisation or change new information may be reflected (Ambert, Adler, Adler and Detzner, 1995, p.880).

Chapter 5 will include specific discussion on case studies which have risen during data collection. Case studies on territorial disputes; Thai-Myanmese Thai-Cambodian border conflict, and domestic conflict in the three Southernmost provinces in Thailand as well as the ASEAN 2015 community development plan were examples that were repeatedly mentioned during the interview conversations. Therefore, in this part these cases will be critically discussed to demonstrate examples of the Thai Senate as a representative in foreign diplomatic duties. In the case of the Southernmost provinces insurgency, members of the Senate are seen as more active in internal diplomacy coordinating with the government and other private sectors in solving the conflict. Theoretical points on border disputes, territory and conflict studies will be adopted as a structure for the discussion in this chapter. The discussion made will also be related to part of the influences on the development of parliamentary diplomacy which are raised earlier on in chapter 2 on influences and factors for the development of parliamentary diplomacy.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ma and Norwich, 2007, p.212. For triangulation in qualitative research, see Denzin, 1989.

Also, these cases will seek to elaborate the ambitions, objectives, and initiatives of the Senate – as part of the Thai parliament –in strengthening and stabilising its position within the region. These case studies also seek to demonstrate the role of the Senate as part of the international negotiating team where the decision-making authority is limited by the Constitution<sup>2</sup>. Modern political representation may be conceived as the main frame for parliament as an institution, with parliamentary parties as crucial collective actors driving the political games within the parliament (Russo and Verzechelli, 2012, p.351). The role of the constitution and the separation of powers can always be interpreted in purely functionalist terms in the emergence of new institutions as the likely consequences of delegating review powers and conditions how the legitimacy of new institutions will be examined, debated, and understood (Sweet, 2002, p.77-78).

In the conclusion chapter, a summary on the research findings based on the initial research questions and hypotheses will be presented. The interpretation of parliamentary diplomacy will also be concluded through the evidence obtained from the Thai Senate, proving whether it is a good example of a parliamentary diplomatic actor and whether legislative institutions are capable of proceeding to foreign diplomatic duties. The concluding discussions will consolidate the theoretical discussions and arguments from each of the previous chapters. As a preliminary definition of parliamentary diplomacy from various scholarly definitions would be stated in the first chapter, in the concluding part a summary the practice of parliamentary diplomacy which can lead on to further in-depth research in similar or relevant fields in the studies of diplomacy and international relations. Limitations from this research will also be pointed out in the conclusion, as to measure if the research outcomes may have been presented differently had these limits have not occurred.

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<sup>2</sup> See Ram-Prasad, 2012, p.2. The individual and collective impact a constitution normatively offers a vision of a political life founded on individual liberty that nevertheless invites a plurality of belonging, then it might encourage loyalty from citizens for whom such belonging is existentially significant.

**Chapter 1**

**Evolution of Traditional Diplomacy**

“Distant proximities encompass the tensions between core and periphery, between national and transnational systems, between communitarianism and cosmopolitanism, between cultures and subcultures, between states and markets, between urban and rural, between coherence and incoherence, between integration and disintegration, between decentralisation and centralisation, between universalism and particularism, between pace and space, between global and local”

(Rosenau, 2003, p.4)

Diplomatic practice has existed since the formation of communities, and has advanced through time. Conventional diplomats, or international envoys, would usually be responsible for almost everything ranging from formal procedures to informal chores. Stories from the senior professionals<sup>3</sup> have inspired younger generations to ponder about seeking careers in the foreign service. The universal perception of a diplomat appears as one of the most prestigious professions, holding the representative position of the state and having all the opportunities to grace formal banquets and encounter important figures from monarchs to Presidents to head of states. In a way, that should be the formal part of their career. On the less formal part, diplomats actually have to do everything; representing the country, heading a delegation, making decisions and public statements, answering phone calls, hosting dinner parties, and fixing a blocked pipe. It would be possible to define a diplomat, from these few examples of their duties, as being the country's handyman.

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<sup>3</sup> The introductory part of this chapter has been composed of various informal conversations with senior ambassadors, diplomats, and parliamentarians during the years 2007 – 2009 while the author was working at the Secretariat of the Senate, Bangkok, Thailand, and during March-May 2011 when fieldwork for this research was conducted.

Diplomacy is the art of communication, representation, negotiation, and international relations practice between representatives of states. In the contemporary world society, the impact of soft power is analysed according to conceptual, institutional, and political challenges (Wilson, 2008, p.111). When we think about diplomacy at the first instance, we usually get the images of high ranking executives dressed up smartly meeting in a grand hall, shaking hands, and indulging in banquets. On the conventional image of diplomacy, this is how diplomacy was and is still practiced nowadays, but there is more to the small chats and wine toasting among foreign office diplomats. The message from involved parties that are being conveyed is what matters the most in diplomatic relations. Through history, diplomatic affairs in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century belonged to an aristocratic elite relationships between monarchs and rulers. Twentieth-century diplomats are envoys of the people. Broadly speaking, the former were professionals while the latter are amateurs in statecraft (Thompson, 1984, p.373-374). The area of international affairs is the preserve of the executive and has traditionally been seen as a domain in which the government rather than the Parliament provides the leadership<sup>4</sup>. My discussion in the following sectors would be to examine whether parliament does hold the authority and competency to have leadership in diplomacy and international relations building among foreign peers.

There are diplomats everywhere these days, in every establishment. When the time comes for an institutional member to be representative of some sort with other international counterparts, they would need to show the radical side of their diplomatic competencies.

All countries have conventional diplomats, but they also have other diplomatic actors from other political institutions who are unique in their duties. In a way, it is undeniable that the modern world system has urged representatives from other social and political establishments

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<sup>4</sup> Since they represent the people, parliaments are entitled to debate government policies and actions, be informed of developments in the international fields, and initiate their own investigations of international issues should they so choose. See Laundry, 1989, p.45.

to come forth as diplomatic actors in their own rights. Changes of the model of global politics in the past millennium are employed for making a projection of institution a development of the twenty-first century. These changes, moreover, are expected to co-evolve with developments in democratisation, the world economy, and public opinion (Modelski and Thompson, 1999, p.109). Governments everywhere increasingly have to adjust and react to the global spread of democracy and the rise of assertive citizens with the potential to organise across borders, as in politics state sovereignty is currently being challenged by people power (Leonard and Avakeson, 2000, p.2). To put it in simple words, the constant shifting and advancement of global activities have encouraged new actors to become more assertive, at the same time competitive in order to adapt their professional skills in building international relations.

As this research is focused on a political institution, adopting empirical theory into the research has helped to clarify the arguments within the theoretical framework. Therefore, empirical theory is adopted for research such as this study in an attempt to understand the nature of international relations as it tries to explain processes, develop propositions, and discover correlations in the world of interaction among states<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, the implementation of research procedures in organisations has to deal with complicated organisational reactions, thus data from organisation research are often arranged on different aggregate levels (Grunow, 1995, p.93).

The representation of new diplomatic players could be from the institutional requirements in fulfilling international duties or to solidify an individual's perceptions and values on international prospects. States have been forced to increase attention in their quest to improve

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<sup>5</sup> See Lauren, 1979, p.8. Qualitative research usually involves a combination of cross-case comparisons and within-case analysis using the methods of congruence testing and process tracing. For theory-orientated research and case studies, see George and Smoke, 2004.

legitimacy, therefore public diplomacy has been stimulated by new types of actors including supranational polities, multilateral organisations, civil society actors, as well as new communication technologies (Proedru and Frangonikelopoulos, 2012, p.728). This is to say that the roles of formerly dominant traditional diplomats, in this sense foreign ministry officials and representatives, are being overtaken by alternative diplomatic actors. In some societies today we even see that new diplomatic actors are becoming as active as the conventional foreign office representatives. “New public diplomacy” representatives would act to signify a combination of public and traditional diplomacy, international and domestic information activities, as well as news management and marketing (Gilboa, 2008, p.58). Before I begin to discuss about parliamentary diplomacy and its significance to international relations, it is worth justifying the meaning and the nature of the traditional diplomatic practice as well as discussing the factors that influence its evolution into several types of diplomacy in the contemporary world. This will help clarify my arguments on parliamentary diplomacy and the Thai Senate for the purpose of constructing a diplomatic model later on.

*a. Defining diplomacy*

*I. Traditional Diplomacy*

The word ‘diplomacy’ carries various interpretations and is part of our daily human interactions as we speak. Diplomacy itself is an ancient method of communication, yet throughout the periods, various titles for diplomacy are applied for the level and purpose of diplomacy. For example, public diplomacy is used by states, associations of states, and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; build and manage relationships; and influence opinions and actions to advance values and interests (Gregory, 2008, p.274). As part of the regular function of conventional diplomacy and intelligence work, information on foreign public opinion has also been gathered. Although not widely practiced, this covers an event whereby an international actor seeks out a foreign audience and engages them by

listening rather than by speaking (Cull, 2008, p.32). In this context, diplomacy is used as a soft method of building and maintaining international relations. International outcomes through influence upon and constitution of actors reflect discourses of transnational discursive democracy (Dryzek, 2006, p.102).

To put it simply, diplomacy is the interaction between two or more actors in building relations, each side or both sides getting the information they want through customary or legal proceedings or proceedings they want without tainting the formal relationship between the parties (Barston, 2006, p.1-5). Diplomats have long recognised one-way communication forms and outlets that are inherently self-contained, which would later on develop into a dialogical form of communication in public pronouncements (Cowan and Arsenault, 2008, p.12). The relations would then develop into a more formal correspondence where official practices are involved and the individual actors would have to maintain a pleasurable and reliable relationship with their equivalents<sup>6</sup>. The information or proceedings in this context refers to any prospect that would be of benefit to the countries they represent. The relationship between the definition of diplomatic theory and diplomatic practice, however, has long been a starting point for scholarly discussions (Constantinou, 1996, p. 48), as the practice may not always follow along with the definition. Diplomatic actors could be representatives varying from a small to a vast social unit, from a social group to a country. Diplomatic relations could begin from individuals from neighbouring countries, countries within the same region, then expand out to countries outside of the region that share similar interests or benefit. Table 1 gives a comparison of the shifting nature of traditional diplomacy to the more contemporary practice of public diplomacy as follows;

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<sup>6</sup> The peaceful relationship between two countries or more, otherwise bilateral or multilateral relationship, would remain stable unless a severe situation forces one part or all to cut off the mutual relations.



*Table 1: Traditional and public diplomacy*

	<b>Traditional diplomacy</b>	<b>Public diplomacy</b>
Key actors	States	People
Source of power	Coercion	Attraction
Diplomatic strategy	Powerplay / realpolitik	Good international citizenship/ mutual benefit
Objectives	Imposing ideas	Shaping preferences
Communications	Propaganda/self-promotion	Partnership/networks
Role of government	Directing	Facilitating
Attitude to information	Confidentiality/trading secrets	Openness/building trust/credibility
International structures	Bilateral	Multilateral
Mindset	Win/lose	Win/win
War	For land or economic gain	For values or international stability

Source: Leonard and Avakeson, 2000.

The chart above has been presented to point out a distinctive comparison and the development of diplomatic procedures throughout the phases of modern international affairs. In the following section, moreover, the interpretation of diplomacy as a method of representation, negotiation and communication respectively.

## *II. Contemporary diplomacy: public diplomacy*

### *Diplomacy as representation*

Several explanations of diplomacy have been stated and noticeably most say that diplomacy is in fact a system of representation. What do they represent? This depends on who they are and where they come from in the society. Diplomatic actors universally are expected to be ambassadors and civil servants from the Foreign Ministry, representing their country and the institution they have membership with. Kurbalija (1999) explained that diplomacy is a human-intensive activity, being conducted largely through personal communication and individual actors, evaluations and decisions. Jönsson (2002) stated that in addition to being a system of representation, diplomacy is also a system of communication. However, he elaborated more that diplomacy is 'a bone of contention' as the study of diplomacy displays a

variety of conceptualisations rather than scholarly consensus, given the undeveloped and fragmented nature of the field. Sharp (1999) argued that diplomacy is a discrete human practice constituted by the explicit construction, representation, negotiation, and manipulation of necessarily ambiguous identities. In some situations, however, it is also possible that diplomacy can be viewed as a discursive facilitator of communication. This is in the sense that as diplomacy is needed more urgently in a situation where the social context in which actors operate is mostly developed, and where the identities of the agents appear as less obvious. New institutions begin to create new dynamics of interaction only when institutional changes are accompanied by changing self-perceptions that new institutions begin to create new dynamics of interaction (Todd, 2005, p. 429).

Bringing the subject back to diplomacy, along the line of Jonsson's argument, it is clear to say that the definition of diplomacy itself varies according to the context and the position of the person who defines it. As this working topic is on a particular dimension of diplomacy, it accords as much with Jonsson's statement about diplomacy being a system of communication and representation as it does to represent the country and its outlook (Hemery, 2002, p.139). The diplomatic actor would inevitably reflect the prospects of his government and his country, sometimes just by looking at the name of the country he represents without starting a formal conversation.

While in the process of discussing and negotiation, the practitioner must keep in mind that it is the message conveyed to deliver the country's policy message - what others hear - that ultimately matters most, not what one says (Ross, 2002, p.76). It should be asserted further that the communication abilities of the individual is one of the most important factors in the diplomatic procedure. Also, the purpose and intention that lies underneath the communication, otherwise the discursive purpose, is more important than the person's image

or the country's name. The discussion will carry on to talk about negotiation as one of the most important parts of diplomacy. In general, negotiations usually expect results in turn, and the results would be either positive or negative, one way or another. At the same time it is possible for certain negotiations to go nowhere, but resulting in an open-ended discussion or a typical debate where the participating parties cannot come up with a resolution. In certain situations prior to the start of a negotiating session, orders can be made to determine the outcome of the negotiation which either has to result in an agreement or disagreement. Unless there are severe political situations that force the diplomatic relations to end, the representative country would prefer to maintain pleasurable relations. Cutting off diplomatic relations is likely to cause negative image and reputation to a country or all countries involved (Henrikson, 2000, pp. 122-123).

The argument on communication and its impact on states draw us towards the thought of balancing power in international relations. As diplomacy is about the effectiveness of communication and representation, the nature of diplomacy in fact engages the ambition for power and managing social governance. As the current discussion is based on an Asian government model, the political system in Singapore can be used as an example of a neighbouring country in the same region where the shifting of power and governance has had impact on bureaucracy. The role of the public sector and the changing nature of the state are reflected in the government's policy orientation. As a result, the focuses on the current trends of change in governance in terms of the nature of state formation, policy orientation, role definition, administrative structure, and welfare provision (Haque, 2004, pp. 228-231). Relating this case to the discussion on the Thai parliament, parliamentary procedures not only reflect their professional orientation but also the shaping of the bureaucratic system on the institutional structure. I shall be arguing about competitiveness and power in the next part of this chapter, but for now I will include a brief discussion on governance as part of the

intention of diplomatic nature. We could see that part of diplomacy and its contribution to the world always has a purpose, that is to gain social power beginning from a micro level. Multilateral cooperation has created a new type of diplomat, the international civil servant leading to the definition for the practice as parliamentary diplomacy. In democratic countries, foreign policy decisions are steered by the objectives of that country's foreign policy given the responsibility by the constitution (Kleiner, 2008, p. 321-322).

This is to say that when country representatives meet, their discussions would assert to an extent a willingness to demonstrate their power and to show their abilities of being in control of that power. Latham (1999) has explained that decision makers, steering committees, or administrators generate governance as they manage or administer the activities of their organisations or those of the people and things for which they assume responsibility. Even if diplomatic actors do not often reveal straightforwardly that they need to be accepted for their power, they tend to show through their talks and speeches that the country they represent has the power and competency to perform in the international level.

### *Diplomacy as negotiation*

Apart from the interpretation of diplomacy as being manners of communication and representation, it can be argued that the most important part of the diplomatic procedure would be the negotiating process<sup>7</sup>. When things go wrong or when a counterpart is in need of

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<sup>7</sup> Brett (2000) presents three main situations that are created at the end of a process of negotiations:

1. Successful conclusion for both parties—win-win situation. Every side in the negotiations has benefited. This outcome is possible when each side is interested in something different and when this focus of interest is found on a different scale.
2. Successful conclusion for only one party. This situation occurs when both parties are found on the same scale of measurement. The success and failure of the parties are measured by the same standards (zero sum game).
3. Cessation of negotiations without results, when neither of the parties has been satisfied and neither has succeeded in convincing the other side. The result of this situation is that each party loses. When the sides are motivated to search for information about the opposite party so as to contribute to the construction of the agreement and they are flexible in the process that will lead to agreement, it is possible to bridge the cultural gaps and reach an agreement optimal for both sides.

a favour or assistance in an international level, the well-known characteristic of diplomacy is that the words *yes* and *no* do not exist. Even if they do exist, diplomatic representatives are not supposed to use them unless the situation needs an ultimatum. Meerts (1999) has given an explanation to support this by stating that the art of negotiation plays an important role in diplomacy when states wish to cooperate on the basis of common interests, or even if there are opposing interests, as long as they wish to reach a non-violent solution to a conflict. Diplomats, or diplomatic actors, as will be referred to throughout in this argument, need to be able to speak out from a professional perspective, tackle the situation by giving convincing and accurate reasons for agreement or disagreement, but at the same time avoid saying yes or no at the same time as maintaining the harmony between relations. If one compared the negotiating process in spoken words it would be like saying "I will do this for you if you do that for me, and we will all be happy". In most social structures and institutions, a burden placed on society is to improve the efficiency of a top-heavy bureaucracy and expanding its military power leading to an increase in benefits (Shiner, 2000, p.330). Therefore, from this point of argument the negotiation process is seen as a formal communication medium in maintaining the balance of power not only among the involved parts internationally, but also to keep the power balanced within the local government of each country.

Negotiation is viewed as the most crucial part of diplomatic procedures as it can determine the outcome of the whole diplomatic mission (Kersten, Michalowski, Szpakowicz, and Koperczak, 1991, p.1269-1270). We all know that national ambassadors appointed to foreign posts abroad already possess the skills and advantages of a potential communicator and negotiator from their intensive training and experience. I argue here that every diplomatic actor, whether conventional or new alternative actors, should understand and improve their negotiating skills to an extent. Diplomacy is not only about shaking hands and attending dinner receptions. If a country or institution provides communicating representatives as a

group, at least one group member should be able to negotiate professionally and by position this is most likely to be the group leader (Neumayer, 2008, p.230-231). The group leader refers to head of state, president, chairperson of institution, ambassador, or person with highest rank in the representative group<sup>8</sup>. From this point of view, it could be justified that the diplomatic actor regardless of his background and profession should have some experience in speaking and negotiating abilities. The person might not need such skills in all circumstances but it is always best to maintain these skills in case they might be needed on an urgent matter. The case that will be raised later on the Thai Senate will demonstrate that negotiations have not yet been used, despite its importance in diplomacy as the members and the institution are still in the developing stage of seeking an international identity to become a successful diplomatic actor. Further arguments and assumptions will be put forth for the discussing the Thai Senate.

### *Diplomacy as communication*

Moving on from the interpretations of traditional diplomacy, we will now think about how diplomacy has given advantage to other actors in developing and maintaining international relations. The working nature of diplomacy consists of building relations, through official channels including talks, meetings, seminars, conferences. In some instances, 'personal diplomacy' as the name says could also happen during informal periods and in unexpected places, for instance during a tea break along the corridors. My argument is that conventional practices in diplomacy provide a foundation of ideas for other actors, so that they know the standard procedures and customs to begin with. The procedures, however, would differ depending on the institution and the actors involved in the diplomatic process and this would

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<sup>8</sup> Further discussions on the knowledge and understanding on parliamentary diplomacy and seniority in the workplace will be explained in the second part of this chapter (shapings of parliament).

also lead to different outcomes. The most important point to stress here is that the existing knowledge of the other actors as well as the understanding, how they value the prospects of diplomacy would definitely affect their performance and the level of successful outcomes of their procedures. Again, the person who acts as the diplomat should need to understand and separate his self perceptions as an individual and as a government representative, for the duties he presides in both roles are different. Smith (1968) pointed out that the diplomatic process acquires some formalities in international relationships and it also requires some limitations, demanding learning and ingenuity to surmount. For what a diplomat can say or do as an individual in his own society, he cannot always say or do in another – what, as an individual, not always as a government representative – and what he does decide is feasible is so subject to misunderstanding.

However, it is clear to see that nowadays traditional diplomacy is becoming blurred as Barston (2006) explained that nowadays foreign ministries and diplomatic service personnel should not be viewed in a restrictive or formal sense as being the only preserved representatives of diplomacy. Societies have expanded to be more advanced and interconnected. Traditional diplomatic routes may become time consuming – considering the matter of space and the number of connections the information needs to pass through. Therefore, there are other political actors in various levels that have emerged and are becoming more active in diplomatic relations. The questioning of international relations theory has been stimulated by an increased awareness of the international dimension in other social sciences disciplines including sociology and geography (Devraun, 1998, p.147). From the point of view of this thesis, this adds up to the stimulation of various actors in diplomacy and international relations, where new actors emerge accordingly to the demands and purposes of the international activity. The following discussion will move on to a more specific examination on diplomacy at the parliamentary level. Parliamentary diplomacy, as

phrased, can be considered as an emerging dimension in the practice of traditional diplomacy. The nature of parliamentary diplomacy involves the representation of a national legislative institution, the professional skills and negotiating ability and persuasion among foreign counterparts. Factors including the level of conflict in a bilateral and multilateral situation would also determine whether the parliamentary diplomats (e.g. Members of parliament) would be able to demonstrate their negotiating skills in conflict resolution, decision-making, or policy implementation. Intervention has now been used in a rather different form in a multilateral level to establish security, end conflict, rebuilding political and economic transformation, and relieve humanitarian crisis with goals on liberalisation and state-building (Lounsbery, Pearson, & Talentino, 2011, p.228).

### *III. Interpretation of parliamentary diplomacy*

#### *1.2 Parliamentary diplomacy*

“Diplomatic historians have attempted to explain the behavior of governmental units involved in diplomacy, strategic planning, alliance politics, or intergovernmental competition. They would help to remind the practitioner that process, routine, the choice of modes of approach, or even the policy maker’s expectation that an individual acting as a quasi-institution must be confronted as it will influence decisions and outcomes.”

(Williamson Jr., 1979, p.141).

Before we start talking about the evolution of traditional diplomacy to various dimensions including that in the parliamentary level, it is fundamental to understand the parliamentary system and the capabilities the institution holds to enable itself to operate as an institutional actor. In this context, I am referring to both unicameral and bicameral parliaments in general. Further in the research, my argument will be more specific on the Thai Senate, otherwise the



Upper House which is part of the bicameral Thai parliament. Therefore, this research will be based on a bicameral parliamentary model. Further research and document analysis from the House of Representative's international bureau will be used to measure the levels of international diplomatic duties of the Thai Senate. This, also, would be able to analyse its significance and might also be able to predict the direction and prospects of the institution as a diplomatic actor.

Parliaments are national institutions known for their domestic duties rather than international duties. Tsebilis and Money (1997) explain that parliaments are institutions which are dedicated to talk; members of parliament debate legislative proposals and scrutinise the work of governments through questioning; they may also be the sites where governments explain and justify their policies. The main responsibilities include drafting and scrutinising legislation. The system of parliament suggests how each country divides the power and responsibility. Significant differences in the influence of individual members on policy choices are characterised by a variety of organisational structures (Diermeier and Myerson, 1999, p.1182). Unicameral parliaments have separate committees handling both drafting bills and inspecting them, while bicameral parliaments are distinctively separated into two houses. Members of each house have separate duties, those of the lower house drafts legislative documents and those of the upper house scrutinises the drafted documents and the performance of the lower house.

However, there have been some suggestion that the check and balance system of bicameralism delays the process of legislation. The existence of two chambers, it is said, apart from showing the difference of the members' backgrounds, adversely affects the ability of parliamentarians to handle their domestic duties in office. Rogers (2003, p.510) has based his argument on the history of American legislature, a bicameral parliament, and argued that

a two hundred year-old belief described bicameralism as a constraint to legislative production. The reason, as Rogers claimed, was that parliaments that adopt the bicameral system produced less legislative activity than did unicameral parliaments due to the division of their duties. When this happens, it alters the anticipated relationship of legislation and the anticipated relationship between bicameralism. The argument deepened here will not specify precisely or go into depth on the legislative responsibilities of both chambers, in particular on the case study of the Thai Senate, as this research is aimed to explore the international part of the parliamentarians' duties. However, I am raising the issue of unicameralism and bicameralism to help clarify the understanding of parliamentary systems and the nature of the domestic legislative responsibilities that would be useful in examining the motivation or stimulation for senators in the performance of their international duties in the following parts further on.

Considering the impact of bicameralism and parliamentary diplomacy, international diplomatic activities constitute an important aspect in the functioning of parliaments. The reason for this can be explained because adopting diplomatic approaches to parliamentary affairs will provide an advantageous opportunity for members of parliament to build networks among foreign peers, exchange legislative policies and procedures, and be able to improvise the structure of their performance. An example from the former speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa suggests that 'parliament is there to watch over the interests of the people; it is there to act as the voice of the people and in the interests of the people both inside the country but also at an international level' (Mbetse in Ahmed, 2009). Parliamentary diplomacy is referred to collective practice throughout every national parliament, as parliaments are active in foreign policy engagement specifically through the traditional committee system. The South African parliament's Parliamentary Group on International Relations (PGIR), for instance, was set up to encourage members' participation

in bilateral and multilateral fora and manages parliament's international relations agenda. However, parliament's uncertainty about its role in the foreign policy process and the executive's domination of foreign affairs are factors which lead to the lack of engagement on international issues (Ahmed, 2009, p.291).

After discussing the changing nature of traditional diplomacy and the positive points of bicameral parliament, the discussion will now move on to talk about the interpretation of parliamentary diplomacy and the reason it is an important addition to international relations studies. As mentioned before, the exact definition of parliamentary diplomacy needs to be drawn from other theoretical explanations than the definition of traditional diplomacy. Scholars in diplomatic studies and political representatives who are acquainted to parliamentary works and relations refer to parliamentary diplomacy as a development of traditional diplomacy, being a series of international diplomatic activities carried out by members of parliaments through its committees in order to create or strengthen existing relations with other foreign parliaments (Rana, 2011, p.159-160). There are many versions of the definition of parliamentary diplomacy. However, this brief summary is what most definitions tend to present. It captures the basic details and procedures of the term. At this stage it would be difficult, however, to give a more fully developed definition of parliamentary diplomacy, as the study of parliamentary diplomacy is relatively new and there is limited existing research on this diplomatic dimension. It would be possible to say that parliamentary diplomacy, in fact, shares exactly the same nature as traditional diplomacy. The only distinctive difference is the change of the actors who perform the diplomatic procedures. As a result, interpretations of the term were drawn together from relevant sources and from the nature of the procedures of parliamentary diplomacy, based on international diplomatic duties of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff.

In the previous parts, it has been attempted to give an accurate interpretation on the nature of diplomacy in general. We will now examine the changing nature of diplomacy and how it has opened up to other actors. It is important to understand the reasons why we get the emergence of various types of diplomacy, in particular parliamentary diplomacy. Hocking (1999) explained that the conduct of diplomacy has long been identified with 'diffusion', that is to say the development of a multiplicity of actors and channels in the conduct of external relations. The perspectives and values of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff on international duties will be discussed later on in the thesis. At the time being, the argument that diplomacy is no longer limited for professional diplomats from a national foreign office will be made clear, as alternative actors are emerging to pursue the diplomatic missions from the institutions they represent. The modernisation of communication and technology in our world today has made formerly reserved professions including diplomacy open up to allow alternative actors to become part of the system. Hamilton and Langhorne (1995, p.3) have given a description on the changing nature of diplomacy as follows;

“dialogues between states and other types of international actors are today ‘blurring the distinction between what is diplomatic activity and what is not, and who, therefore, are diplomats and who are not’.

In addition, Hamilton and Langhorne has also described 4 factors that shape the development of diplomacy: the international order; the threat, prevalence and changing nature of war; the evolution of the state; and advances in science and technology. This quote takes us back to the previous part on the speculation of traditional diplomacy. From these factors, I argue that the most influential one on modern diplomacy would be the advances on science and technology, in particular the internet. The internet has paved way for a faster track of communication, and has covered every level of correspondence (Hamilton and Langhorne,

1995, p.258). I would say that the internet has become part of the diplomatic procedures in all establishments from local, national, to international. Yet, the traditional custom of meeting in person and arranging courtesy calls is still practiced along with cyber correspondence. Another focal point is that each institution or diplomatic actor can adopt different levels of traditional diplomatic customs as they intend to establish their own unique institutional identity according to the members and regulations within the institution. It is inevitable that nowadays the internet has a vast impact on our daily lives, including the politicians where the internet facilitates the personal characteristics of the candidates, the strategic and structural circumstances of their incumbency, and the demonstration of constituency characteristics of the elections (Herrnson, Stokes-Brown, and Hindman, 2007, p.33).

Moreover, parliamentary diplomacy has been likely to develop from the debating nature of parliamentarians on domestic issues. During sittings members of parliament would have the opportunity to discuss on specific issues and see whether any adjustment or reform needs to be done. From this point, my assumption carries on that when parliamentarians are required to pursue the international part of their duties they would also have the opportunity to share opinions and engage in a discussion. They might bring up certain domestic issues and at the same time learn about other national issues from foreign counterparts<sup>9</sup>. Bayley (2004) stated that the concrete action in the outside world are results from the discourse of parliament as parliament establishes regulations as to what must, may, or may not be done in a given society. Parliament is the site of debate, discussion, and linguistic activity. Other main duties of parliament would include the enforcement and maintaining the autonomy of state institutions referring to political parties, the functioning of political parties, electoral and parliamentary practices relating to political parties (Tardi, 2007, p.432). This assumption,

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<sup>9</sup> International duties referring to international conferences and meetings that are proceeded in the country and abroad. This assumption can also be related to competitiveness among parliamentarians as a motivation for developing parliamentary diplomacy.

however, would depend on the interpersonal knowledge and skills of the individual parliamentarian, and will be discussed later on in the research.

As referred to earlier on in the discussion, there should be a reason that makes parliamentary diplomacy a distinctive topic of study. An observation would be that there are new emerging diplomatic actors, governmental and non-governmental, in today's globalised world. This emergence of new diplomatic actors is seen as breaking the barrier of the traditional Foreign Office diplomatic route (Rana, 2011, p.159-161). Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff are part of the emerging new diplomatic actors. Reasons for their engagement in international diplomatic missions would be that parliamentarians and the working staff would have to keep up with recent worldly issues, engage themselves in foreign affairs in order to improve their competency as diplomatic actors. Shifting back to the thought that diplomacy is another form of communication, I argue here that an accurate way to describe parliamentary diplomacy would be that it is a level of power communication between parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to build and strengthen international relations with other parliaments. Other consequences would be to gain benefit from that relation, to prove that the representative parliament is a strong diplomatic actor and therefore be able to exercise their power through the institutional processes of communication and representation (Offe, 2006, p.9-10).

So far, I have raised discussions and have attempted to clarify the nature and definition of traditional diplomacy leading on through to the emergence of parliamentary diplomacy. Also, brief details on different systems of parliament including unicameral and bicameral have been pointed out as part of the explanation to help clarify the working natures of parliamentarians and how the parliament system may enable them to develop as potential diplomatic actors. Relating this discussion to the theory of internationalisation, the concept of state security has

dominated international relations discourse and practice as a sovereign means to protect its citizens (Masunungure and Badza, 2010, p. 208-209). Coordinately, the development of the parliamentary institution as a diplomatic actor will help to clarify the roles and responsibilities of parliamentary institutions in international diplomatic affairs and maintaining the autonomy of its citizens. My argument for now will remain that parliamentary diplomacy is by no doubt another dimension of traditional diplomacy. As it has evolved from the conventional diplomatic practice, the nature of parliamentary diplomacy has no dramatic differences from that of traditional diplomacy. However, in the following parts I shall need to explore further on various impacts that are thought to be involved in the development of parliamentary diplomacy.

An example of decision-making and policy implementation from local politics in Ghana is raised here as an example of opportunities provided for local assembly members in policy implementation and decision-making (Fiankor and Akussah, 2012, p.32-33). The assembly system of Ghana had little access to relevant and reliable information when making decisions about programmes, policies, and their implementation. Recommendations from this study on the Ghanaian Assembly included enhancing the capability of assembly members through training, the presentation of information sources in appropriate formats for assembly members, the provision of adequate funding by assemblies to support subscription to relevant information sources, the establishment of district assembly libraries and information centres, and the effective dissemination of information by ministries, departments and agencies to the district assemblies.

The analysis of the operation of modern diplomacy is to consider the present trends of the global order, analyse the paths and contexts which governments chose in pursuing their policies and objectives in the greatly changed international arena. It is also to study how a government reaches a diplomatic objective that it sets itself. A state or government needs to define its objectives, assess the practicability of those objectives by taking the constraints it faces in achieving the objectives into account, and then decide on the means, resources, or the pathways for pursuing its objectives in terms of understanding what it wants to achieve (Woolcott, 1997, p.103).

In the next chapter, factors that influence the patterns of parliamentary diplomacy will be discussed. These aforementioned factors would lead on to a thorough explanation about the nature of parliamentary diplomatic practice. The significance between the institutions and its actors will also be discussed, basing the arguments on the raised factors and elements on the development of parliamentary diplomacy which will be raised co-ordinately.



## Chapter 2

### **Influences on parliamentary diplomacy**

“Despite the most dramatic political and economic crises, an abiding belief in the power of public diplomacy to bridge the cultural, political, economic, and religious gaps worldwide is public diplomacy. The focus is not on governments or sponsors but on people communicating with people and the productive relationships that hopefully ensue, further develop, mature, and continue to manifest additional creative projects, exchanges, and events that further understanding and mutual respect”.

(Payne, 2009, p.580)

Continuing from the first chapter, now that the attempt to clarify the interpretation of traditional diplomacy and its evolution into parliamentary diplomacy has been discussed, this part of the discussion will be focusing on the various influences on parliamentary diplomacy. The factors that are related to the formation of parliamentary diplomacy and how it is interpreted and implemented today will be elaborated. As the discussion goes, a theoretical shaping of parliamentary diplomacy as a form of social institution will also be emphasised. A statement has been put forth to emphasise the importance of the institutionalising of diplomacy that it was needed to stabilise the relationship between nations and make it more predictable at some point where the interdependence went beyond a certain threshold (Galtung and Holmboe, 1965, p.102). Moving on from traditional diplomacy, the discussion will now focus on the diplomatic dimension in the parliamentary level. As previously argued, parliamentary diplomacy has evolved from the traditional diplomatic practice. During the stages of evolution, there has been several influences that stimulated and shaped the nature of

parliamentary diplomacy, that is procedures, actors involved, and purposes of the missions. This part, therefore, will bring up the potential agents that have influence on the evolution of the diplomatic practice in political institutions. The discussion about the factors, shapings, and motivations that have had an extent of impact on how parliamentary diplomacy has developed will be stressed in this chapter. The first part of the discussion will begin with the political, economic, and cultural factors that are having general impact on the shifting and development of international relations, in particular diplomacy. At this point, it is argued that contemporary parliamentary diplomacy is still in the developing stage, and may take some time until we are able to confirm that parliamentary diplomacy is indeed a strong and reliable path to develop international relations from the conventional diplomatic practice. While this is so far, all countries, including the Western democracies, it is also very true to countries like Thailand. Impacts of the proliferation of non-state actors, the inexorable march of global capital forces, and the communications revolution have risen questions on the future direction of diplomacy whether there would be a place or a future for the profession at all (Hemery, 2003, p.140) . These issues will be discussed later on in chapter 3.

Considering these issues, theories of 'New Institutionalism' will be utilised, focusing especially on sociological institutionalism as a base for the discussion on the relationship between the institution and its actors. In this section particularly, distinctively different definitions have been raised about institutions and organisations, that they are different in terms of the functioning structure, the communication pattern, and the behaviour of its actors. A reason to support this assumption is that the processes of institutional and organisational fields emphasising the power, structure, and scale of institutions, demonstrates that institutions are different from and independent of organisations (Lammers & Barbour, 2006, p.358-360). Again, analytical analysis will be carried out in the case study when the relevant

arguments relating to this research are specified. The institution and the actors would refer to the parliament and the Thai senators and senate staff respectively.

There are several factors, shapings, and motivations that stimulate the practice of diplomacy in the parliamentary level. The difference between factors, shapings, and motivations that will be presented in this chapter are all categorised as influences on the development of parliamentary diplomacy. However, the differentiation between these 3 terms is based on the scope they cover. Factors will refer to the global-level influences that stimulate the building of international relations in general, and therefore apply to the development of parliamentary diplomacy. Shapings will then focus on a specific impact beneath the structure of the institution and the performance of the institutional actors respectively – in this case the discussion will be based upon a theoretical approach on sociological institutionalism. Motivations, further, will refer to influences within the parliamentary institution. In summary, factors, shapings, and motivations are influences that stimulates parliamentary diplomacy from the macro level to the micro level respectively. The discussion will begin with the factors, following with the shapings and motivations to expand the research questions and hypotheses given in the introduction on parliamentary diplomacy.

### **a. Factors**

Several factors explain the development of parliamentary diplomacy in Thailand. As has been pointed out earlier on, parliamentary diplomacy is not the kind of diplomacy that developed on its own, yet has evolved from the traditional diplomatic practice of building relations with foreign governments, especially under such pressures as expanding global trade and resolving international conflicts. The activeness of institutional actors also supports this fact in stimulating the competency of institutions in playing a role in the international relations

arena. Other external factors, moreover, contribute to the structuring of diplomatic practice at the parliamentary level. Beginning from a historical reference, there is some evidence that the term 'parliamentary diplomacy' originated from the post World War II period during the formation of the League of Nations<sup>10</sup>. The initial plan to establish the League of Nations was on the attempt to maintain state sovereignty where diplomats, lawyers, and governmental representatives from national governments established international regulations and facilitated international consultation and cooperation (Dubin, 1983, p. 469-470). The term 'parliamentary diplomacy', however, originally referred to the parliamentary-type proceedings of the League Assembly and the UN General Assembly, not to parliaments acting externally.

From that period until now, many factors have been considered in the process of the development of parliamentary diplomacy. As the term "parliamentary diplomacy" reflects the relations between national parliaments, therefore it is important to think about factors that encourage parliamentarians from different countries to pursue international diplomatic duties. Such factors could be derived from political, economic, and cultural dimensions in the studies of international relations. Certain possible factors which will be raised throughout this chapter would include political proximity, the geographical location of the country, economic relations, globalisation, and culture. These themes have been raised as general factors to cover my arguments on the evolution of parliamentary diplomacy, and they can also be applied to theoretical explanations about the development of international relations in a territorial sense, from regional levels to the global level.

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<sup>10</sup> During the post-WWII period, parliamentary diplomacy developed along with international law procedures. See Rusk, 1955.

This can also lead us to think about motivation of parliamentary diplomatic actors to become part of politics, as members of a political institution, in the first place and whether they look forward to the advantages they may receive from their membership and the duties they perform. The study of political participation has emphasised attributes of the individual actor to account for participation, to the relative exclusion of characteristics of the context within which that actor is behaving (Uhlener, 1986, p.552). In this context, the focus is on the arguments and discussion on political participation in terms of individuals' motivation in entering politics and exercising their political professions rather than to study the citizen's interest and engagement in politics, as this shall be explained later along the course of the thesis. For the meantime, the following factors that will be raised here are global factors that influence traditional diplomacy. As a result, they can possibly be applied not only to issues on parliamentary relations but also to other institutions, representatives, or actors in international relations.

### *i. Power*

Power is a major factor raised here to support the discussion on factors that influence the development of parliamentary diplomacy. One main purpose lies in all aspects of building international relations; to demonstrate the *power* and ability of the governments. My argument will base on the factor that has strong impact on the changing nature of diplomacy is simply *power*. Power has been an inevitably linked subject to the study of politics and international relations and is dominantly related to 'influence' and 'control' (Baldwin, 2003, p.177). What we learned and know about power in the international context traditionally would refer to the use of military force when there are national states with conflicting policies. A way of understanding what is happening in the world on the balancing of power is that individual states, developed or developing, all strive for political power, and

diplomacy is one of the 'soft' methods they use. It is said that power may be achieved through moral force including diplomacy, guile or fraud, and does not need to depend wholly upon the use of physical force (Wells, 1970, p.3).

This argument can be support further that forming and maintaining diplomatic relations is, in a way, an exercise of power though representatives of a particular country, to create political counterparts and allies for national benefits. On the part of parliamentary diplomacy, creating diplomatic relations would differ slightly in terms of the extent of impact it has compared to traditional diplomatic procedures extended through the Foreign Office. In other words, the diplomatic relations among parliamentary counterparts would be more to build and maintain a network of contacts and colleagues rather than to engage in a complete diplomatic mission that would have direct impact towards the state. Political proximity, in this case, refers to engagements that globalisation entails as it draws us all closer together, both 'phenomenologically' via the sort of experienced proximity that is provided in time-space bridging technologies through media technologies and communication; and 'structurally' via the complex institutional interconnections of globalisation (Tomlinson, 2000, p.402). What is understood and seen nowadays is that nations are not entirely striving for political power, but they exercise the use of diplomacy so as to maintain the balance of power among each representative country. Power, in this sense, can relate to diplomatic concepts of authority, influence, coercion, and can be used to analyse social relationships in the real world, depending on how we identify cases of power and how power is interpreted<sup>11</sup>. Knoke's distinction on the multiple-elite power model suggests that the state is neither a captive of other institutional elites nor a neutral political broker. The interests of the elite organisations

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<sup>11</sup> A redefinition of power has been brought up as 'power to' against 'power over'. Therefore, power indicates a capacity, a facility, an ability, not a relationship, indicating that the meaning of power has started to shift and be reinterpreted during the author's writing (1975). See Lukes, 1974.

are more often served than the interests of the larger collectivity, therefore a few elites dominate decisions and nondecisions in each of their own arenas of power (Dobratz and Kourvatis, 1982, p.293). In what follows, below, economic globalisation will be discussed as another important factor on influencing parliamentary diplomacy. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will be discussed as an example of a regional establishment that has a major impact not only on the stable maintenance of power in the region, but also a reflection on the competency of Thai parliamentarians as governmental representatives in the international arena. Ever since the formation of ASEAN, the evolution in Southeast Asia's multilateral defense diplomacy were explained by the pre-existing ASEAN-related cooperative activities dealing with transnational security. The continual power maintenance are all due to the creeping democratisation among key Southeast Asian states and the changing nature of Southeast Asia's strategic environment (Laksmana, 2012, p.253). A detailed explanation on the significance of ASEAN to Thai senators will be included in the aforementioned part on economic globalisation and in the chapter on the Thai-Cambodian border conflict and the ASEAN 2015 development plan respectively.

### *ii. Geographical settings*

International borders not only provide resources and physical security but also provide order to national and transnational social and economic life. When they are uncontested, they clarify and stabilise transnational actors' property rights (Simmons, 2005, p. 827). However, defense of one's national territory is no longer defined simply by security alone. In times of conflict threat or risk to the state or its people can challenge the capacity of the state to regulate entry and exit, penetrate society, and cross boundaries (Dewitt and Hernandez, 2003, p. 4). The nonviolent resolution in most territorial disputes are bilateral negotiations between

the two parties or a more formal process of legal dispute resolution by a third party such as an international court or arbitration panel (Huth & Allee, 2002a).

Geography influences not only the possibility for conflict, but also the likelihood it will be chosen as an option by a decision-maker. A great distance may be outweighed by a preference for military force by the state or by the risk-taking propensity of its leadership. However, several other facilitating conditions for conflict may enhance or supercede effects of those from geography (Goertz and Diehl, p.5). Institutions have become entwined with concerns about the agents for development. The question of agents as instruments responsible for the security of people has been discussed. The relationship between habit, agency, rationality, and uncertainty in world politics, or even the appreciated habit's role as a structural obstacle to social change has yet been explored in recent practices of international relations. Where the logic of habit predominates, international relations has less rationality, less agency, and less uncertainty than other logics would lead us to expect (Hopf, 2010, p.540). Consequently, international humanitarian law and international human rights law remain highly contingent on different perceptions of interests between states and security (Cox and O'Niell, 2008, p.201).

Geographical proximity also has an impact on the maintenance of peace between border countries. Recent patterns in international peacemaking have stressed the need for practitioners' coordination and discussion as one of the implications of peacemaking. Peacemakers and negotiators, accordingly, should let their actions be tempered or inspired by findings from rigorous retrospective research (Heldt, 2012, p.2). Evidence from interviews conducted are raised here as an example in order to explain the relations between the Thai



Senate and other parliaments through membership and participation of parliamentary friendship groups. Bilateral relations through forms of friendship groups are established in order to maintain goodwill among fellow parliamentarians and also to exchange opinions on any problematic situation that may occur.

Parliamentary diplomacy has been previously argued as an evolvement from traditional diplomacy, therefore factors, shapings, motivations may be drawn or assumed from those that has been seen to have influenced traditional diplomacy. This can be related to one universal factor on the development of traditional diplomacy in general; *the geographical location of the country*. The location of the country can also lead to political proximity where national governments within the same region choose to build relations between each other and establish a stable and trustworthy foundation. Most importantly, political activity and political power are extended across the boundaries of the modern nation-state (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton, 1999, p.49). For example, parliaments from countries that share the same border, or are in the same specific region, may start building connections with one another<sup>12</sup>. Transfrontier diplomacy, as it describes actions to build international relations between countries sharing the same border, can ameliorate relations not only between border communities but also between central governments and even entire societies (Henrikson, 2000, p.121). As it is easier to build relations because of their common location, then these countries may choose to expand the connections to a wider sphere depending on the particular issue they wish to discuss or seek opinion. Sharing borders would be the most convenient factor for representatives to travel to another country in a shorter period of time. It could also help the government to spend less travel costs, and would be generally optimal unless there was political instability in one country, or both, or if the political regime did not

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<sup>12</sup> As this research will be focusing on the Thai Parliament (Senate) later on, a distinctive example of countries that share the same border and have close parliamentary relations would be the Thai – Laos Parliament exchange visits.

enable representatives from the neighbouring country to travel on diplomatic missions eg. North Korea-South Korea, Israel-Lebanon etc.

A specific case of political instability between neighbouring countries that could strengthen the argument on the impact of regional political proximity in the current situation pertains to the Thai-Cambodian border conflict<sup>13</sup>. At this point, I would not go into detail about the situation but this case has been raised to explain that there are possibilities that states tend to go to war with neighbouring countries and as a case on political instability as a constrain to the development of international relations. A recent explanation on border conflicts would be that the spatial hardening of states during the 1990s, in other words “deterritorialisation”, became one of the many ironies of globalisation and this underlied the tension and opportunities that shaped Thailand's broader economic and political relations with neighbouring countries (Battersby, 1998-99, p.473). The border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia has been an ongoing regional issue that authorities from both governments are constantly negotiating with one another while preventing any further military clashes (Bangkok Post, 15/08/11). Relating this border conflict issue to the Thai Senate, the former President of the Senate has had a role in being part of the negotiating team from the Thai government's side to resolve the situation. We shall talk about this further in detail in a later chapter.

### *iii. Economic relations*

Moreover, countries that are in the same region would usually be in the same trade agreement zone, or other joint agreements, so it is quite automatic for the diplomatic actors to collaborate within the member group. An obvious example of regional cooperation, or

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<sup>13</sup> Case studies on the Thai-Cambodian border conflict and the ASEAN 2015 community development plan will be discussed separately in chapter 5.

multilateral regional diplomacy (Barston, 2006), would be ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations). ASEAN member countries maintain regional cooperation to accomplish their mission in tackling political, economic, cultural or security independency issues in Southeast Asia and that its most distinctive features is the ideational and institutional structure that forges ASEAN's regional identity (Wunderlich, 2007). Moreover, ASEAN illustrates associative diplomacy in transition from one of initial concerns with development projects to international trade and security issues (Barston, 2006, p.109). As earlier, this matter has not been raised simply to give descriptive detail or to critically analyse the role of ASEAN in detail, but rather to demonstrate the regional association as an example of an institution active in economic integration plans and other security related issues within the region. From this, we can see that the country's geographic location has an important impact on the political representative's decision to select corresponding partners, or in the long run countries they wish to visit and in turn officially receive as diplomatic guests (Shinn, 1989, and Tuan, 2002, p.311).

Of course, other smaller issues are included. Not only the location of the country is crucial, but domestic aspects including social stability, economic status, and other assets would also be taken into consideration as national factors that may contribute to the development of parliamentary diplomatic relations. As for ASEAN, the first period of membership did not include all countries in the region<sup>14</sup>, as certain countries did not join initially due to political instability. Up to now, although the Asia-Pacific region has made some progress on institution building and has witnessed growing economic interdependence, the risk of armed conflict remains serious in many areas putting security at risk (Yuzawa, 2006, p.786). However, at the moment all Southeast Asian countries are ASEAN members and

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<sup>14</sup> The first ASEAN members in 1967 include Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. At present, 5 other countries in the region are included; Brunei, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Myanmar.

governmental representatives including civil servants and parliamentarians meet twice annually to discuss social and economic issues<sup>15</sup>. Member countries take turns being host for the ASEAN Summit. Another example of regional cooperation relates to ASEAN member countries who while ready to cooperate on certain issues but are not yet ready to participate in full regional cooperation have been encouraged instead to participate in a formally recognized but lesser regional grouping called ASEAN-X<sup>16</sup>. This is an improvement mechanism upon bilateralism as it extends to more than two countries (Chavez, 2007, p.360). A roadmap to ASEAN 2015, or to be more specific an outline development plan for economic integration and drug trafficking elimination is presented here in the following section to provide an introduction to the case study on the Thai Senate's role in regional integration later on in chapter 5.

#### *iv. Globalisation*

Carrying on from the previous factor, it could also be possible to say that another factor regarding locations and boundaries that influences parliamentary diplomacy is *globalisation*. Nowadays the world is moving fast with respect to the speed of communication. Territories and borders only exist on maps, but people and places are virtually connected together no matter where they are. The prominent feature of political, economic, and social discourse has been increasing in the popular press and policy making, not only limited to the academic community, therefore deriving the term 'globalisation' which has been used since the 1990s (Christopherson, Garretsen, and Martin, 2008, p.343). Therefore, a lot amount of time is saved in corresponding with each other through rapid internet communication. The world system now has a new international agenda where countries have become interconnected and

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<sup>15</sup> See the ASEAN Secretariat website for details; [www.aseansec.org](http://www.aseansec.org)

<sup>16</sup> ASEAN-X is an alternative programme where regional members have the opportunity to explore common concerns and have members participate from national and sub-national authority. See Chavez, 2007.

interdependent in ways unimagined before (Riordan, 2003). Further explanation is given as follows:

“Domestic policy has been internationalised and diplomacy politicised as key political, economic and social issues have escaped the territorial boundaries of the nation state. A new international agenda has emerged to test the structures and personnel of traditional diplomacy (Riordan, 2003).”

From here, we are able to assume that due to the rapidly modernised world of advanced technology, parliamentary representatives like any other individual would want to keep up to dated with the latest worldly issue and communication trend. Even though representatives from parliaments – MPs or staff - are still following the traditional diplomatic route of carrying out official visits to other countries<sup>17</sup>, their correspondence about the mission has already been way ahead or may even have been concluded, credits to the internet. Global computer networks including satellite communication systems, computerised networks, and linked software and hardware have made globalisation possible by not only producing a stream of correspondence but also a technological infrastructure for the global economy (Kellner, 2002, p.287). Globalisation, moreover, is placing governments under increasing scrutiny, as well as prompting governments and policy practitioners into providing a secure and stable economic domestic environment by conducting responsible economic policies (Cheema, 2005, p.5).

Thus, it is evident that globalisation is a key factor that influences the procedures of parliamentary diplomacy. However, to conclude exactly what sort of influence globalisation is on parliamentary diplomacy is still debatable. The reason lies in the fact that there are

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<sup>17</sup> Traditional diplomats believe that for the courtesy of the other behalf and for a successful diplomatic progress, it is better the meet representatives in person rather than keeping distant correspondence.

different streams of globalisation; the hyperglobalists, sceptics, transformationalists (McGrew, 2001, p.20). From this reason, to justify whether globalisation is a major influence on parliamentary diplomacy would depend on which approach is adopted for explanation. All in all, the argument will be maintained that the level of performance is dependent on the diplomatic actors' perceptions and values on their duties. Shifting slightly back to the impact of the current global trend on international activities, it has been stressed that globalisation in itself is neither inherently good nor bad, as citizens can choose to shape global opportunities and benefits to their national and international advantages (Talbot, 1997, p.71). This is saying that globalisation along with the diplomatic actor's values, should they have it, would enable them to decide what is more advantageous for their representative countries. Critics of globalisation see the shift in power from sovereign states to technologically advanced global elites as an adversely impact on national sovereignty (Preble, 2010, p.341, 343). Global elites in this case are multilateral companies, NGOs, and third-party organisations. The emergence of individual actors has also shaped the way international diplomatic duties are being perceived. This assumption, interestingly, could lead us to think further about the role of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff as alternative to, or contemporary with, diplomatic actors. This issue will be discussed later on in the research in chapter 3.

### *v. Culture: politics and parliaments*

The factors being stated in this part of the research are respective influences that are deliberately linked to one another. The next factor that has inevitably influenced parliamentary diplomatic practices would be *culture*. It is argued here that culture is the most universal factor which strongly shapes who we are and how we react in the society. Culture includes legal and political institutions, economic systems, religious ideas, methods of social organisation, technologies and scientific concepts (Wesley-Smith, 1981). Moreover, cultural

differences among people are reflected through their values, outlooks, intentions, interests, habits, historical hopes and fears (Anand, 1981, p.113). Bringing the argument on to a more specific level, cultural diplomacy would be more connotated with propaganda, imperialism, and colonialism, immoral and unethical practices that are associated with such activity<sup>18</sup>.

Although it has been previously argued that parliamentary diplomacy is a relatively new and not widely studied subject in the studies of international relations, research has been done on other related issues including political culture and parliaments. An interesting fact worth noting on political culture, in particular parliamentary culture, is that most studies of parliament had been focused on two particular institutions, reflecting the Western experience; the U.S. Congress and the British House of Commons (Banjo, 2009, p.61). The distinction between the two parliamentary models is that although both national parliaments are bicameral, the UK House of Lords acts as 'check and balance' in legislative scrutiny on bills passed forward from the House of Commons. On the other hand, the House of Representatives and the Senate of the U.S. Congress have equal power to collaborate in joint consent for the passing of any drafted legislation. Moreover, US Congress members are all elected (Smith, Roberts, and Vander Wielen, 2006, p. 55). As a result people tend to assume that the procedures and parliamentary 'culture' should be conducted according to these two distinctive models. Most national parliaments and their members, parliamentarians, in fact adopt the rituals and customs from either one of the two, or both. From a critical point of view, there are no disputes about that as it helps with the developing of a solid structure and identity of the institution. One study on identification processes say that identities emerge and movements ensue because collectives consciously coordinate action, as intellectual concerns with self-direction and agency (Cerulo, 1997, p.386, 393). However, the most important point

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<sup>18</sup> See Nisbett, 2012, p.2. More recently in the age of globalisation and the rapid growth of in the internet, the rise of Western corporate power has stimulated the transmission of political, social, cultural and economic values.

here is that different cultures and personal values of parliamentary representatives should not be an obstacle to the development of parliamentary diplomacy with other counterparts. Yet, it is difficult to predict whether parliaments with similar cultures (e.g. same religion, language, located in the same region, adopts the similar parliamentary system) could form a successful parliamentary relationship as leaders and members of parliament are all different individually and have diverse styles of performance in their duties. Another study from a Western parliament, the Scottish Parliament, proved its goal of establishing a 'new politics' by deliberately taking the decision to forge a strong support and linkage between the parliament and public (Carman, 2010, p.731). Nevertheless, examples here are all taken from the Western parliament. A suggestion here would be that further discussion needs to be added on the Asian parliamentary culture to clarify the argument on elements that make Asian parliaments distinctive from the Western parliament. Culture includes everything related to an individual – language, tradition, beliefs, and these can be incorporated into formal institutions including parliament. Not only in Asia, but in other continents the influence of institutional systems have also shaped the policy structure and the performance of its actors.

For example in central and eastern European countries, a difference between formal and informal institutions in respect of institutional change is informal constraints change very slowly, while formal rules can be changed overnight by discretion (Ovin, 2001, p.133-134). Having stated this factor on culture, it is intended to say that values and beliefs of politicians in other countries where the US Congress or Westminster style parliament are adopted are usually merged with the bureaucratic system and political culture of that respective country. Therefore, the amalgamation of Western-style parliament models will then reflect the values of that country.



Coming back to parliamentary diplomacy, therefore, my interpretation of culture as an influencing factor of parliamentary diplomacy would be that parliamentary representatives are encouraged to perform international diplomatic missions in order to build networks with foreign peers and to exchange professional opinions and values on worldly issues that may be of benefit to their respective countries. Foreign peers in this sense meaning parliamentary representatives who are from different countries, speak different languages, have different religious beliefs and customs. More specifically, to make the argument more relevant we could speculate that diplomatic duties in the parliamentary level are acknowledged as part of a political culture. Cultural dimensions in politics is more restrictive in a way that complex of subjective beliefs, attitudes, sentiments, and behavioural patterns that presumably sustain the structural make up and functional operation of political order (Gebhardt, 2010). As this thought is somewhat linked to the sociological aspect on determining individual behaviour, we will be discussing more theoretically in the next part on New Institutionalism as the approach that will be emphasised as the shaping of parliamentary diplomacy.

These factors, overall, are major factors that have an extent of impact on parliamentary diplomacy. When we analyse these factors, we see that they stimulate parliamentarians, as national representatives, to create networks and discuss with peers from other parliaments in particular problematic issues (e.g. social conflict, economic stability, terrorism, human rights, etc.), whichever subject that needs advice for improvement, even for a resolution from other parliamentary counterparts. Also, if the parliamentary representative does not have the purpose to seek advice, then he or she would want to learn what other countries are doing and how they are tackling the problem on a particular topic (Simpson, 1968, p.137). They might select an issue to talk about and simply exchange opinions about it. Opinions could be based on their national ideologies and their personal values. An example from a US Foreign Service

officer's perception on his diplomatic duty was that he wished to do well in his work, meaning that he will maintain communication with those he would be frequently associated with on specific subject matter content, and he wanted others to regard his professional qualifications highly (Lazorchick, 1968, p.108). As a result, the constant correspondence and exchange of opinions might be a pattern for further consideration for problems if occurred within the representative's own country. This usually happens when countries are from different geographical locations and have started to develop a diplomatic relationship.

### **b.Shapings**

Moving forward from factors, this part of the thesis will be looking at shapings of parliamentary diplomacy. Even though the main argument is focused on the evolution of traditional diplomacy and the nature of parliamentary diplomacy, examining the functions of parliament as an institution is also crucial to strengthen the discussions on how diplomacy in the parliamentary level has been shaped and developed. The theoretical idea that will be used as the main discussion in this part would be *New Institutional theory*. This idea concerns the relations between the individual and the institution, and thus I will refer this theory as a shaping influence on the evolution of parliamentary diplomacy. When placed in the context of parliamentary diplomatic development, we could assume that the evolution of parliamentary diplomacy, including the outcomes and future prospects of parliamentary diplomatic missions, are mainly shaped by the actors involved. In other words, parliamentary diplomacy could be viewed as an alternative institutionalised function in the international society. An emphasis on diplomacy studies is that the articulating of an institutional function is an illuminating way of looking at diplomacy (Melissen, 1999). This introduces an argument concerning parliamentary diplomacy as being an institutionalised form of

diplomacy. The theoretical framework for this research will be argued based on the sociological institutionalism theory of March and Olsen, focusing particularly on the 'logic of appropriateness'. I argue that if individuals have membership of a certain group or association, they will tend to behave and react according to specific rules within that establishment. This statement will be further supported in terms of the logic of appropriateness – a perspective that sees human action driven by rules of exemplary behaviour (March & Olsen, 2009). Such a theory holds to the view that tradition, political ideology, the socio-economic structure of society, the role and importance of the bureaucracy, the weight and character of the main political groups, and the personal strength of the leader are all factors that shape the existence of a particular set of governmental arrangements (Blondel, 1982, p. 57).

The interaction between parliamentarians and the institution contribute towards the purpose of international parliamentary activities in that they create relations, build networks for further correspondence, or meet for discussions on a current issue, whether or not seeking for a resolution or only to get suggestions and exchange opinions. Interestingly, there has been scholarly speculation on the performance of members of parliament and parliamentary staff that what they do is shaped by the set regulations and prospects of the institution. The constitutive rule of an institution provides a certain class of distinct systems of legal norms that can achieve validity rather than giving a specification of a certain class of single legal norms (Ruiter, 1998, p.217). In other words, the individuals including the parliamentarians and parliamentary staff are the political actors of the institution, or the parliament, and parliament represents the values of the parliamentarians. These values, more or less, would presumably reflect through both their domestic and international duties. The definition of

new institutionalism is able to clarify the functioning between the human agency and the institution as the base for their actions.

For this research, the arguments will be based on the sociological institutionalist approach. Yet, there are three general schools in the New Institutionalism debate; historical, rational choice, and sociological institutionalism. These constitute “The three major research pillars of contemporary political science”. However, different titles were also used for the type of approach; normative, constructivist, organizational (Campbell, 2004). The new generation of West Europeanists on institutions was more on the informal rules of the game, organisational patterns of political behaviour, and organisational structures both within and outside of government rather than the formal understanding based on constitutions (Immergut and Anderson, 2008, p. 346).

#### *i. Historical institutionalism*

The original scholarship in the studies of institutions is referred to as historical institutionalism. Historical institutionalists are interested in identifying the functioning of an institution from elements during the construction of that institution through different time periods. In formal aspects of government, analysing the determinants of policy and its outcomes in historical and comparative perspective, developing and testing theories of political institutional development and policy performance are focuses of historical institutionalism (Thelen and Steinmo in Campbell, 2004). Broader societal and state structures matter more to historical institutionalists than organisations per se (Ma, 2007, p.57). The preferences of interest groups reinforce the stability of the original set of policy preferences, as political institutions shape the preferences of interest groups (Drezner, 2012, p.793). Historical institutionalism offers a perspective that recognises both the constitutive

nature of institutional contexts and the critical role of unanticipated consequences in driving future policy change stressing the importance of time and timing in causal processes (Farrell and Newman, 2010, p.611).

*ii. Rational choice institutionalism*

Rational choice institutionalists imply that an institution is a set of information and rules that 'gains from exchange' are being promoted associated with the pursuit of strategic interactions of individual rationality (Harty, 2005). This is to say that individuals use institutions as a pathway to achieve their professional goals. For parliamentarians, accordingly, parliaments are the place to be for them and parliamentary diplomatic procedures could be presumed as the tool to fulfil their goals including fame as being the institutional representative and success as political actors and negotiators. Rational choice theory stated that outcomes are the result of choices made by actors. It is also considered applicable to a wide variety of social situations, where various informational, structural, and psychological factors are claimed to interfere with rational decision-making (Quackenbush, 2004, p.87).

Rational choice institutionalism might appear to be the most suitable theory that can be used to elaborate the discussion on conceptualising parliamentary diplomacy. However, the reason I did not adopt the rational choice institutionalist approach for this research will be briefly explained here. The main idea on rational choice institutionalism is that actors would become members of an institution to pave way for their professional goals. This may be true for members of most political institutions. However, on the case of the Thai Senate, senators are senior professionals who are elected or appointed based on their profiles and achievements respectively. From a personal point of view, it can be argued that senators enter a temporary political career in order to enhance their already notable profiles. After their term in

parliament ends, they would usually return to their previous professions. In the following section, an explanation will be included to give the reason why the sociological institutionalism approach has been adopted to develop arguments for this research rather than the other approaches. An explanation of how this theoretical approach fits better into my arguments about the relations between the parliament as an institution and parliamentarians and parliament staff as the institutional actors will be given.

### *iii. Sociological institutionalism*

In this research, the sociological institutionalist approach has been adopted to examine the relations between the institution (parliament) and its actors (parliamentarians and staff). New Institutionalism scholars March and Olsen (1989, p.38) have stated that the relations between structure and agency are important, and that behaviour is driven by elements including internalised principles and values, cultural features, identity, and habit. Moreover, this thought supports the fact that actors interpret their situation, their particular place in it, and the most appropriate course of action for whatever decision faces them. So they say, the developing human being interrelates with a specific social and cultural order, apart from the natural environment, and these are mediated by the significant others who have charge of him (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.66). Yet, all this has to be done within the frame of the institutional regulations. Therefore, it is likely to say that the mediator is the institution. Parliamentarians, in this case, are expected to act, perform their domestic and international duties, as well as make the right decision on matters that are duty-related.

“Much of the behaviour we observe in political institutions reflects the routine way in which people do what they are supposed to do. Institutions have a repertoire of procedures, and they use rules to select among them. The rules may

be imposed and enforced by direct coercion and political or organisational authority, or they may be part of a code of appropriate behaviour that is learned and internalised through socialisation or education”.

(March and Olsen, 2009)

This quote fits in with my intention to argue that actors of parliament, a political institution, are by all means members of the society and that their behaviour and interactions in office are mostly driven by their personal backgrounds. In other words, the way they interact professionally can reflect the way they would behave off-duty in a personal setting. A reason for this statement would be that individuals tend to create and become occupied with expected roles or behaviour when they are in particular positions or statuses, reflecting large complexes of cultural patterns focused on some important human activity (Gordon, 1988, p.63). In other words, they entitle themselves to enter a routine of work that at the same time fits in with their personal habits and decisions. It is clear now that members of parliament are supposed to follow the rules once they enter parliament, in other words be obedient and ‘go with the flow’, even though they may not agree with parts of the institutional regulations. Routine refinement of rules can be imagined to improve their fit to the environment as experience are routinely coded into rules, rules into principles and principles into systems of thought in many spheres of life (March and Olsen, 2009, p.15).

An interesting aspect would be to consider that some parliamentarians may have already known what they will be doing before they stood for election or being appointed for office, which shows that they are well-prepared for their prospective terms in office and presumably for what the institution has to offer for them to pursue their goal if they were successful. This would be the case where parliamentarians know they have a high chance to be successful in

the elections. At the same time, most of them may not have realised what they would be doing once they are elected or appointed. So we see there are two distinct groups of parliamentarians; the assertive and the passive. A study on political deliberation showed that internal policy had an effect on citizen's feelings of their own competency to participate in politics, as deliberation will probably initially increase on specific internal political efficacy (Morrell, 2005, p.50). The group of active parliamentarians would follow the institutional rules as well as might initiate new rule options or imply 'their way' of procedure, while the group of passive parliamentarians would fit in the general category of following the institutional regulations and norms of what they are supposed to do, and be strict to the routine so as to avoid negative scrutiny from their peers and the public<sup>19</sup>.

In the case of the Thai senators, which will be discussed further in the next part, the majority of them have little experience and knowledge of the duties in office. It may be possible that some already know about the upcoming duties once they are elected from peers or relatives who hold a position in parliament. This is different from members of the House of Representatives, as most of them hold positions in government, including the Prime Minister. It can be assumed that they take their posts in office for political reputation and to exercise their values through the institutional framework. Once they work together as teams, or committees, then their opinions would become stronger. The matter of fact is, however, once the logic of appropriateness is applied for these political actors then they are held accountable for any improper behaviour that sometimes is associated with bad consequences (March and Olsen, 2009, p.17).

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<sup>19</sup> Public scrutiny is part of public diplomacy, in other words open diplomacy. This issue will be discussed later on in the research.



Therefore, it is clear that there is an emphasised distinction between organisations and institutions on the matter of the purposes of the members and to some source, the emergence of each particular unit. Organisations as we know them are a relatively recent development, whereas institutions of one type or another can be traced back to the earliest stages of history of humankind (Scott, 2001, p.71-72). The question now is whether the theoretical description of sociological institutionalism could be interpreted differently when applied to institutions and organisations. I do not wish to deny the fact that existing suggestions show different meanings of an organisation and an institution. However, to some extent it is evident that sociological aspects on organisational behaviour and institutional behaviour share similarities and can be applied to demonstrate the same collective behaviour of the actors. This argument is supported by March and Olsen's view that political actors associate specific actions with specific situations by rules of appropriateness; that what is appropriate for a particular person in a particular situation is defined by political and social institutions and transmitted through socialisation (March and Olsen, 2009, p.23).

### *Logic of appropriateness*

The logic of appropriateness – a sub-theory related to sociological institutionalism will be used to elaborate the argument on the shaping of the Thai Senate. The reason for emphasising this particular issue is in order to generate the idea on how the logic of appropriateness in new institutionalism contributes to the senators perceptions on their values and identities in developing parliamentary diplomacy. At the same time, the logic of appropriateness will be utilised to explain the relations between the Secretariat of the Senate staff and their values towards the senators and the institution, as their duties are to support the main duties of the senators.

For this research, I have chosen to adopt the sociological institutionalist approach because the parliament, a political institution, is a place with a set of regimes that parliamentarians are expected to follow and complete. In other words, it is saying that the members of parliament and parliamentary staff, despite their offices, are nevertheless normal individuals in a particular community. Members cooperate in a community and help each other out; therefore cooperation presupposes another characteristic of community; effective communication (Tuan, 2002, p.307-308). The argument goes on to the distinction between a community and society, but it is possible to say that in either one there should be an interaction among individuals according to the framework of routine. The logic of appropriateness has been used in a wider context concerning new institutionalism<sup>20</sup>. However, this thesis plans to discuss only within the sociological institutional perspective. Although the argument will be based on March and Olsen's theory, it will draw also on different scholarly approaches in terms of from those who agree or disagree with the logic of appropriateness. In addition, I will elaborate my own justifications in order to further support the argument.

Not only they need to follow the requirements of their positions, but they could also realise their values and potential from their duties. A speculation showed that institutions regulate the distribution of values among group members. The distribution of values, however, can be intensely contested by actors who desire a different pattern of value access and distribution (Offe, 2006). Moreover, the decision to base this research on the sociological institution theory was based on the logic that the regulations and norms of the workplace are reflected through the personal backgrounds of the parliamentarians. Research on how normative meanings have been generated in transnational arenas, as well as change during the transfer

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<sup>20</sup> Further studies on institutions and organisational behaviour can be referred to the works of DiMaggio and Powell (1991), *The New Institutionalism in Organisational Analysis*.

from the transnational to the domestic political arena<sup>21</sup>, has reflected perspectives on institutional norms, examining from the 'interaction in context' (Weiner, 2007, p.48). In addition, a study on the role of parliamentary politicians in Singapore has been conducted and stressed that the socioeconomic background of the members of parliament is important in shaping what they do in the legislative process: the expectation they have of themselves and the actual role behaviour they adopt (Chee, 1976, p.424-425). However, there have been sceptical debates on the utility of the concept "logic of appropriateness", that it does not actually have a total impact in shaping the behaviour, values, and decisions of the actors of an institution. A doubt has risen whether they are seen as theories, perspectives, or ideal types (Goldmann, 2005, p.35). Also, a more general approach to explain the logic of appropriateness in organisations should attempt to explain how both rules and anticipated consequences affect behaviour and outcome rather than trying to conceptualising rule-governed choice (Ostrom, 1991, p.239).

The logic of appropriateness, from the researcher's point of view, is seen as a guided framework that shapes and conducts the behaviour of the parliamentary diplomatic actors in office. This is to say the logic of appropriateness does indeed have a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of the institution and its actors. Even if they do not realise it, there will always be 'an act of courtesy' comprising routines and realisations within that invisible frame concerning what they should be doing, how they do it, and what to expect from their actions. Moreover, the logic of appropriateness fits in with my argument on the behaviour of the institutional actors, parliamentarians and parliament staff, and how the logic of appropriateness has an extent of influence on the perceptions of these actors on the international part of their duties. A statement to support this is that the doctrine of

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<sup>21</sup> E.g. during treaty negotiations to domestic governmental sittings.

appropriateness can be applied to administrative planning in any level of government, emphasising the functioning of human activity (Kennedy, 1972, p.142). The decisions they make on their missions and duties, however, would be resulted as part of the shaping of the logic of appropriateness and also from their experiences, training, and perceptions in life.

Accordingly, my assumption here is that parliamentarians are confident and proud about their titles and duties that they tend to believe they are in control of their behaviour and decisions. A senator from the Committee on Education stressed that both appointed and elected senators share the same professional knowledge and expertise, but the bias from their senatorship limits the opportunities for elected senators to be heard in parliament (interviewed 30 March 2011). However, this can also lead to a possibility in a change of rules. Although the institutional actors are required to follow the rules and routines, it is also likely and possible that rules could be changed through the actors' exposure to information, experiences and contact with others (March and Olsen, 2009, p.13). Yet, an emphasis on the change of rules in an institution would be that actors cannot change every rule and routine all at once because then there would be no need for either organisations or institutions (Rowlinson, 1997, p.89).

Apart from the relations between the individual and the institution, another important influence that could shape parliamentary diplomacy would be *the seniority and the professional experience of the parliamentarians*. How does seniority shape the pursuit of international diplomatic practice between parliamentarians? The answer is that senior individuals are expected to have more experience, either personal or professional, or has spent more time in office (MacCormick, 1998, p.326-327). In this case it means that the parliamentarian has likely spent many consecutive terms in office, depending on the constitutional regulations of each national parliament. Moreover, senior representatives are

likely to be selected as leader e.g. Speaker, Chairperson, Head of the House or the Committee, therefore reflecting a somewhat upward power structure<sup>22</sup>. To support this argument, Peter (2008) gives an explanation about a younger official's perception on seniority and hierarchy in an intergovernmental organisation as follows;

“Age is an important factor in organisations here and as a young person you are not taken seriously here. People just don't listen to you regardless of your qualification”.

From the quote, it is clear that age has an important part in shaping the structure of an institution, especially in countries where seniority is more associated with hierarchy<sup>23</sup>. Even so, nowadays the structure of political institutions tends to be more open and flexible. Although senior officials hold the leading posts, but advice is taken from other junior members despite their age and experience. The reason would be that the responsibility and performance would depend on the specialism of the individual rather than age difference. This could be considered as a positive aspect towards the distribution of duties within the institution, as well as the duties extended across institutions. Seniority, accordingly, would be a factor to maintain courtesy and respect among peers.

As for professional experience, this is another important shaping strategy that could determine the success of parliamentary diplomacy. When we say that members of parliament have various professional experiences in order to be qualified for office, it refers to the fact that their knowledge and experience should be universal as well. Members of parliament

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<sup>22</sup> The structure of power, on the other hand, could also be downwards or centred. Again this depends on the system within each parliament.

<sup>23</sup> Examples of countries that seniority and hierarchy are associated include Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand. See Peters, 2008.

should not only have specialised knowledge and experience about what they do domestically, but should have the worldly knowledge that could be discussed universally with foreign counterparts. If parliament were to develop and become a strong trustworthy diplomatic actor, it needs people who are not only experienced in their profession, but should also have sound experience with international diplomatic activities. This is to say that they should have a good understanding about their diplomatic duties and aim for the improvement and success of the institution. The issues about the image of parliament as a diplomatic actor will be discussed in the following point on motivations that influence parliamentary diplomacy.

However, the arguments and discussions have been based mainly on the sociological approach because the Thai Senate is seen as a somewhat 'closed' institution with a specific group of actors that perform their duties separately from members of the House of Representatives. In this case, it could be termed as an organisation with members from diverse backgrounds. By applying the sociological institutional approach to this case study, we are then able to examine the understanding of values of the actors towards the institution and whether the legislative setting has impact on their behaviour and performance in international diplomatic duties (Searing, 1991, p.1240). In the next section, the discussion will move on to the actors' motivations in developing and strengthening parliamentary diplomacy.

#### *iv. Constitutional arrangements*

The constitutional arrangements of a country are considered as another influence that have impact on shaping the performance of diplomatic actors. Raising the Thai Senate as a focal point for this research, evidence in the findings chapter later on will demonstrate that the constitutional framework has a limitation on the procedures and outcomes of parliamentary

diplomatic duties. In diplomatic missions, the completion of a mission should include a formal agreement between the parties involved – where it be two parties or more. In the case of the Thai Senate, both domestic and international duties are clearly restricted by the constitutional framework. Therefore, the perceptions and outcomes of the Senate's international diplomatic missions may not reflect a complete course of a diplomatic procedure where negotiations, decisions are made and document evidence is signed between the parties as of conventional diplomacy. Under Section 190 in the Thai Constitution, 2007, any planned foreign affairs mission that would be relevant to national security needs to be approved by parliament. In this sense, parliament has got a degree of impact and rights to approve the procedures of international diplomatic missions. Section 190 reads in full;

“The King has the prerogative to conclude a peace treaty, armistice and other treaties with other countries or international organisations.

A treaty which provides for a change in the Thai territories or extraterritorial areas over which Thailand has sovereign rights or has jurisdiction in accordance therewith or in accordance with international law or requires the enactment of an Act for the implementation thereof or has extensive impacts on national economic or social security or generates material commitments in trade, investment or budgets of the country, must be approved by the National Assembly. For this purpose, the National Assembly shall complete its consideration within sixty days as from the receipt of such matter.

Prior to taking steps in concluding a treaty with other countries or international organizations under paragraph two, the Council of Ministers shall provide information and cause to be conducted public hearings and shall give the National Assembly explanations on such treaty. For this purpose, the Council of

Ministers shall submit to the National Assembly a framework for negotiations for approval.

When the treaty under paragraph two has been signed, the Council of Ministers shall, prior to the declaration of intention to be bound thereby, make details thereof publicly accessible and, in the case where the implementation of such treaty has impacts on the public or operators of small-or medium-sized enterprises, the Council of Ministers shall take steps in rectifying or remedying the impacts suffered by aggrieved persons in an expeditious, appropriate and fair manner.

There shall be the law on the determination of procedures and methods for the conclusion of treaties having extensive impacts on national economic or social security or generating material commitments in trade or investment and the rectification and remedying of impacts suffered by persons in consequence of the implementation of such treaties, having regard to justice to persons benefited and persons aggrieved by the implementation thereof as well as to general members of the public.

In the case where there arises a problematic issue under paragraph two, the power to make the determination thereon shall be vested in the Constitutional Court and, for this purpose, the provisions of section 154 (1) shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the referral of the matter to the Constitutional Court.”

Section 190 justifies the duty framework for the Senate in foreign and diplomatic affairs.

From this fact, the arrangements of the Constitution do have an impact on shaping the perspectives and attitudes of the legislators on foreign affairs, thus having direct impact on parliamentary diplomacy. However, the issue which needs to be supported by evidence along



the course of this research is the extent of the international duties of the Senate. On this point, the matter of the Senate's diplomatic duties would be more of a focal point in research than the constitutional arrangements. Purposes, procedures, and outcomes of these duties will reflect and provide analysis for the research questions and hypotheses on parliamentary diplomacy.

#### *v. The Military*

The military has always played a major role in shaping Thailand's political system. Since the political transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy in 1932, the Thai political system has always been prone to military dominance. The majority of prime ministers or political institution leaders were usually military personnel. Even in parliament, members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate are from a military background. To understand political relations in Thailand, the creation of parameters from political institutions and material conditions are able to determine the relationship between the country's military and society. Various institutional, ideational, and macro-structural factors have been realised through agents' choices and strategies through the conditioning of structure in explaining the erosion of Thai democracy (Chambers, 2011, p.290-291).

Focusing the impact of the military on international diplomatic duties of the Senate, the composition of senior military generals in the Senate is considered as a lesser factor on the outcomes of parliamentary diplomatic duties. The reason for this statement is because once the senators hold membership in parliament, they also hold equal opportunities to legislative scrutiny, be active in individual committee settings, and participate in international diplomatic missions. Their background, as the argument goes, can facilitate their duties in

terms of building existing relations with previous contacts in their professional fields. Throughout the course of Thailand's political history, there has always been a struggle against dictatorial military regime. The 1997 Thai constitution presented major shifts in developments for democracies in Thailand by strengthening representative democracy to make the political system more responsive to the differing demands and needs of the people and to establish a more effective means of checking politicians' abuses of power (Maisrikrod, 1999, p.355).

### **c. Motivations**

There are several motivations for the practice of parliamentary diplomacy. We will be talking about motivations for the individual parliamentarian, and for the parliament as a political institution. First, we will discuss the motivations of the parliamentarian as an individual. The main duties of parliamentarians, as individuals, are legislative drafting or scrutiny within their national government. Apart from that, international duties are assigned according to expertise and experience of the individual representative<sup>24</sup>. This becomes automatic when parliamentarians join different committee groups in parliament, in particular the Foreign Affairs Committee, as they usually continue to carry out their discussions in 'another country' with another friendship group abroad on a subject that would be beneficial to both sides. National parliaments, whether the system is unicameral or bicameral, have different committee groups to focus the discussion on specific issues.

A member of parliament can choose to join one or more committees according to his or her expertise or personal interest. His or her professional technical expertise in virtue of experience, otherwise 'experience-based expert', apart from personal interest on the issue

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<sup>24</sup> Regulations on the international duties of parliament is considered as a crucial part of the institutional structure, apart from the domestic duties.

would be the main factor for choosing to become member of a committee or even member of the institution (Collins and Robert, 2002, p.238). As a result, international diplomatic activities are prestigious opportunities for parliamentarians as individuals to adapt their knowledge and skills in performing their international diplomatic duties. In other words, the international missions in proceeding parliamentary diplomacy would motivate the actors, parliamentarians, to demonstrate or to test their potential in international affairs. Members of parliament would have the opportunity to practice their discussion and negotiating skills as a diplomatic actor, thus opening up the traditional frame of domestic responsibility in legislative drafting or scrutiny<sup>25</sup>.

However, some parliamentarians from non-English speaking countries find the thought of speaking with foreign counterparts somewhat intimidating (interview with Secretariat staff from Bureau of Foreign Affairs, 2 May 2011, Bangkok). Even though they have sound knowledge about the particular issue under consideration, and professional translators are requested to interpret or translate the discussions during official meetings, this particular group of parliamentary representatives would not say a word. The reason for not giving any opinions might not only be language difficulties, but lack of specialised knowledge on the topic or even for security reasons. When parliamentarians meet with international counterparts, they may choose not to speak as they are aware that their opinions might be referred to in a negative aspect. This could make the conversation less worthwhile, as exchange of opinions may not be successful due to language obstacles. Also, this would be a fact that could discourage parliamentarians from being less active in international diplomatic duties.

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<sup>25</sup> This is a general implication to the duties of both Houses (bicameral parliaments); the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively.

When the parliamentarians are motivated to perform international diplomatic duties, the following motivation would then be *competitiveness among parliamentarians*. Each individual who runs for parliamentary elections or appointments has a sense of pride in himself. The extent of pride would likely to increase when he has a respective political title – MP - and an extent of capability in office. Moreover, competitiveness can begin to form even before parliamentarians take their position in office, during the election period. This fact can be used to explain the composition of senators who are elected, but then again the aggression of openly lobbying and vote-buying among senators are not considered as serious as candidates who expect to be elected as members of the House of Representatives. An example of the U.S. Congress electoral process on political competition speculated that limiting an incumbent's term of service to a specified number of years guarantees a minimum level of legislative turnover<sup>26</sup> (Cain, Hanley, and Kousser, 2006). Interestingly, the authors' analysis later showed that other trends in the electoral environment and the strategic behaviour of incumbents also had dramatic effects on competition during election.

### *i. Electoral competitiveness*

So what does electoral competitiveness have to do with parliamentary diplomacy development? The assumption is that competition during election, or appointment to office, could shape the candidate and further on his political values when he takes up parliamentary duties. A fact is that, party members will collude to prevent the rivalry between the branches of government necessary for mutual monitoring to occur when unified government exists, giving way to the classical approach of electoral competition encourages executives to pack the legislature with members of their own parties in a world of partisan competition (Lehoucq, 2002, p.31). As mentioned earlier, members of parliament are likely to adopt their

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<sup>26</sup> The example raised here on the effect of term limits in office and political competitiveness was taken from the U.S. Congress electoral process. However, the argument meant to show that after elections MPs continue to compete against each other in office for successful political profiles.

professional skills and knowledge to their parliamentary responsibilities. Further, their political values could alter or change when they are surrounded by other parliamentarians who have different skills, knowledge, and values during their term in office and this would make competitiveness in office more intense. We would be able to observe when we see parliamentarians taking special training sessions to improve their interpersonal skills so they would be as competitive as other peers in the House, or when he tries to get the attention of the House leader or Committee leader by putting himself forward in parliamentary activities that may not be his direct responsibility. These duties might include both domestic and international duties. We shall discuss about parliamentarians as diplomatic actors further on in this research.

Moving on from the individual parliamentarian, the next point to observe is the motivations for parliamentary diplomacy from the parliament itself as an institution. When we think about the nature of diplomatic practice, governments and foreign ministries would be the most prominent national bodies that perform international diplomatic missions. However, in today's globalised world there has been a series of international instruments and organisations emerging as substitute actors in the international relations process (Riordan, 2003). National parliaments are postulated as one of the alternative diplomatic actors that are also becoming more and more active. International diplomatic activities including courtesy calls, official trips and meetings with foreign parliament members abroad are all part of the parliament's 'diplomatic missions'. Some motivations for carrying out international diplomatic missions are suggested in the following sections.

*ii. Creating stable and reliable political network and counterparts* would be the expression to describe as a motivation for constant parliamentary diplomacy development. Even if not having ambassadorial postings abroad like the foreign office, there are many friendship groups between parliaments who share interest in a certain area. The interest may be on anything; political, economical, social or cultural issues. At this point, the diplomatic relations would extend beyond regional borders and parliamentary representatives are most likely to choose to build a diplomatic relationship with foreign parliaments in different continents, does not have to be within the same region. However, it is assumed here that for a beneficial connection and for security issues, parliaments tend to create and maintain diplomatic relations with equivalents that have similar political statuses. Apart from this, parliaments may find that connecting with countries that have similar cultures would also make the bond stronger. Usually this happens more progressively when parliaments are in the same region. In the long run, this would be beneficial for national interests of the country that each parliament represents. However, a thought about the above assumption would be that national parliaments are seen as weak in developing international relations (Stravidis, 2005), and that it needs to build a strong parliamentary connection to reflect its capability in foreign affairs, apart from domestic legislative duties.

Another obvious motivation for parliaments, as a political institution, that may be possibly assumed on the development of parliamentary diplomacy is *the ambition to create a notable institutional identity*. As parliaments, either unicameral or bicameral, have domestic duties in drafting legislation. For bicameral parliaments, the main domestic duty of the upper house would be to scrutinise legislative documents passed on from the lower house (Tsebelis and Money, 1997, p.53). As a result, the international duties of the upper house may not be as distinctive as that of the lower house. However, this research will raise a case study later on

focusing on the bicameral parliament system, and will base the discussion on the international duties of the parliament's upper house.

As previously mentioned, international diplomatic duties are supposedly missions of Foreign Ministries and national governments. If we examine their diplomatic duties as part of a set of institutional regulations, for the said institutions the diplomatic missions are their main responsibilities. However, for parliaments the international duties are supposedly secondary or in some places joint duties which need to be accomplished along with the domestic duties. From this, it is obvious that parliaments are constantly engaged in diplomatic duties so that they could improve the image and status of parliament as a substantive diplomatic actor. (Tickamyer, 1981, p.17). There may be a group of parliamentarians who have less or no interest in foreign affairs. This also needs to be proven from fieldwork research. Nevertheless, further research needs to be conducted in order to ascertain whether purposes and outcomes of international diplomatic duties are successful and that parliaments are indeed prospective diplomatic actors. Findings will be reported gradually later on as the research develops.

### *d. Prospects for parliamentary diplomacy*

A discussion about factors, shapings, and motivations for the procedures of parliamentary diplomacy have been emphasised in this part. The next question that would follow would be whether parliamentary diplomacy can be successful. However, there has been limited research done on parliamentary diplomacy, and some reasons were stated above. Scholars including Stravidis (2005) wrote about the dearth academic research on the question of what 'parliamentary diplomacy' actually is, what role it plays in international affairs, and what the normative implications of such a phenomenon could be for democracy, diplomacy, policy-

making, and conflict resolution. Weisglas and Boer (2007), moreover, even point that parliamentary diplomacy is in fact only in its infancy<sup>27</sup>. From several scholarly interpretations drawn together at this stage, diplomacy can be referred to the procedures of building bilateral or multilateral relations between nations by different actors. Conflict prevention and peace-keeping, accordingly, can be referred to discussions and negotiations between state representatives to maintain and stabilise any occurring conflicts, domestically or internationally, in such cases where military force may or may not be required.

As a result, most of the assumptions on factors, shapings, and motivations are analysed from various existing research materials as well as the researcher's own speculations on the interpretation of parliamentary diplomacy. It would be best to assume for now that the prospect of parliamentary diplomacy depends on whether the members of parliament see themselves as diplomatic actors, and how they apply the thought of parliamentary diplomacy into practice. This is to say that if the parliamentarians and staff understand and acknowledge the purpose of parliamentary diplomatic duties, then the outcomes would be more successful. On the other hand, if they perform diplomatic duties only to fulfil the required institutional regulations – only to get the work done on time and by duty - then the prospect of parliamentary diplomacy may not be as successful, reflecting that particular parliament as a weak diplomatic actor as it was not seen as a strong representative in the first place. The most important fact for now, as the study goes on, is to perceive parliamentary diplomacy as a means to create and expand a political identity among the actors who represent their

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<sup>27</sup> Despite having decades of existence, parliaments are relatively weak actors in the international arena when compared to governments, NGOs and businesses. See Stavridis, 2005, and Weisglas & de Boer, 2007.



institution. In the following part, I shall be moving on to discuss specifically about the Thai Senate, a case study for this research to examine whether the perception of values and identities within the sociological institutional framework enable them to be a significant diplomatic actor.

To give a brief conclusion to this chapter before moving on to discuss the Thai Senate, the series of factors, shapings, motivations raised to discuss the development of parliamentary diplomacy including geographical settings, economic relations, globalisation, culture, sociological institutionalism, logic of appropriateness, seniority and professional experience of parliamentarians, to name but some, has helped clarify my main hypothesis that the Thai Senate is a main institution in domestic legislative scrutiny, but is yet to fully develop as a prominent diplomatic actor. Part of the fact is because the duties of the institution are limited by rules stated in the Constitution. Another reason would be that the individual actors do not truly realise the importance of international diplomatic duties and how these duties would enable the Thai Senate to grow further from its current position. The research will be carried on specifically in the next part of this report where discussions will be based on the theoretical elements in chapter 1, chapter 2 and the constitutional framework on duties of the Thai Senate. Findings that will be presented in the following chapters will seek to measure the significance and purposes of the Senate's international diplomatic duties, therefore gradually clarifying the initial hypotheses on the Thai Senate as a diplomatic actor.

From a series of observations and from document consultation, we can say that the Thai Senate is considered as another possible diplomatic actor in developing parliamentary diplomacy, but before this claim is able to be confirmed as true and that the enhanced role of diplomacy in the twenty-first century can be better understood, the disparity of views in diplomatic studies must be consolidated and classified (Murray, 2008, p.22). Even though

parliamentary diplomacy seems a relatively new sub-theme in the studies of diplomacy, the attempt to define its procedures as to whether it is more relevant to international law or international politics have been discussed for decades. At this point, it may be worth to look at diplomacy and its dimensions as a consequence of the shifting global trend. Part of the speculation would be the enthusiasm in new dimensions of political studies, expansion of diplomatic routes and actors, individual attitudes towards the political system and their position within the international settings (Meisel, 1974, p.602).

### Chapter 3

#### **A Bureaucratic Model: the Thai Senate**

“Modern parliaments are assemblies representing the people who are ruled by the means of bureaucracy. It is, after all, a condition of the duration of any rule even the best organised that it should enjoy a certain measure of inner assent from at least those sections of the ruled who carry weight in society. Today parliaments are merely the means whereby this minimum of assent is made manifest.

(Max Weber, in Allen, 2004, pp .144-145)

The Thai Senate is a relevant example of a group of elite representatives whose main duties are to scrutinise legislative bills and drafts. On the thematic discussion about parliamentary diplomacy, as the title suggests, parliaments and their members are the key figures involved in the whole process of building international relations. The structure of the Thai governmental system, in particular, provides a perspective for examining intergovernmental relations through horizontal and vertical dimensions as well as behavioural outcomes as they centre on the competition for power, influence, and authority; and they generate and resolve conflicts over important group and societal values (Krannich, 1979, p.506-508).

In this chapter, the discussion will focus on the Thai Senate as a case study on a domestic political institution that has responsibilities in international diplomatic duties. The main point intended to be examined further as the discussion and research goes is whether the Thai Senate understands and applies the model of parliamentary diplomacy, judging from the purposes and outcomes of the international diplomatic duties the Senate actors take part in.

Also, the individual perceptions of the Thai Senate actors towards the significance of international diplomatic duties will be taken into consideration as a means to understand the role of a non-conventional diplomatic institution in strengthening and developing parliamentary diplomacy, which will also contribute to the encouragement of further studies in diplomacy as it is claimed that diplomacy is an understated yet important field of study within international relations. An explanation to this statement may be that diplomacy and foreign affairs are procedures and events that require “an intuitive resolution of uncertainty”, they are crucial to national interests but are not reiterative (Howe, 1968, p.39). Another speculation is that studies on diplomacy would not be directly referred to as ‘diplomacy’ but would be referred to in other dimensions or other titles. Also, most of the studies on diplomacy were originally used for conflict prevention and peace-keeping (Pin-Li, 1993, p.349-350). Therefore, studies on these fields then needs to be strategised and may require subjective or unquantifiable data, and this also should be researched later on.

*a. Historical background: semi-structured democracy, military and elite dominated*

The reason that the Thai Senate has been classified as a non-conventional political institution is because the conventional diplomatic institution is usually regarded as a nation’s Foreign Office, that is how it is acknowledged and that is how it is expected to remain. A national Foreign Office or Diplomatic Corps, either way they are addressed, is the “phantom of international politics” and a primary symbol of diplomatic culture, as its ceremonies, rituals, and rites confirm the existence of an international society which acts according to agreed upon norms and laws (Sofer, 2007, p.31). However, the general theme of this study is mainly to examine the role of the Thai Senate as a diplomatic actor, not attempting to seek evidence to prove that the Thai Senate should in fact be a more prominent diplomatic institution and therefore should replace the conventional duties of the Foreign Office

altogether. The discussions below will be about Thai political culture and the historical background on Thai politics, as this will be the grounds to which my research arguments stem from. The following arguments will focus on the fact that the diplomatic duties of the Thai Senate and the Foreign Office remain distinctive from one another, as they are two separate institutions with unique functions. However, the question whether conventional diplomats are made redundant has been raised as the changing nature of international relations have led to the shift of conventional diplomatic practice, as they are long standing calls from states for modernity, relevance, and joined-up representation (Black, 2010, p.248). At one point, however, information may have to be gathered from Foreign Office representatives to measure the argument on the Thai Senate's diplomatic values.

As mentioned earlier, parliamentary diplomacy is still regarded as a developing evolution from traditional diplomacy. The nature of its practices and its actors are yet to be strengthened for the term to be distinguished as a notable method of diplomatic practice. Most importantly, the development of parliamentary diplomacy should also stand on the original ground of the desire to introduce democratic procedures in the field of international politics, as expressed by former United Nations' Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld (Bailey, 1962, p.310). For the time being, my further arguments on the Thai Senate and related issues towards the nature and duties of the Thai Senate will be based on my interpretation of parliamentary diplomacy that it is another branch of representation, communication, and a lesser form of negotiation. The reason I interpret parliamentary diplomacy as a 'lesser' form of negotiation fits with the nature of the informal diplomatic discussions of most parliamentary institutions. Also, formal procedures of negotiation would involve sequential changes of offers, changes of state of environment, and opponent's responses (Kersten, Michalowski, Szpakowicz, Koperczak, 1991, p.1270). For this country-

specific study, the important actors would include parliamentarians and parliamentary working staff from the Thai Senate, who are political civil servants and permanent civil servants respectively (see figures 1 and 2). The difference between these two categories of political membership is that in Thailand, political civil servants are temporary. They have a fixed number of years in office which then expires and they would have to reapply if they wish to continue their terms depending on the regulations of their position. For the current constitutional acts on senators, they are not allowed to take consecutive terms in office (Secretariat of the Senate handbook, 2008). It has been debated, however, that governments adopt a “platonic guardianship” in an open move toward technocratic elitism as a mode of transnational governance development. This approach on platonic guardianship socialise them to believe that deeply political trade-offs are value-neutral choices based on “objective” expertise<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, most legislators do not worry much about the tension between public opinion in their districts and their personal ideology, as a legislator’s personal ideology does not stand at one pole and constituency preferences or political environment at the other (Uslaner, 2000, p.52).

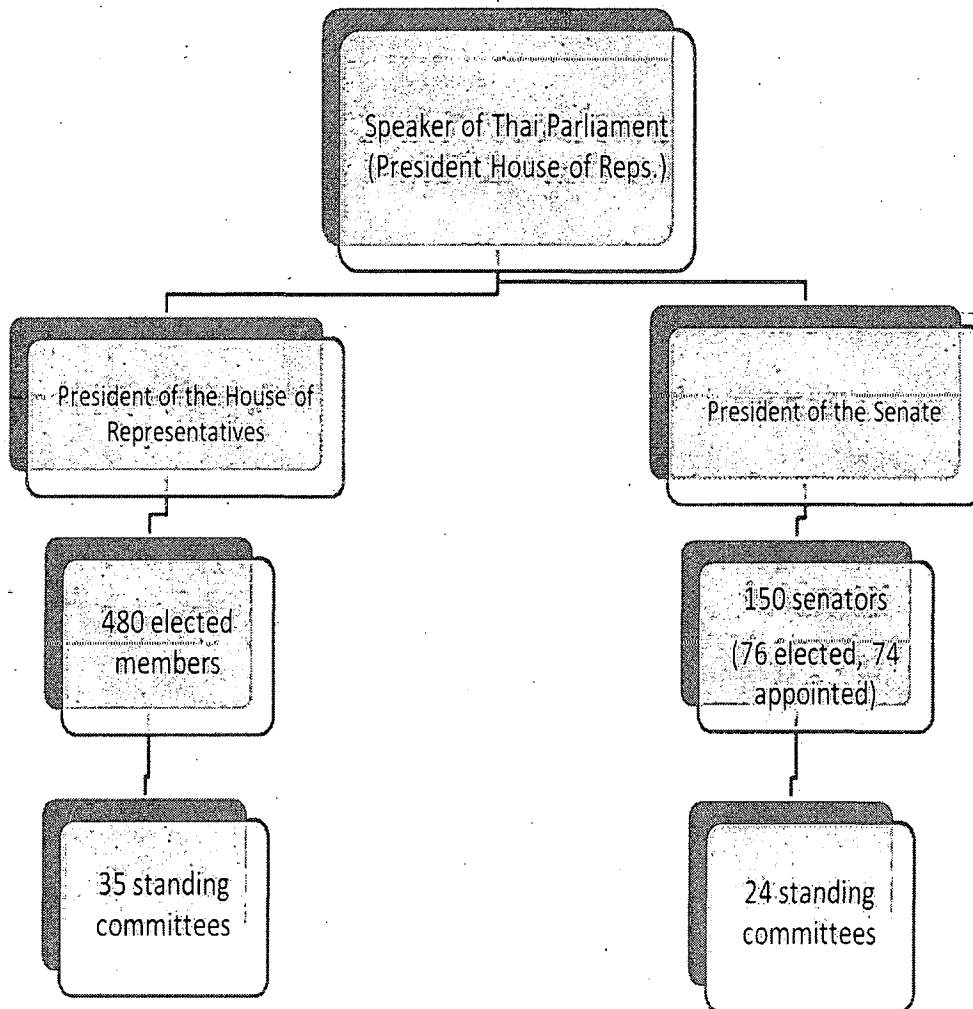
The main lesson learnt from the functioning of the Thai Senate, again, is that the actors needs to develop their own solid policy on international diplomatic affairs, for the benefits of the institutional proficiency in the future. The major hindrance to self-improvement of senators’ understanding and skills as diplomatic actors is the impact of the patron-client relationship in the Thai bureaucratic system - contrast to the reality that they are expected to contribute their knowledge and experiences to their political duties. The country's politics and bureaucracy remain trapped in an archaic culture of hierarchy, patronage, highly centralised power, and

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<sup>28</sup> See Slaughter, 2004, p.219. To allow them to escape politics is to allow these officials to come together off-shore, free from the usual mandated intrusions of public representatives and private interest groups in their decision-making process.

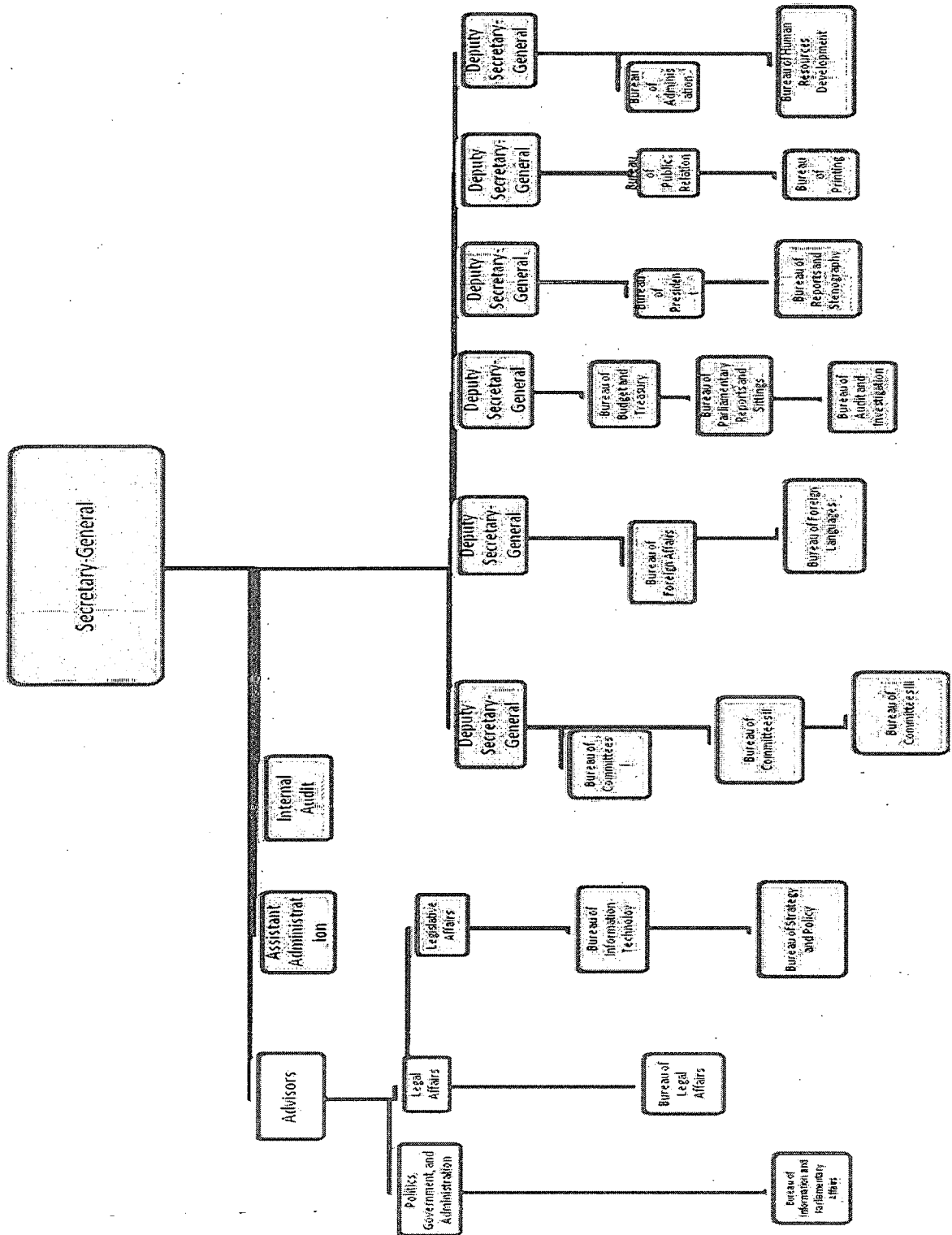
social conflict is growing. Parties freely contest elections but huge numbers of votes are bought. Citizens have little political participation outside elections despite enjoying extensive personal liberties (Eng, 1997, p.169).

**Figure 1: Structure of the Thai Parliament**



**Source:** Bureau of Policy and Strategy, Secretariat of the Senate, Bangkok, Thailand (updated December 2012).

**Figure 2: Structure of the Secretariat of the Senate**



**Source:** Bureau of Policy and Strategy, Secretariat of the Senate, Bangkok, Thailand (updated December 2012).



Permanent civil servants, on the other hand, have life-long tenure in their positions until the official retirement at the age of 60, or until other circumstances force them to resign earlier. From the professional distinction between the senators and the staff, this raises a speculation that senators should in fact be referred to as 'contemporary' diplomatic actors, while they hold their term in parliament. If they chose to pursue a career in diplomacy later on after their senatorship, then we could refer to them as 'permanent' diplomatic actors. However, the extent to which politicians pursue other occupational affiliations they have prior to or simultaneously with involvement in politics depends on time, interest, and necessity (Tickamyer, 1981, p.19). The senate staff, however, are likely to be viewed as more prominent diplomatic actors, due to their longer period in office and a more repetitive routine of work preparation and maintaining diplomatic correspondence. Their 'more prominent' diplomatic role might change in time if they are transferred to another department or establishment that is not so much involved in international diplomatic duties. Therefore, further on in individual roles and duties of the parliamentary actors I will be asserting that *the position and statuses of these actors have impact on their perceptions towards their diplomatic duties.*

As Reischauer, Director of the United States Congressional Budget Office stated as follows:

“Parliament could use a larger and more capable staff. Governance is not a matter for amateurs any more, and politicians have a lot of other demands on their time and a limited amount of expertise and providing them with capable staff can only help the overall progress that countries are being made, by and large in parliament systems, the parliament has been starved of capable staff”.

(Hennessy and Smith, 1992, p.10).

From this quote, it is clear that parliamentary staff form part of a smooth and successful functioning of parliament. In certain situations, depending on the purpose of the diplomatic mission, factors to consider regarding parliamentary staff would be more on their experiences and competencies, rather than the number of staff assigned to facilitate the parliamentarians. In either way, parliamentary staff need to acquire general skills and knowledge to assist parliamentarians.

Moreover, another point which needs to be stressed about in this part is that Thai politics has a distinctive feature in terms of being shaped by domestic political outbreaks and worldly influences, resulting in a unique political culture that is reflected through the international diplomatic customs from any Thai political institution. All national governments have been affected virtually by global interdependence, stimulating them to think more about paths and procedures of international relations and paths of diplomacy (Talbot, 1997, p.75). The Thai Senate is a domestic political institution comprised of elected and appointed representatives as well as the permanent civil servants who are based within the Secretariat. In this part of the research, several issues will be raised to give a brief understanding of Thai political culture and a clarification of Asian political and parliamentary cultures in general. This would be a focal background in developing my arguments on the Thai Senate as a diplomatic actor.

The international diplomatic missions of the Thai Senate might be able to clarify a point that parliaments, as well as other institutions who are partly international representatives, tend to keep contact and linkages with particular countries. This is because states promote their political and economic interests through diplomatic representation to coordinate, negotiate, and solve problems by gathering information that is not otherwise publicly available. Thus, sharing a particular view of the world generates a sense of ideological affinity and sense of

belonging to the same group (Neumayer, 2008, p.228-231). Also, further study would need to examine whether the Thai Senate has regular contacts with parliaments of any particular country, as this could be considered as a form of linkage diplomacy where the initiator country seeks the cooperation of the other state and communicates through techniques of influence, making threats or promises in areas over which it has little control (Pin-Li, 1993, p.349).

The main reason that the arguments are based on the Thai Senate is because this particular institution is considered as another emerging diplomatic actor within the scope of diplomatic practice, apart from the traditional diplomatic actor being civil servants from the Foreign Ministry. As mentioned before in the theoretical part, globalisation has created and unfolded new identities and part of that was the emergence of new diplomatic actors (Hogan, 2004, p.1). At this point, I do not wish to make a distinctive comparison between the purposes and outcomes of the international duties of the Foreign Ministry and the Thai Senate as the international duties of the Ministry are their main responsibilities whilst that of the Senate, so far that I have acknowledged, are secondary responsibilities. Whether the senators consider the international diplomatic duties as important as their domestic duties is a matter that would be clarified during conduction of fieldwork.

However, national and international circumstances nowadays have encouraged Thai Senate actors to give more priority to the international duties. The effective exercise of influence is related increasingly to forging partnerships, managing networks, and shaping opinions (Copeland, 2009, p.146). Therefore, if a comparison between the two institutions were to be made it would be more likely to focus upon the basis of the Foreign Ministry being a

traditional diplomatic actor and the Thai Senate being an emerging, in other words a “new” diplomatic actor.

*i. Thai politics: a background*

When we talk about politics and international relations, the thought that comes up to mind would associate political and institutional structures with the citizens of a country. Every person, not only political leaders, whoever they are and whatever their role is in the society is expected to be a representative of a common national culture that shapes a nation’s character (Pye, 1991, p.501). Political systems encompass attitudes and values which pertain to its political system. Certain attitudes are also fostered in their citizens and, therefore, demarcates the boundaries within which governments can legitimate act. These provide an invisible, overarching bond of values, ideologies, customs, traditions, symbols, myths, and beliefs which unifies its citizens (Jackson and Jackson, 1993, p.84-85).

However, it is important to note that culture can imply a diverse branch of implications. If speaking about people, then culture would signify the mass culture and the elite culture, particularly in Asia. Asian governments have had the opportunity and obligation to learn from older democracies in the West, therefore democracy in Asia has encouraged their own greater self-reliance while respecting cultural values (Dae Jung, 2002, p.272). Further explanation on the Asian model of parliaments, apart from the adoption of the Western legislative system, in this case I have raised an example of the South Korean parliament where the dominant modern strand of the Confucian moral tradition rejects the underlying ethos of democratic institutions such as separation of powers and checks and balances as the

innate goodness of human nature are instead assumed<sup>29</sup> (Park & Shin, 2006, p.353). However, the Thai parliament cannot be compared to the other far Asian parliaments as the adoption of Confucianism is not as prominent. But then again, this point on spiritual morality and the perception on democracy can still be argued as a cultural impact of personal beliefs on the collective performance and competency of the political actors..

*ii. Asian parliamentary culture: models of new democracy?*

The parliament of Thailand has its own distinctive characteristics, as could be claimed with any other national parliament from a developing country. While the bicameral Westminster-style model has been adopted, the functioning system heavily reflects a common Asian style which is instilled with Asian values of courtesy, tolerance, and a struggle of autonomy of the only regional country to avoid total Western colonisation. The issue on Asian parliamentary culture, accordingly, has been brought up here to look at other Asian parliamentary models in terms of measuring the suitability of democracy and the preference for democracy - how it will fit into the political culture of that Asian country. This will also reflect how other Asian parliaments reflect their political attitudes and represent development of new democracy<sup>30</sup>. Apart from the subservient characteristics of parliamentarians to party lines and the leadership of the political party having a majority in the lower house and partly due to the socio-economic conditions of the country, parliament needs to maintain the momentum for consolidation of democracy in the country – live up to constitutional expectations by playing a key role in the process of democratisation and modernisation (Subedi, 1998, p.163).

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<sup>29</sup> According to Far-Eastern tradition, both pro-democratic and anti-authoritarian orientations are negatively related to each of the two broad dimensions – social and political – of Asian values. See Park & Shin, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> In 2002, the East Asia Barometer (EAB) conducted national random-sample surveys in five new democracies (Mongolia, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand), one old democracy (Japan), one quasi-democracy (Hong Kong), and one authoritarian system (China). Public satisfaction with the regime among these eight political systems is surprisingly highest in authoritarian China, lowest in democratic Japan and Taiwan, and fragile in the other new democracies. See Chu, Diamond, Nathan & Shin, 2009.

An identifiable “Asian model” of democracy can be characterised by centrist political competition, nascent two party systems, aggregative electoral politics, and the impact of institutional reforms to elections via deliberate political engineering<sup>31</sup> (Reilly, 2002, p.1351). Models of other Asian parliaments including South Korea, Phillipines, and Japan are raised here to give a general view on the system of political representativeness in the region. Party systems in South Korea and Thailand, compared to other Asian countries, are characterised by unstable party organisations, high vitality, and weak roots in the society. In Japan’s political and democratic history, for instance, the period has been divided into democracy under military occupation, democracy during state developmentalism, and democracy in an era of globalisation respectively<sup>32</sup> (Inoguchi, 2008, pp.118-120). However, institutionalised systems of political parties have strong organisational roots among their respective electorates and are well linked with society (Croissant and Vogel, 2010, pp.241-246). So to speak, the background of other Asian countries’ political background also reflects the representation of their parliamentary incumbency.

*b. On representative democracy*

Modern democracies have to cope with the structural conditions of modern rule to fulfill various functions, both internally in terms of complex societies and externally in terms of a challenging environment, therefore they are complex institutional structures (Merkel, 2004, p.36). Parliamentarians are representatives of the people. Even though they come from appointment or election, they are expected to contribute their skills and knowledge to building a competent political institution and promoting democracy in the society.

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<sup>31</sup> Political engineering is defined as the conscious design of political institutions to achieve certain specific objectives. Some institutions of government can be purposively engineered so as to reward particular types of behaviour and thus achieve particular outcomes. See Reilly, 2002.

<sup>32</sup> In the 2nd phase, Japanese politics was heavily bureaucratic-driven by government. In the 3rd phase, globalisation ignores national borders, it divides national economies, and it facilitates the merger of the highly competitive.

Democratisation broadens the scope of the agenda of institutions, creating a deeper basis for regional socialisation and allowing these institutions to address issues such as human rights promotion beginning from a regional sphere (Acharya, 2003, p.377). The discussion in this part aims to examine dynamics of parliamentarians – particularly in the case of the Thai Senate – as elite representatives of the people, how it reflects the relationship between the politicians and the citizens.

G.S. Pathak, Chairman of the Rajya Sabha (Senate), India has given a description on Parliamentary democracy as follows;

“Parliament is in touch with the day-to-day life of the entire nation and is the centre of the net-work of political opinion from all quarters. It is the mirror of public opinion. Parliament controls the purse of the nation; it has an impact on the policies of the government and where foreign policy is concerned it affects relations with foreign countries also. It is truly said that a democratic political system will always seek, in the long run, to become a democratic society. It is the medium for achieving social and economic objectives through constitutional methods” (Pathak 1971, p.5-6).

The Thai Senate, consequently, might be domestically generalised as a representative institution of the elite considering its members and their professional backgrounds. Therefore, the study of elite political culture would be another focal point to discuss in order to help clarify the nature of Thai senators and might constitute to their perceptions towards both their domestic and international duties. A group of people when formed together may encompass not only their preferred form of external boundaries and social organisation, but a group

identity that includes their idea of time, imagined and shared history, language, even conflict resolution mechanisms (Verwiej, Oros, and Jacquin-Berdal, 1998, p.5).

Thai politics has its own distinctive characteristics. For this research, the background on the nature of Thai politics should also be discussed in order to understand the structure and functioning of a Thai political institution. As a result, I shall be giving a description about the nature of Thai politics and the impact it has on domestic political institutions and its actors. Ever since adopting the system of becoming a democratic Constitutional Monarchy back in 1932, all Thai citizens know that the patronage way of governance still dominates the society until today. A straightforward description on the nature of Thai politics was stated as followed; "Thailand is going nowhere because the military and politicians are greedy for power, and the citizens are stupid" (Laothammatas, 1995, p.4). Supposedly the Thai parliament, in general, has adopted the Westminster system and has formed the current model of parliament in 1932 after the country transferred from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy. After the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932, a struggle to control the institutions of the monarchy began almost immediately (Ockey, 2005, p.118). Focusing on the Thai Senate, it needs to be pointed out here that particular historical facts about Thai politics have played a crucial role in shaping the structure and status of Thai political image and identity. This is an undeniable shadow that has followed the development of Thai political culture throughout the decades. Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that has never been colonised during the Western colonisation period in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the country does not have a direct Western influence and seeing this from a long run, Thailand has thus struggled to create and maintain her own social, cultural and political identity. During certain periods, the country went through a stage of economic prosperity



before the burst of the Asian crisis. However, until present Thailand has been struggling to handle its domestic political stability and democracy when there is conflict.

The political system of Thailand has only transformed from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy in 1932. Referring to the previous point, Thailand was never colonised but members of the Transformation Group - Kana Radsa; "the people's group" - were mostly educated abroad; in the United Kingdom or France, reading Law or Politics. This has undoubtedly influenced their political beliefs and therefore led to the idea of revolution. They then went on to transform the governing system of the country, adopting their knowledge to suit the local values and norms, rather than becoming under convention of a Western nation. The King remains the highest state power, but has limited political powers. Moreover, the rapid modernisation since the mid-1900s had introduced an active civil society and a vigorous middle class, even the newest constitution describes Thailand as a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy and unitary administration (Dressel, 2010, p.447). The shifting of the traditional norms of bureaucracy has made a government official no longer a 'boss' or a 'master' in the eyes of modern educated Thai people, but a public servant even though in provincial or rural areas many government officials still act like 'masters' (Dressel, 2010). The Prime Minister is leader of the Cabinet and governs under the current Thai Constitution, version 2007. Another fact on the Thai Constitution is that it has constantly been revised every few years, and this point will be elaborated as the arguments develop later on in the research.

Remaining on the historical part of the argument, the next point I wish to elaborate in order to clarify my arguments is the realisation of political legitimacy, developing from the relations between the political and social outbreaks in Thailand and its impact on political institutional

actors. The event I will be raising here is the Asian Crisis in 1997. An interesting fact is that not only did the financial bubble burst in 1997, but also it is the year when Thailand had its then new Constitution inaugurated as a following consequence from the economic crisis<sup>33</sup>. Cross-regional thresholds on party formation were designed to reduce party fragmentation and restructure the political system in Thailand's ambitious 1997 constitutional reforms (Reilly, 2006, p.817). Nonetheless, underlying problems for Constitutional reform in 1997 that were discussed among academics, lawyers, politicians included lack of government transparency, electoral fraud, lack of legal measures to prevent corruption, and inefficiency of political and legal process in punishing corrupt politicians (Uwanno & Burns, 2011, p.1). These problems were seen as major faults for the country's economic and political instability. Therefore, the following discussions will be on the background of this particular period in Thai politics and I will then seek to explain the relevance of the Asian Crisis, the 1997 Constitution, and the influence it has on the perceptions of the Thai Senators currently in office.

An observation is that the Asian Crisis has had a crucial impact not only on key economic and political actors but also on a wider group of Thai people from different professions as a whole in terms of their reactions and further plans. The financial crisis in Thailand and other Asian countries including Indonesia, Malaysia, and South Korea not only highlighted nepotism, cronyism and corruption problems but also urged the need for more transparency and accountability in government (Quah, 1999, p.483). Moreover, the Asian crisis has led to the questioning of political legitimacy and the level of effectiveness of government authority (Alagappa, 1995, p.2). Speaking about the Thai Senate, the current Thai senators have undoubtedly experienced through the financial crisis period as any other Thai citizen, as they

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<sup>33</sup> In Thai political history, the Constitution has been frequently revised and inaugurated since 1932 when the political system changed from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy. Up to now, 17 Charters and Constitutions have been revised.

are from various professional backgrounds so during that time they might have been businessmen, academics, or legal officials. Moreover, the drafting of the 1997 Constitution in that same year – known as “the People’s Constitution”- also had a major impact on political actors in all sections of government<sup>34</sup>. The new constitution by then, as it is suggested, was poised to make far-reaching reforms in the quality of the country’s democratic system by strengthening political parties, consolidating a strong check-and-balance system, and upholding social, political, economic rights. However, the former Premier Thaksin Shinawatra’s monopolisation of power resulted in the party list elected Senate ending up functioning as the second arm of the Thai Rak Thai party rather than as a check on parliament (Kuhonta, 2008, p.374).

The most important limitation on the effectiveness of the new Constitution, nonetheless, is the nature of the Thai political culture itself. It remains to be seen whether this change in the law can alter the historical reliance of Thais on patron-client relationships within their political culture. It is unlikely that rural peoples in particular areas will change their behaviour and no longer vote for their patrons. Beyond the culture itself, is the issue of good governance among corporations. Drawing in my previous arguments on diplomatic theory, diplomacy has enabled Thailand to manage its foreign affairs flexibly and become adaptive to shifts in international currents or intrusions of major foreign powers. In the region, Thailand has almost always aligned itself with the dominant power; in this case Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, in its efforts to ensure security, increase trade, and preserve national independence (Shinn, 1989, p.214). Part of the reason is because these countries, including Thailand, were the fore founders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Details will be

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<sup>34</sup> The 1997 “People’s” Constitution’s concern with political stability ironically facilitated the consolidation of electoral authoritarianism. This period of electoral authoritarianism, coupled with charges of corruption, in turn generated a response by the military.

discussed later on in chapter 5 on the Thai-Cambodian border conflict and ASEAN specifically. An issue on the conflict in the 3 Southernmost provinces of Thailand will also be added to clarify the discussion on civil rights and democracy. The constant clashes in villages and neighbourhoods stem from the inequality of living, religious disputes as seen by citizens from other parts of the country. The population are separated into 2 large groups; the peaceful and the violent. There is a large Muslim population in the Southern part of Thailand, as it is near the Thai-Malaysian border.

*i. The Thai Senate: a typical reflection of bureaucracy*

Following on from the recent discussion on new democracies and an 'Asian' parliamentary system, it is worth examining the role bureaucracy plays in the functioning of national legislative institutions. According to Weber, the general process of rationalisation can be used to explain the development of a bureaucratic organisation which distinguishes modern society and centres on shaping the apparatuses and functional means ruling social life (Senigaglia, 2011, p.54). Structures of most national parliaments worldwide reflect the bureaucratic system of their countries. In the case of East Asia, a debate has arisen over the political and institutional foundations of rapid growth, basing it on the fact of authoritarian, centralised, and insulated nature of political institutions (Cheng, Haggard, Keng, 1998, p.88). As in the case of Southeast Asia, both politicians and citizens in some cases have been calling for greater bureaucratic accountability in a variety of country settings. These settings range from rudimentary bureaucracies, one-party states to emerging democracies and countries with capabilities. The rhetorical emphasis of such reforms, however, is often similar with calls to promote positive behaviours, increase the transparency of decision-making, and constrain corrupt civil servant behaviour (Fritzen, 2007. p.1435).

The constant revision of the Thai Constitution has been raised as one of the main factors that has set a strict framework to the senators' authority in decision-making. Throughout the recent political history since the regime transformation to Constitutional Monarchy in 1932, there has been a total of 18 written constitutions. Up until the present version of the Constitution, the limitation of the senators' authority have had impact on their domestic and foreign duties. Recent public statements on an urge to revise the current version of the Constitution – inaugurated in 2007 – has been put forth. A statement from a senator from the Committee on Tourism has given a public statement that elected senators share similar opinions for the Constitution to be revised, particularly on the act stating that elected senators are not allowed to take consecutive terms in parliament (Section 117).

About 40% of people believed the government's latest attempt to rewrite the constitution would deepen the political rift in the country, but only 34% gave it full support, Nida Poll of the National Institute of Development Administration (Nida) reported on Monday. The pollsters surveyed 1,255 people of all education levels and occupations nationwide on Dec 7-8, seeking their opinions on the government's plan to amend the charter. Nida reported 60.40% of respondents said they knew about the government's intention, while 39.60% said they were unaware of it; 90.63% had no idea which articles are going to be changed; 4.75% knew that the charter changes will touch on Articles 68, 117, 190, 237, 291 and 309; and only 4.63% believed that it is aimed to facilitate political amnesty.

When asked who they think would benefit, 29.64% of the respondents were unsure, 20.16% pointed to politicians, 16.18% believed the people and 1.75% said both, according to the pollsters. Questioned whether they support it, 39.84% said no, believing that it may further

divide the nation and would only help politicians, 34.10% pledged their support, thinking that it will bring national reconciliation, and 26.06% were unsure.

Thanavath Phonvichai, University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce vice-president for research, said the country's economy would not be at risk from the constitutional amendment process if there is no prolonged political rally that could affect the confidence of investors and the tourism industry. Mr Thanavath said it is still too soon to determine what type of impact the charter amendment will have on the Thai economy<sup>35</sup>.

Furthermore, a critique from Dr. Theerayut Boonme<sup>36</sup> asserted that another revision of the Constitution would not do any drastic change to the country. Reasons for this claim are because of the 'non-existence' of democracy in the Thai society from the very beginning since the inauguration of the first Constitution. According to Dr. Theerayut, parliament has full authority to propose a constitutional amendment, therefore members of parliament should remain professional and not seek to amend the Constitution in order to suit the wrong person<sup>37</sup>. The most important fact the Constitution Drafting committee should bear in mind is the equality of the acts applied to the citizens from every level of the society under a democratic order, whether or not the Constitution will be partially or fully revised and rewritten in the near future.

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<sup>35</sup> Published: 10/12/2012 at 11:59am.

Source: Bangkok Post online news: Politics

URL: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/325449/poll-most-against-charter-change>

(retrieved 10/12/2012)

<sup>36</sup> Source: Thairath Online, 8/12/2012, 1.30am.

URL: <http://www.thairath.co.th/content/pol/311702>

(retrieved 11/12/2012)

<sup>37</sup> Referring to the former PM Thaksin Shinawatra, who is currently abroad and on criminal charges. He has strong supporters in every sector of the society; parliament and certain regions in Thailand.

We now move on to discuss about the case study for this research; the Thai Senate. It has been pointed out that the nature of Thai politics has always been the major influential background on the performance and output of the Thai parliament. Also, it is claimed that the Thai Senate affects the nature and quality of diplomacy. The uncertainty and continuously shifting social and political events in Thailand have had a certain amount of impact on political representatives, shaping their behaviour and values. During the past decade, government after government relied on the strong and competent bureaucrats and technocrats to formulate and carry out public policy and administration, therefore providing a higher degree of policy stability and continuity despite frequent changes of government due to coups d'état or elections (Pupphavesa, 2002, p.20). In the following parts the discussion will focus on two groups of the institutional actors – the senators and the secretariat of the senate staff. Both actors form an important part of a bicameral parliament, therefore their duties and relations will be discussed and how domestic legislative scrutiny strengthens the images of senators as capable professionals and politicians.

### *Senators*

In Thailand, the Senate is viewed as a conventional, elite, and prestigious political body. The Senate (Upper House) is part of the bicameral Thai parliament and is comprised of 150 members with a 6-year office term<sup>38</sup>. The senators in office at present were appointed in 2008. Most members were appointed from various professional sectors; agriculture, business, legal, academic, and others, according to their respectable backgrounds. As intensive professional experience and seniority is required, the minimum age requirement for a Senate candidate

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<sup>38</sup> The number of senators appointed to office can vary according to the version of the Thai Constitution. However, the term remains 6 years. This information is based on the 2007 Constitution.

must be 35 years or more<sup>39</sup>. If one chooses to leave office, another suitable candidate will be appointed in place. The 2007 constitution stated the qualifications of a senator as follows;

“Section 117, the term of membership of senators is six years as from the date of election or the date of the Election Commission published the result of the selection, as the case may be, and no senator shall consecutively hold office more than one term. Senators retiring at the expiration of the term shall remain in office to perform their duties until new senators are obtained.

Section 118, upon expiration of term of senators from election, the King will issue a Royal Decree calling for a new general election of senators in which the election date must be fixed within thirty days as from the date of the expiration of membership of senators from election and the election date must be the same throughout the Kingdom.

(Kitisin, 2008, p.67)

The main duties of the Senators are to scrutinise legislation being passed forward from the House of Representatives (Lower House). In other words, we could say that they are required to watch over and double-check the duties and progress of the Lower House. This is stated in the Thai Constitution, and this is in fact similar to responsibilities of other upper houses in bicameral parliaments around the world (Banjo, 2009, p.61). The characteristics of Thai senators, once they enter politics, can also be heavily shaped by seniority, institutional norms and regulations, and political beliefs and values. Relevant in this context is that Thai society is becoming “polarised” between two groups characterised variously as “pro-military” vs

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<sup>39</sup> Chapter 6, Section 122, Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2550 / A.D. 2007.



“pro-democracy”, “conservatives” vs “reformists”, and “traditional military/bureaucratic power holders” vs “the new business-based power-seekers” <sup>40</sup>(Ockey, 1996, p.346). The patron-client structure of the Senate not only runs among the senators and the public, but also between senators themselves during their term in parliament. As most of the senators are senior military officials, the nature of the patron-client relationship model is inevitably reflected on senators from other professional backgrounds. Considering this particular relationship model on the Senate’s diplomatic efforts, furthermore, there has not been a vast impact on the building of diplomatic relations with other parliamentary peers. However, the composition of senators from military backgrounds is more to do with domestic governance as military officials, whatever political position they hold, would have an extent of influence on the moulding of social mobility and democratic prospects. These political values on patron-client relations are inevitably reflected through all institutions in Thailand. Speaking about the impact of age difference and the senators’ performance in office domestically and internationally, a description to support this statement is stated as follows:

“Senators who are official retirees of 60 years or more can usually provide good advice on performance for younger senators. Therefore, they are regarded as senior advisors. Senators who are between 45-50 years of age have better understanding of the managerial structures including benefits, policy outlines, and passing policy laws. Senators aged 40-44 would be those who know details of legal acts and are better in problem-solving”.

(Sotanasathien, 2005, p. 212 )

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<sup>40</sup> The definition of these terms; pro-military vs pro-democracy, conservatives vs reformists, and traditional military/bureaucratic power holders vs the new business based power seekers all share a similar definition. The former terms refer to the conservative military-dominant governing system, which is seen as autocratic. The latter terms, on the other hand, refer to a more democratic approach where citizens have more authority in national governance.

Apart from their domestic responsibilities of legislative scrutiny, senators also have the international component of their duties. Most national institutions nowadays have their own international department to deal with their foreign affairs. Yet, official correspondence would have to be forwarded through the conventional Foreign Office diplomatic route. These international duties include corresponding with foreign representatives in Thailand, usually Ambassadors or other international representatives who may want to call on the Senate President on a particular matter, and travelling abroad on official diplomatic missions. Also, they would do it the other way round which is receiving official delegates from other national parliaments as guests of the Thai Senate (ethnographic observation, August 2007-July 2009). Building relations with foreign counterparts means that there is a lot of continuous communication going on, and it is expected that senators need at least to be able to communicate reasonably well in English. There are senators who are not able to speak the language, but have secured a place in office due to their advanced professional experience and strong political connections. There are also some senators who can speak English, but would rather remain passive until a discussion is brought up or until it is the appropriate 'time' to express an opinion. During courtesy calls or short meetings, the discussion would usually vary from 15-30 minutes, depending on the individual knowledge on the subject and level of engagement of senators in the discussion. However, not every senator can be spontaneous during courtesy calls or official meetings, as their educational backgrounds vary considerably. They are usually provided with briefing scripts about the topic that will be discussed, or sometimes scripts of short speeches they need to say. This usually happens when senators do not have previous knowledge about that certain topic. Bureaucracy also plays an important part in shaping the functioning of such procedures. I will discuss this issue about the overlapping of the duties and the knowledge and values of senators further in chapter 4.

Moreover, another interesting observation on the nature of the senators' performance in diplomatic duties is that the overall activities are mostly associated with ceremonial proceedings in traditional diplomacy; protocol, representations, visits (Barston, 2006). Historically, the main ceremonial figure would be the Ambassador, but now more distinguished persons are replacing the traditional model. The argument here is to support that senators are indeed substantive diplomatic actors, and can therefore continue to develop their skills and knowledge on parliamentary diplomacy even after they finish their term in office. Another question rises on the extent of perception. A discussion on political entrepreneurship – whether parliamentary diplomatic duties would lead the senator's career path further down the diplomatic road - will be added in the next part to give an idea of the professional prospects of the senators after they finish senatorship.

Before moving on to the next point on the temporary establishment of the National Legislative Assembly, a discussion on the potential cost of the Senate being a diplomatic actor will be included here. In the methodological limitations for this research, official documents from 10 years and further back are usually destroyed. However, a Foreign Affairs committee report – categorised as 'most confidential', recorded around 12 years ago – was a summary of a foreign diplomatic visit to Myanmar. The underlying reason for the discussion, and a dispute which occurred later on, was about the problems of democracy in Myanmar, the military junta and the house arrest of then opposition party leader Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi.

*ii. Turning point: The National Legislative Assembly*

The National Legislative Assembly was designated to act as members of parliament, both the House of Representatives and the Senate, on 24 October 2006 according to the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (Interim edition) B.E. 2549 (2006)<sup>41</sup>. The temporary appointment of the National Legislative Assembly, from a general point of view, is considered as a bridge to keep the government functioning after a military coup to oust the former Prime Minister and cabinet a month earlier on 19 September 2006. Information on the appointment and functioning of the National Legislative Assembly has been given here in order to provide an understanding of the constant change in Thai politics. It is also obvious that the interim constitution was promulgated only to be applied for the temporary period while the NLA members held position. Afterwards, the 2007 Constitution was promulgated and a new cabinet was approved for parliament<sup>42</sup>. In the following chapter, I will then discuss in detail on the impact of the National Legislative Assembly on the institutional performance of the Thai parliament when members of the House of Representatives and members of the Senate were officially elected and appointed to office. As this research is specified on parliamentary diplomacy and whereby the international diplomatic duties of the Senate are focused upon, the discussion will be based on numbers and figures from summary reports on the President of the Senate's diplomatic duties abroad.

Party politics, moreover, plays an important part in reflecting the performance of political actors under their affiliation. The individual and collective performance of senators reflect a connection and contribution to the political party they hold membership<sup>43</sup>. It is evident that a party majority can determine an effective success of legislation as some members would use

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<sup>41</sup> See the Summary of Foreign Diplomatic Duties, National Legislative Assembly B.E.2006-2008.

<sup>42</sup> The National Legislative Assembly during the period of late 2006 to early 2008 not only act as an interim government, but also to keep the check and balance of the country's politics during this transitory period.

<sup>43</sup> The two dominant parties in the Thai parliament are the Democrats and the Puer-Thai ("For Thailand") Party. The latter was originally known as Thai Rak Thai ("Thai loves Thai") party.

their own legislative skills or take advantage of the political context to move legislation from one stage to next (Hasecke and Mycoffe, 2007, p.607). Further on in this part, a discussion on electoral competitiveness will be added to give a general understanding on the formation of parliament – the Senate to be precise – and how the background of each senator constitutes to their performance, choice of committee membership, and role within the committee<sup>44</sup>. Social group identities on attitudes and voting decisions differ in a variety of political contexts. In Western democracy, in the event that a particular social group is not a relevant political cleavage characterised by unique voting patterns, the relationship between social structure and support for political parties for voting is often attributed to a lack of attitudinal differences between that group and other relevant social groups (Andersen and Heath, 2003, p.301). On the parliamentary level, there has been less attention to what is left of parliament's plenary identity including the power of decision-making after authority from cabinet has been delegated to ministers (Shaw, 1998, p.226).

At this stage, it would also be worth discussing further the motivations for the senators' performance and decision-making in office. As stated earlier, there are two key actors of the Thai Senate that I will be talking about; one is the parliamentarian and the other is the parliamentary administrative staff. From my investigation, the working nature within the parliament is that the staff are the most prominent individuals who put together the diplomatic procedures and the parliamentarians carry out these procedures which are already prepared for them. Therefore, my assumption at this stage would be that the staff are very important actors in the shaping of the institution as well as the development of parliamentary

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<sup>44</sup> The senators positions within each standing committee would include chairperson, vice-chairperson, committee secretary, and committee member. Senators are able to hold multiple membership in the standing committees.

diplomacy<sup>45</sup>. The parliamentarians, although elected, are nevertheless dependent upon the staff in carrying out the diplomatic missions to fulfil their part in international duties. Unless parliamentarians were able to be responsible for the whole preparation and planning of the trip, this assumption could not be different. Again this thought would take us back to think about the actor's perception on the institutional regulations and how he has chosen to pursue his duties as member of the institution. Whether my claims are proven wrong, we shall discuss further about it in the findings from the interviews.

The argument on the Thai Senate as a model of parliamentary diplomacy would be that by image the Senate is an active diplomatic actor and is well-known within the circle of parliamentary relations as having professional and experienced members. This is to say that the Senate is a model of a *globalised* institution that constantly keeps itself up-to-date with current worldly issues and maintains constant diplomatic connections with other national parliaments. However, consequences of these actions would be the main point that makes the Senate a relatively weak diplomatic actor, as most foreign missions rarely conclude in formal agreements or a resolution of a problem. This may sound quite diplomatic in itself as it is not justifying whether the Senate is a good or bad diplomatic model, but this is an attempt to point out different perceptions about the nature of the Senate's diplomatic duties. To conclude, foreign missions are seen as an opportunity for the senators and staff to expand their personal experience, rather than stimulate their political values. Also, from the argument above, it can be justified that senators are sub-actors in the international arena. Their international duties do not provide an outstanding national benefit.

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<sup>45</sup> Assumptions are based on the frequency and repetition of the Secretariat staffs' duties in assisting and facilitating senators. However, the thorough understanding of the international diplomatic duties in detail is yet another point that needs to be analysed from relevant data. Any findings will be presented in the next chapter.

Another distinction between the senators and secretariat staff, Foreign Office Ambassadors and ministry staff can also justify the outcomes of international diplomatic duties. Conventional diplomats eg. Ambassadors are representatives who have had intensive experience in country profiles (political, economical, social, and cultural). To elaborate on this point, ambassadors are actually senior civil servants in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who have had extensive training and experience as junior envoys. As a result, members of staff – in other words junior diplomats – are accustomed to the knowledge and diplomatic procedure in an extensive level. The difference with the secretariat of the senate staff, however, is that they are likely to be more familiar with the routines of their duties - which involves assisting and facilitating senators – rather than possess in-depth knowledge on country profiles and/or other issues relevant to each particular diplomatic mission.

An explanation to this distinction between the diplomatic nature of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Senate staff personnel can be due to the fact that the civil servants in the Foreign Affairs Ministry including the foreign affairs minister, ambassadors, senior and junior diplomats, staff from internal departments in the ministry - basically the composition of the ministry - are the main representative institutions in the state's foreign affairs as being responsible for international matters that would be of benefit or constitute towards the country's benefit. This would also enhance bilateral and multilateral relations between the Thai government and other foreign counterparts. On the other hand, the Senate: comprised of senators who are temporary diplomatic actors, their limited period of term in office, the level of diplomatic efficiency would depend not only on the frequency of the international diplomatic activities but also the purposes and outcomes of these diplomatic activities would also need to be taken into consideration. For only under transient and peculiar circumstances have legislative institutions operating in the context of parliamentary democracy been in a

position to initiate any kind of policy on foreign affairs (Hocking, 1976, p.280). Therefore, the level and intensity of experience, knowledge, and procedural circumstances between Foreign Ministry diplomats and Senate staff actors are by no doubt different.

### *Parliamentary staff*

In this research, my argument will be based on the duties of parliamentary staff, who can be referred to as the steering wheels of the institution. Parliamentary staff in this interpretation include career staff who work in the parliament's foreign affairs department, President and Vice-Presidents' office, and committees department<sup>46</sup>. In contrast to the senators, staff are permanent civil servants who stay in office until they chose to leave or until their formal retirement at 60 years while senators are only appointed there in office for a fixed 6-year term.

Senate staff are responsible for the preparation of the entire process of a diplomatic mission. For instance, the Senate's Foreign Affairs Department, so the name says, needs to facilitate any diplomatic procedures including national and international correspondence, courtesy calls and meetings, and formal receptions between senators and other foreign delegates who could be either within Thailand or from abroad (Secretariat of the Senate, 2008, p.4-5). Some senators are helpful in the preparation stage, as they might have personal contacts with key persons who would be useful in corresponding. Nevertheless, most senators are usually informed about their responsibilities and what they are required to be doing during the trip prior to the travelling date, showing that they do not actually take part in the preparation stage. It is clear from here that some senators know what they are doing, and some do not. The level of assertiveness also varies among senators, and, simply put, it is clear that some

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<sup>46</sup> The Secretariat of the Thai Senate has 3 committee departments. The Senate's sub-committees are divided into each department.



senators are less assertive, while some are not assertive at all. As a result, Secretariat staff need to be knowledgeable and alert when they are on duty along with senators during international missions in Thailand and abroad.

From this fact, it is clear that the routine responsibilities of preparations for international missions often enable parliamentary staff to be more experienced in their duties than the senators. At the same time, it is also possible to say that parliamentary staff, despite their ranking and position in the office, might not know what they are supposed to be doing unless assigned by superiors. They also may not appreciate that their roles entail the duties and responsibilities of service. The question moves on as to how does the knowledge and experience of the staff coordinate with parliamentary diplomacy development. It is necessary over and above normal routines for members of an organisation to have routines directed towards exploring new knowledge. Incremental innovation could be seen as a part of exploiting the capabilities and resources, meaning that does not have to be necessarily equivalent to exploration (Jensen, Poulfelt & Kraus, 2010, p. 2046). It has been noted earlier that in this research there are two diplomatic actors considered, the senators and the staff. If the duties and knowledge of senators and staff were compared, the parliamentary staff are more likely to be seen as the key functional actors in the diplomatic procedure. It is clearer to say that the responsibilities of the staff and senators contribute towards one another. Senators will then carry out these procedures - do what they are supposed to do. Only a few would collaborate in the preparation stage. However, it is also possible to think that the parliamentary staff do what they require to do, that is a 'routine' of preparation for diplomatic missions. It is the same for the senators in that they carry out these diplomatic missions as required. The status and routine of employers are influenced by their professions and regimes in the publicly-established regulatory bodies. These allegiances between the staff and their

membership organisation are increasingly in tension, as the impact of public sector reforms has resulted in changes in the status of professionals leading to increased de-professionalisation (Hutton and Massey, 2006, p.23). The discussion goes further as to whether the parliamentarians and staff learned anything new from their routine duties, particularly parliamentarians who have a fixed office term and some staff who are being transferred to different departments more than the others.

Another observation from the interviews was that the clash of ideas between parliamentarians and staff were likely to happen, despite the bureaucratic relations. In certain times, the attitudes and opinions of staff could clash with the senators'. This would happen if the staff had more knowledge or experience on parliamentary diplomatic practice than senators. From a personal observation, clashing between the two actors would be most likely to happen with staff from the foreign affairs committee, the President – Vice Presidents office, Foreign Relations Department whose main responsibilities are dealing with foreign related issues when staff are always engaged in correspondence and preparations for official trips abroad. As a result, the staff would understand the details and procedures whilst the senators would have no knowledge on that particular mission, but then would have to be provided with the complete details and documentation later prior to the mission abroad. Nonetheless, the most important part of the international diplomatic mission is that senators and staff are required to collaborate officially with respect and looking forward to a successful diplomatic mission, whether be only creating political networks and gaining experience and knowledge from foreign geographical surroundings.

*iii. Political entrepreneurship*

When speaking about political careers, it is likely that politicians would continue their duties after a particular political term is completed. While studying the Thai Senate, an interesting thought had risen whether the senators would still choose to pursue a political career *after* they finish their senatorship. This issue was explored during the interviews, and most answers were that senators would not have future political opportunities so diplomatic career prospects would be difficult. An option, however, would be to continue working with existing connections they had prior to entering office or during term. Political career patterns, in particular, may provide clues about the nature of informal ties in the political system and career ambitions also shape legislative ambitions. Here the main question is whether legislators have good reason to hope for advancement by moving to other political levels, in other words stepping stones (Scarrow, 1997, p.254-255). Thai senators would already have a professional career prior to taking up post in the Senate, particularly those who are involved in business and academia. They would usually continue their previous jobs when they finish their term in office. Some findings have suggested that a number of senators might not continue their profession in politics. The main reason is because of the lack of opportunities and connections. Again, this would differ between senator and their background profession.

My concluding remarks to this part of the discussion about the Thai Senate as a diplomatic model would be that the perception of parliamentary diplomacy falls down to the individual, whether senator or staff. This includes how parliamentary diplomacy is being pursued. The understanding about the values of international diplomatic duties and its outcomes are to some extent based on the professional backgrounds of both senators and staff; educational qualifications, professional training, experiences abroad and opportunities of interactions with foreign counterparts. All these personal factors influence the person's daily work routine

and how they think about parliamentary diplomacy. These factors influence the actors' daily routine and their perseverance about parliamentary diplomacy. The reason is because if they see international diplomatic duties as part of their responsibilities, that will enhance their performance and be a responsibility to utilise and improve their professional skills. This will also enhance their status, both individually and collectively. Institutions are conceptualised as embodiments of accepted practice in society and repositories of common knowledge. Individuals or social groupings, therefore, are viewed as malleable agents whose in whole or partial actions may be externally defined in any institutional change (Karantalidis and Fletcher, 2012, p.199-200). In this case on the Thai Senate, it should be viewed as the other way round where the structure and functionality of the institution may have impact on the senator's future professional paths post-incumbency.

*c. Conclusion*

The Thai Senate has been raised as an example of a bicameral parliament which reflects a strong bureaucratic system. The system itself is an underlying impact on the performance and functionality of parliament in domestic and international diplomatic duties. Certain factors and elements have played a crucial role on the procedure of international diplomatic missions. The question of democracy has put a challenge on the preliminary arguments and discussions. Foreign missions of the Senate are only seen as an opportunity for the senators and staff to exercise their personal and professional experience rather than to stimulate their political values. Nevertheless, there are certain elements in the research that suggested a possibility of the improvement of the actors' values towards their duties. In the following chapters evidence from fieldwork will be presented either to support or to contradict against claims that senators are sub-actors in the international arena as the international duties conducted do not provide an outstanding national benefit.

The evidence-based discussions in the following chapters will provide an analysis from the collected interview data from selected interviewees and document information from the Secretariat of the Senate, Bangkok. The further analysis will seek to testify my research questions, hypotheses, being in accordance with the theoretical framework which has been drawn out in the earlier theoretical chapters of this research.

## Chapter 4

### **The Thai Senate as a Diplomatic Actor: findings and analysis**

“Over time, diplomatic institutions have risen and fallen in the popular mind, taking with them the reputation of academic fields devoted to their study. In our own age, diplomatic history in the West appears anachronistic, bigoted, and irrelevant; like diplomacy itself, it has largely withstood the influence of divergent movements across the intellectual and political landscape.”

(Schweizer and Schumann, 2008, p.149).

#### *a. Structure of the interview data on the theoretical assumptions*

In the previous chapter, a detailed discussion on the chosen case study for this research has been given; the Thai Senate. Relevant explanations on the historical background on the formation of the Senate and political culture of Thailand were also discussed to give the readers a basic understanding on the underlying motive that directs the decision-making of the parliamentary actors. The hierarchical structure of the Thai Senate, as discussed previously in this research, also internally divided by the composition of senators who are appointed and who are elected. After having conducted semi-structured interviews with Thai senators, Senate staff, and a group of interviewees who are members of the public, in this part a structural account based on the findings from the interviews will be given and related to the theoretical framework and literature review in the first part on conceptualising the theory of diplomacy, paying specific attention on the definition of parliamentary diplomacy. Further, findings have also suggested a distinction between appointed and elected senators, as the

former appearing as more privileged than the latter. The thematical approach on sociological institutionalism and the logic of appropriateness will also be included as themes for discussion. The information obtained from the interviews and official documents have given an extent of support for my hypotheses by reflecting the view that parliamentary diplomacy is indeed a crucial path in developing contemporary international relations. However, a number of specific issues have risen during the triangulation of the obtained data, including a suggestion that the composition of senators should not be a hindrance to distinguish advantages and disadvantages among senators in the same incumbency. All senators – whether appointed or elected – are equally expected to conduct proficient domestic and diplomatic duties according to their committee memberships and responsibilities. Further detailed data will be presented accordingly under each theoretical headline.

During the years 2008-2011, there have been 2 senatorial incumbencies. The researched incumbency started in April 2008, but elected senators and a group of appointed senators resigned in February 2011 and then the rest of the incumbency terminated their senatorship in April 2011 respectively. Nevertheless, the most interesting point that has been found from these reports were that details, missions, and procedures of the domestic and international duties are all similar as there has been, and still are institutional outlines on how to proceed these duties. As stated earlier, the oldest official report summary on foreign diplomatic duties of the Senate which was capable of access was dated only as far back as 2000 (B.E. 2543) as official documents older than 10 years old are usually destroyed. Recorded details from the report, in particular, did not reflect any dramatic differences from the Senate's current foreign affairs. In other words, it can be implied that the nature of the Senate's international diplomatic practice has not changed very much during the course of 10 years<sup>47</sup>. It is, however, possible to assume that the frequency of the diplomatic activities would vary depending on

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<sup>47</sup> Referring to the year 1992 when the Secretariat of both Houses were separated.

the initiative and activeness of the President of the Senate, the Vice-Presidents, and committee chairpersons in each incumbency.

The data presentation has been categorised in the first instance as the Senators and the Senate, the Secretariat of the Senate staff and the Secretariat. The several themes that have stemmed from data triangulation shall be brought up and discussed respectively. Then in the final part, the discussion will be expanded on the public opinion from interviews with selected members of the public. Their opinion, in particular, would be a reflection not only on the international diplomatic duties of the Senate but also on the overall functioning of the Senate and expectations from the public. In the section on public participation, the discussion was raised according to the gathered information. However, after the triangulation of the data it appeared that public participation is not considered as necessary to the functioning of the Senate due to the status of the institution<sup>48</sup>. What matters more happened to be the accountability of parliament towards the people. As a result, the discussion aimed more on improving the transparency of parliament and building people's trust. Transparency works through increasing the amount of information available to voters, therefore it is often considered beneficial in information-scarce contexts (Alt and Lowry, 2010, p.380). Citizens have different degrees of interest in and demand for governmental transparency. Some feel strongly to learn more about what government is doing and the need to access government information whereas others are less interested. Transparency is a fundamental value of democratic accountability that at times is manifested in administrative reforms (Piotrowski and Van Ryzin, 2007, p.306).

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<sup>48</sup> To the public, the Senate is seen as a closed institution. Even though selected parliamentary sessions are broadcasted, they are mostly joint between the House of Representatives and the Senate. As a result, groups of citizens would be skeptical as to what are the actual responsibilities of Senate.



The planned analysis of with the interview data was done by triangulating the information between the three groups of interviewees; the senators, the senate staff, and the external interviewees in order to check and establish validity in the study according to standard methods (Guion, 2002, p.1). Moreover, the triangulation of data between these interview groups are expected to stimulate relevant ideas and thoughts that might have been obvious at the beginning. When compiled with the existing hypothetical arguments, then it will make the discussion valid and more credible. However, further fieldwork from document analysis was gathered and included in the data analysis, adding to the triangulated information to strengthen the arguments.

### *i. On parliamentary diplomacy*

The interpretation of diplomacy in the first chapter has been supported by evidence from the interview and document findings. It has been stated that the general interpretation of diplomacy is that it is the art of communication, representation, negotiation, and international relations practice between representatives of states. At present, the rapid modernisation of the world societies have urged more actors in diplomacy and international relations to develop themselves and become more active. Parliamentary cooperation has been superceded by 'parliamentary diplomacy', referring to both institutional links of a traditional kind as well as those formed spontaneously and then institutionalised. Parliamentarians, thus, are able to act within their remit by tackling major problems which transcend national borders. Accordingly, fora for multilateral consultation eg. Inter-Parliamentary Union have a key role in raising parliamentarians' awareness and keeping them informed about matters relating to the objectives of the various organisations of which they are a part. This gradually leads to a collective conscience developing around shared interests, which simplifies preparatory work in the run-up to formal negotiations between governments (Squarcialupi, 2000, p.4-5). The extended appointments enjoyed by parliamentarians in many other countries creating what is

in effect a parliamentary career path, enabling them to concentrate and set goals to their interest. The contribution that individual members have been able to make and the satisfaction that they have derived from their involvement has varied greatly in the growing field of parliamentary diplomacy (Canadian parliament papers, 2003, p. 4, 15).

The senators perform their duties along with the facilitation of the Secretariat staff. The conduction of 33 semi-structured interviews with Thai senators, Secretariat of the Senate staff, and external interviewees from various professions have raised several issues related to the theoretical approaches that has been adopted for this research. At the same time, thoughts from most of the interviews have fitted into the main hypothesis; that the Thai Senate is a distinguished institution in domestic legislative scrutiny, but is yet to develop in becoming a prominent diplomatic actor. However, a question arises as to whether the Senate is in fact a strong domestic actor on its own right. The readers need to be reminded at this stage that the structure of Thai political institutions are shaped by social and cultural hierarchy. Thailand's governance context is best understood as the emergence of new social actors seeking political accommodation against the background of a rapidly modernising political entity (Dressel, 2009, p.164). As a result, members of the middle class have a clear interest in preserving a relatively privileged social and economic position (Wyatt, 1983, p.296). At this stage, a reminder to the reader that the senators interviewed were the ones who have been in office since April 2008 up to present. However, there were a number of senators who resigned in February 2011 in order to put themselves through to the following election and appointments. As stated by the Thai Constitution, 2007, senators are not allowed to take consecutive terms. After the results of the newly appointed and elected incumbency came out, not all of the former senators who resigned earlier succeeded in holding a place. This reflects influence from party politics and favouritism in parliament. Delegates' positions on expanding competences and qualifying majority voting were determined by national interest, party

political related factors, or institutionally determined patterns depending on the extent to which they are directly accountable to domestic electorates or whether they belong to parties that are in government or in opposition domestically (Treib, 2010, p.121).

Most of the interviewees, including the senators and secretariat staff, think that it is important to understand and value the benefits of maintaining strong international relations with foreign counterparts, as this is a way to 'keep up with the world' and also to require for assistance on urgent matters when needed. An interview with the Chairperson of the Committee on Economics, Trade, and Industry (interviewed 23 March 2011) suggested that international visits provide an opportunity for senators to learn new technology and innovations from more developed counterparts, considering Thailand as being a developing country. For instance, policies on mass public transportation in Japan should be taken into formal consideration as the government would be able to consider how this scheme may be adjusted to the plans, settings, and national budget of the country. All of the senators gave opinions on the importance of international relations, as they think that parliamentary diplomacy is a valuable channel for improving connections. The speaker for the Committee on Foreign Affairs (interviewed 28 March 2011) emphasised this issue that the Thai government should strengthen and maintain good foreign relations with neighbouring countries in the first instance as part of a global community. As a continuing discussion on the hiatus period when parliament was dissolved from October 2006 to April 2008, the transitory period of the National Legislative Assembly and the promulgation of the 2007 Constitution as a reflective background on the impact of political transitions on the functioning of the parliamentary institution shall be further explained. Political institutions including parliament are combined structures of human actors, roles, and rules who generate activities, and depending upon how people perceive these entities and assess their actions they may choose to trust or distrust such entities (Askvik, Jamil, and Dhakal, 2011, p.419).

The promulgation of the 2007 Constitution shall now be raised as one of the influences on the restoring of the parliamentary structure. This recent constitution is a result of yet another transitional period in the Thai government and the political institutions. The Chairperson of the Committee on Energy (interviewed 2 May 2011) stated that although international diplomatic duties are yet to be clear the constitutional framework in particular section 190 points out the role of the Senate in approving foreign affairs procedures. Such political transition and revision of the constitution has an underlying impact on the functioning of the Thai Senate, which shall also be discussed accordingly.

*The promulgation of the 2007 Constitution*

Apart from the period of political uncertainty, it can also be argued that the constant revision of the Thai constitution is considered as another reason for the President of the Senate from the 2008 to 2011 incumbency to become more distinctively active in both domestic and international diplomatic duties in order to reestablish a better image and reputation for parliament. The reason is stated according to section 190 where foreign missions need to be approved by members of parliament in joint sittings. Moreover, the promulgation of the 2007 version, the current version in use, has reflected yet another example of the authority of military personnel in constructing Thai politics. An argument on civil-military relationship stressed that 'civil control of the military is a sine qua non for democratic rule', however the interactions between these two agents are beneficial towards the ability to make political decisions on relevant political issues. There can be no power over the military by the civil society, not to mention the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government without civilian control<sup>49</sup> (Chambers, 2011, p.291).

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<sup>49</sup> For Civil-Military relationships, see Croissant, Kuehn, Chambers, and Wolf, 2010; Croissant, Kuehn, Chambers, Voelkel, and Wolf, 2011; and Welch Jr., 1976.

If human relationships are to be calculable, the people of a community must know, and know in advance, the rules by which they are to act and by which they may expect other men to act. The promulgation of law; The very idea of obedience presupposes knowledge of that which is to be obeyed, without which knowledge there could be only the coincidence, never the obligation, or obedience (Bailey, 1941, p.1059). Furthermore, during the period when parliament was dissolved and the National Legislative Assembly was appointed temporarily – with a provisional constitution of 2006, stating the appointment of a National Legislative Assembly to administer the country while on yet another political transition. This can be viewed, according to a Thai politics scholar, as a “vicious cycle of Thai politics”, as an election is held after a new constitution, thus producing a corrupt government, leading to political crisis, engendering a coup, and then going back to the constitution again (Pongsudhirak, 2009, p.29). The Thai propensity for changing constitutions has been referred to as “faction constitutionalism,” whereby each successive draft reflects, makes legitimate, and strengthens major shifts in factional dominance. Thai constitutions have not been considered the fundamental law of the land; rather, they have functioned to facilitate the rule of the regime in power (Neher, 1970, p.240). This also implies that the senators – as members of parliament – are able to enhance their individual and collective performance within the institutional frame, at the same time convey their professional knowledge through their political duties. Knowledge creation, retention, and knowledge transfer can all be related to the status of the political actor (Argote, McEvily, and Reagans, 2003, p.573). Moreover, institutions may even help keep the peace among non-democracies as they are understood to constitute frameworks of reference for politics (Brock, 2006, p.90).

The uncertainty in Thai politics reflected from coup d’etats and governmental transitions also have impact on the country’s foreign networks. During the period from September 2006 – April 2008, Thailand’s membership in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) was temporarily

suspended. According to the IPU regulations, member countries must demonstrate by the status of their governments that they promote representative democracy. Any civil unrest or political transits would reflect not only an unstable government but lack of democratic accountability, therefore memberships can be suspended or terminated<sup>50</sup>. Basically a way to look at this is that the instability of Thai politics seen through concurrent transitions, coup d'états, and constitutional changes have somewhat reflected the social and civic status. Not only does it show the instability of the social and civic status, but also it can be considered as a challenge for parliament to prove its competency in handling and restabilising its affiliation during political unrests. Party fragmentation and decentralised parties have become increasingly concentrated due to constitutional reforms in the late 1990s, when leading parties remained internally weak, resulting in the reform process being more decisive but remaining less credible (Zhang, 2009, p.1382). Therefore, one way to improve the image and proficiency of the government is that politicians must perform their duties by aiming to distribute benefits to the groups whose support brought them to office, as they cannot afford to ask what is good for society as a whole in the long run, lest they lose power in the interim (Garrett and Lange, 1995, p.631).

The instability of Thai politics including concurrent transitions, coup d'états, and constitutional changes does, in fact, have an impact on the functioning of parliament. From the period of rapid economic growth in the 1970s, the concentration of power has been reflected by the military coups, very few democratic elections<sup>51</sup>, and the ruling elite from Bangkok. Being retired military generals, most prime ministers since military rule have created political parties based on supporters and their own personalities rather than pre-

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<sup>50</sup> For further information on functions and prospects of the IPU, see the IPU Strategy 2012-2017 "Better Parliaments, Stronger Democracies" <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/strategy-e.pdf> (retrieved 15 June 2012).

<sup>51</sup> The only democratic election was that in 1988. The elections in 1991 and 2006 were disturbed by military coups. See Forsyth, 2010.

defined political positions of left and right (Forsyth, 2010, p.461-462). This explains a lot about the continuous conflicts and corruption which undermine the actions of political representatives, despite their background and selection to membership in office. Coming back to parliamentary diplomacy, the international diplomatic duties of the Thai Senate are only part of the parliamentary institutional regulations that the actors need to follow while they hold membership in office. Another factor to add up to the collective performance of the senators are individual backgrounds of each senator and secretariat staff. What I attempt to say is that despite shifting periods or political turmoil which may cause a stir and hindrance to the political situation in the country, it is only an external factor that would have a limited effect on the decision-making and performance of the President of the Senate and Committee Chairpersons in each senatorial incumbency. In the following part, the discussion shall continue on the themes that have risen from the triangulating of the interviewed data. These themes, so the argument goes, are all relevant to the understanding of the evolution of parliamentary diplomacy as well as how the actors perceive parliamentary diplomacy.

*ii. Sociological institutionalism: the actors and the institution*

In an organisation, the institutional policy is important for the actor's functioning. When considering the Thai Senate, however, a criticism has risen on the lack of proper institutional strategies and policies on the conduct of international diplomatic affairs. A senior secretariat staff from the Bureau of Strategy and Policy (interviewed 2 May 2011) suggested that the Senate's institutional policy on foreign affairs is not clear. Above all of the questions, such policies may not even exist. Considering the nature of foreign diplomatic conduct and procedures, the vagueness of the institutional policy on foreign affairs stems from the original fact that the Senate is a political institution whose main responsibility is domestic legislative scrutiny. The reason for no institutional policy was that traditionally there has never been proper policies on foreign affairs, so senior civil servants do not know where or how to begin.

Additional information was that the Senate did not copy the diplomatic procedure pattern from the Foreign Office, but rather each committee or individual would mold their own pattern for a specific diplomatic mission abroad. From this reason, the Senate's international diplomatic duties do not really show any prospects of being a prominent diplomatic actor.

Suggestions from this senior member of staff was that the Bureau of Foreign Affairs should have specialists who would be responsible for providing information and contact for each region in order to assist with foreign mission planning. If possible, there should be staff responsible for each country within that region. For instance, if the Foreign Office provides general knowledge about each country, the Bureau of Foreign Affairs should be able to provide specific introductory knowledge on national parliaments and other local establishments which would suit the purposes of the committee visit. Although the norms of protocol should always pass the Foreign Office, the Senate should have a level of independence and not rely on gaining information or putting their missions solely on the Foreign Office. Senate staff, as with other people in administrative and facilitative positions, should learn to adopt their skills and knowledge – benefit for future transfers of positions. The repetition of their routine in administering and facilitating senators should equip them with a more thorough and practical outlook on their duties, therefore stimulate the secretariat staff to initiate working plans that could be improvised for their duties.

An interview with the First Vice-President of the Senate<sup>52</sup> on the importance of institutional policy reflected that parliamentarians should perform together, despite being member of the House of Representatives or member of the Senate. They represent parliament in any way or the other. However, the most important part on reorganising the functions of parliamentarians is to restructure internal institutional policies (interviewed 17 March 2011). Another point

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<sup>52</sup> The First Vice-President is currently President of the Senate, as of August 2012.



that was stressed here was an initiative to establish an e-parliament. E-parliament is about changes in using IT to develop internal and external integration, cooperation, and automation among government agencies and as a tool to assist in decision-making<sup>53</sup>. These decisions, therefore, are forward in forms of directives to the administration (Gronlund, 2003, p.55). At this point an in-depth discussion on e-parliament will not be elaborated, as this would rather be a suggestion that fits into a separate discussion on public relations and civic engagement towards parliamentary affairs. The main focus here is on parliamentary diplomacy, therefore the concept of e-parliament may be less relevant to the debate on the diplomatic affairs of the Thai Senate other than being more of a method to improve parliament accountability and public knowledge on parliamentary affairs.

Apart from the opinion on international diplomatic duties, the exchange visits aim to provide secretariat staff with the opportunity to learn, observe, and acknowledge similarities and differences in other foreign institutions. Nevertheless, whether the outcomes of the foreign visits are successful - that is whether the staff have gained much from the official visits would depend on how well they understand their own duties and whether the knowledge they achieve would be concrete. This issue can also be drawn back to the purposes of the visit, and we shall discuss later on. Further fieldwork and additional document analysis would be to try and find out which specific countries the senators choose to visit, whether there are any particular reasons or if they have special connections. The possible reasons in choosing countries to visit are that there are existing connections or agreements with that particular government or friendship groups. Reversing the research strategy would be to do additional consultation on archival material stored at other parliament counterparts where the Thai

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<sup>53</sup> E-Government: apart from being a method in enhancing public participation with parliament, this is also a way to keep connection with the public as a result of global technological advancement. However, I have only raised this issue as it has been mentioned during an interview with the former First Vice-President of the Senate (who is now the current President of the Senate).

Senate has paid for an official visit. This would be an option to understand the reasons why the senators choose to go to that country more frequently than another and whether any objectives of the trip were accomplished. However, obstacles would include confidentiality issues, accessibility, as well as willingness of the foreign parliament in providing information on certain trips. Also, the question of whether such a report exists or whether reports had been written at all after the trip should also be considered as possible.

Many countries have initiated broad public sector and civil service reforms as a response to the age of globalisation and informatisation demands new systems in society and government (Kim, 2002, p.389). All countries today should not lose out in a global rule setting, thus they must gear up so as to play an effective role in intergovernmental bodies. Several factors motivate committee members to choose the countries they plan to visit and study on a foreign mission. Most of the countries they choose to visit would be the countries that are advanced in specific fields which are relevant to the committee objectives<sup>54</sup>. In trips lead by the President of the Senate, there are usually courtesy calls to foreign counterparts. This would include the speaker of the Upper House or speaker of parliament - if the parliamentary system were unicameral – and an official call to the Thai ambassador residing in that particular country<sup>55</sup>. Unfortunately, there is little personal or professional interest for political actors and decision takers to see essential re-making of public institutions right through until it has been realized. The reasons are many, but include the hostile power of special interests, the absence

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<sup>54</sup> Other issues apart from socio-economic discussions would include technological advancements in transportation, education, health and welfare etc.

<sup>55</sup> During 10-16 July 2012, the former President of the Senate made an official trip to the UK and paid a courtesy call to Baroness Frances d'Souza, speaker of the House of Lords. Their discussion was an exchange of information about the composition of the current Thai Senate incumbency. At the time of visit, the House of Lords reform bill was being debated. See Colin Low, "Lords Reform: the Lords is more diverse and democratic than the Commons", *the Guardian*, Monday 9 July 2012 (retrieved 30 August 2012).  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jul/09/house-of-lords-commons-democracy>

of media attention, the lack of votes to be won, or the long time required to get visible results (Ormond, 2010, p.221-222).

In the following sections, a discussion on different types of international diplomatic duties of the Senate will be considered. Outlined figures will also be added to each section in order to present the trend of international diplomatic duties of the Thai Senate in the studied period; from 2006 to 2012 - the time of writing<sup>56</sup>.

### **Diplomatic activities of the Senate**

The diplomatic activities of the Senate will be categorised into 4 parts in the following sections; official visits, courtesy calls, reception hosting, and participation in international conferences respectively. A description will be provided for each section on the nature of the activities, purposes and motivations, and any consequences of the activities that may have had an impact on parliamentary diplomacy in a collective context (See appendix 2 for numbers of international diplomatic activities).

#### *Official visits*

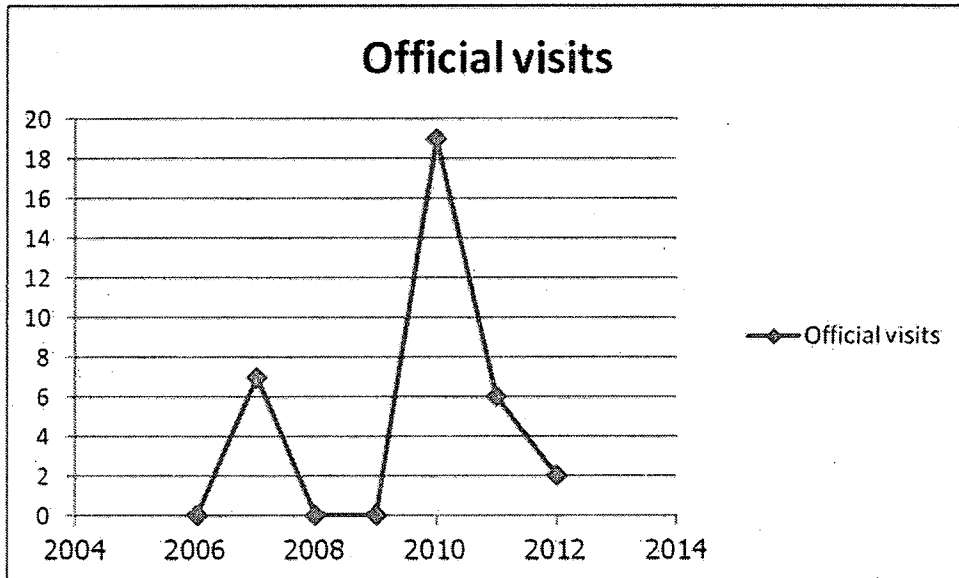
Official visits include planned diplomatic missions led by the President of the Senate to foreign countries as guests of that respective parliament, at the same time receiving foreign parliamentary delegates as official guests of the Thai Senate. Countries they chose to visit are usually countries with an advanced parliamentary system eg. the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Australia, countries in the same region which share similar cultural and traditional values eg. Bhutan, Mongolia, China, ASEAN member countries – the latter group as having convenient access. Moreover, the countries they chose to visit may also be countries they already had previous connections with. In the exceptional case of the official

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<sup>56</sup> Graphs last updated 4/1/2013.

visit to Bhutan, the former President of the Senate stated that since the Bhutanese parliament are at a developing stage, the formal relations with the Thai parliament has enabled them to gain knowledge about the Thai parliamentary composition and committee structure (interviewed 28 March 2011).

However, there are differences between countries that senators in previous incumbencies have already visited (relations exist) and countries where senators choose to visit and create new relations. This would, of course, depend on official invitations from Presidents or speakers of other foreign parliaments. Nevertheless, in cases where the country the senators visit already has existing relations, political representatives whom the senators meet may not be the same persons. If we consider this from two sides of the argument, the senators themselves may already have changed incumbencies – if they visit the same country twice or more then the composition of the Thai Senate delegation may be different. Since official visits and other international diplomatic visits would involve courtesy calls and general meetings to discuss current affairs rather than make a formal agreement, a view on this point about visiting the same country but meeting different people is that it will provide the chance for people on separate occasions to engage in a more diverse discussion and prevent information being ‘locked’ amongst a small group of elite actors. Moreover, official visits are good opportunities for senators to meet with foreign representatives from all sectors (administrative, legislative, and the court). As a result, the exchange of ideas and opinions would be beneficial for both parties – referring to both the Thai senators and the foreign government representatives.

**Figure 1: Official visits to and from the Senate**

Official visits would be considered and organised according to previous courtesy calls from ambassadors of that particular country. The ambassador may request a courtesy call as an opportunity to convey an official invitation from their President of the Senate, or Speaker of Parliament in cases of unicameral parliaments. Also, the President of the Senate from a foreign country may send an official invitation directly to the Thai President of the Senate, and vice versa. This would depend on previous conversations and relations between the Thai President of the Senate and foreign ambassadors who paid courtesy calls to the Senate. Moreover, not only do courtesy calls from foreign envoys to the Senate serve as introductory meetings, but they can also help remind the President of the Senate of the represented country – leading on to check the existing relations if there has been official visits to that country in past incumbencies or any official visits to come to Thailand as official guests of the President of the Senate. This would also contribute towards the decision to accept an official invitation to visit a foreign country or to extend an invitation to a certain country.

Official visits - whether from the Thai Senate to a foreign country as guests of parliament or from foreign parliaments to Thailand as guests of the Thai Senate – frequently have similar members in the delegation. A delegation, for example, would comprise of the President of the Senate (or speaker of parliament), several members of parliament, and staff members from different Secretariat departments. The person with the highest position in the delegation eg. President, Vice-President, or Chairperson of a committee would usually be leader of the delegation. Other delegate members would be senators from different committees, but they may also be invited to join a delegation according to their professional background, expertise, provincial constituency, and by personal cordiality.

During some official visits, the foreign President of the Senate or Speaker of Parliament would request for a courtesy call to HRH the King of Thailand at the Royal Residential Palace in Hua Hin, Prachuabkirikhan province. However, several factors including the status and position of the delegation leader, the country they represent, the composition of the delegation, and purposes of their visit to Thailand must be considered in advance to request for a royal visit. Depending on these factors and the availability of the King, a courtesy call cannot be appointed. Other official places the delegation would normally visit would be to seek courtesy calls with the Prime Minister, the Foreign Affairs Minister, the President of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and the Ambassador who represents their country in Thailand. The duration of an official visit would usually last from 3 days up to 10 days, the normal period being one week including travelling dates.

The number of official visits have remained stable during the period of 2006 and 2008. The reason is because there were political coups and transitions accordingly; the former period when the then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was ousted and parliament was dissolved, and again in 2008 when parliament was undergoing a transitional period from being the

National Legislative Assembly (NLA) to a normally structured bicameral parliament. In 2007, interestingly, numbers of official visits have risen. An explanation for this increase can be due to the maintaining of the normal parliamentary functionality through an uncertain cabinet hiatus period. Although the titles of the persons who hold leading positions in the National Legislative Assembly are slightly different from when parliament is sitting normally, however the functioning of the institution maintains the same to assure that the legislative institution has not undergone any dramatic changes despite political turmoil.

*Example of official visit to observe parliaments of Korea and Japan*

In 2009, Mr. Nikom Vairajpanich, then First Vice-President of the Senate led a delegation to the Republic of Korea and Japan on an official visit to observe the National Assembly library and the National Diet Library respectively. During the visit to the Korean National Assembly library, the delegation acquired information about laws and ethics on internet usage in Korea, internet law. On the institutional structure, the Korean National Assembly parliament is fully digitalized, therefore the transparency of information among members of parliament and the public is regarded as highly efficient. Moreover, the National Assembly Library of Korea has 281 staff members who are responsible for providing research abstracts, papers and reports on parliamentary policies and affairs for members of parliament. On the public relations side, the editorial section and news articles on politics and economics from 5 foreign newspapers; U.S, Japan, U.K., France, and Russia are being translated on a daily basis. These details are then sent to the parliamentarians via email. As for Japan, the e-library of the National Diet has limited access only in the Japanese language and information from the library can only be accessed within Japan.

Observations from this official visit have stimulated the Thai Senate delegation in future improvement of the parliamentary institutional system in Thailand, in particular information services and library settings. The settings in the National Assembly Library of Korea and the National Diet Library in Japan are examples of the application of digital technology to parliamentary documents. The official visit to observe the e-parliament systems and organisational PR have provided the senators with extended knowledge on more advanced institutional structures. The matter of taking a further step by implementing these advancements to the Thai parliament is another important issue that senators should propose to the relevant committees. In addition, advanced digital technology in the National Assemblies of Korea and Japan have provided convenient links and contacts to legislative specialists, scholars, and institutions.

When a delegation of senators visit a foreign country, they would generally pay courtesy calls on national representatives; the Prime Minister, speakers of parliament, Thai ambassadors in that country, and foreign representatives of establishments according to the planned schedule. There are possibilities of appointments being postponed or cancelled, therefore it is necessary for the secretariat staff to check promptly before appointments during the foreign visit. The nature of a courtesy call is usually a visit and briefing from the Ambassadors and other foreign representatives, then the senators may have the chance to inquire further on specific issues. A lengthy debate-like conversation is not very typical during official visits. However, a more open discussion or debate on new information from the official visit is more likely to be carried out when the trip is finished and when senators meet during post-trip committee meetings.



Moreover, the objectives of a foreign visit of the Committee on Economics, Trade, and Industry to US and Canada during 25/5/2010 – 2/6/2010 has stemmed from the government's urge to strengthen economic policies and industrial states<sup>57</sup>. The emphasis on improving the economic situation in Thailand is to adjust the whole structure in agriculture and industry. The purpose of this foreign visit is to observe methods and paths for economic, trade, and industrial development. These initiatives shall be considered for committee performances and will be proposed to the government. Moreover, the foreign visit aims to enhance bilateral relations between the committee (as representatives of the Thai Senate) and foreign institutional representatives. The following copy of an open letter reflects part of the duties of senators on official diplomatic duties as mediums who are able to convey governmental messages as such from Thai ambassadors abroad back to the main headquarters in Bangkok. Therefore, this is considered as part of the Senate's duties on being a diplomatic actor in assisting the government envoys<sup>58</sup>.

An open letter from the Thai Embassy, Washington D.C. given to the Committee delegation to pass forward to the government in Bangkok. The letter was a follow up from the civil tragedy in Thailand on 19 May 2010. Therefore, the ambassador and staff from the Thai Embassy in Washington, D.C. wished to express their concern and reconciliation from the Thai community in US to fellow Thai citizens that people who live in rural communities should be provided with support in all terms. Unity policy must be proceeded vertically and horizontally in coordination with transparent legal regulations and every province should have regular community meetings (like town halls in US) to stimulate local cooperation. Further, the National Council should propose initiatives to parliament in order to improve the situation and restore peace and stability as soon as possible. The establishment of a “national

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<sup>57</sup> During that period the US was suffering a bad economic retention.

<sup>58</sup> Group report of Committee on Economics, Trade, and Industry, Bureau of Committees 1, Secretariat of the Senate.

unity government” should also be taken into consideration, although it may be a difficult task for some politicians who are not willing to give up their political benefits, but the idea for national improvements. This may be a new dimension for Thailand in terms of education, police, military, agriculture, industry, technology, economics, politics, bureaucracy, and ethical values etc<sup>59</sup>.

The number of visits have obviously risen sharply during 2009-2010 (post-NLA period). The rise of international visits to foreign parliaments can be interpreted as a reassurance of trust – a strategy of H.E. Mr. Prasobsook Boondech, former President of the Senate, who held office term during the 2008-2010 incumbency. It is also a matter of informing foreign governments that recurrent political transitions in Thailand have become a normal part of the Thai political culture. Non-state and non-regime actors who have fought against liberal and illiberal elites to advance substantive political and economic equality has emphasised the democratic struggle in Thailand (Connors, 2009, p.356).

The examples of official visits raised in this section were aimed to present an analytical viewpoint of international diplomatic duties of the Senate. On observing the details of the foreign duties, it is more obvious that the majority of foreign visits of Senate delegations are to gain new experiences and knowledge from other advanced parliaments. By mentioning the advanced parliaments, in this case the term is referred to the reference on advanced information systems and technology.

The example on the official visit to the United States and Canada is a more obvious case where the Thai Senate delegation has represented the government as a diplomatic medium by conveying the message from the Thai ambassador to the US to the Ministry of Foreign

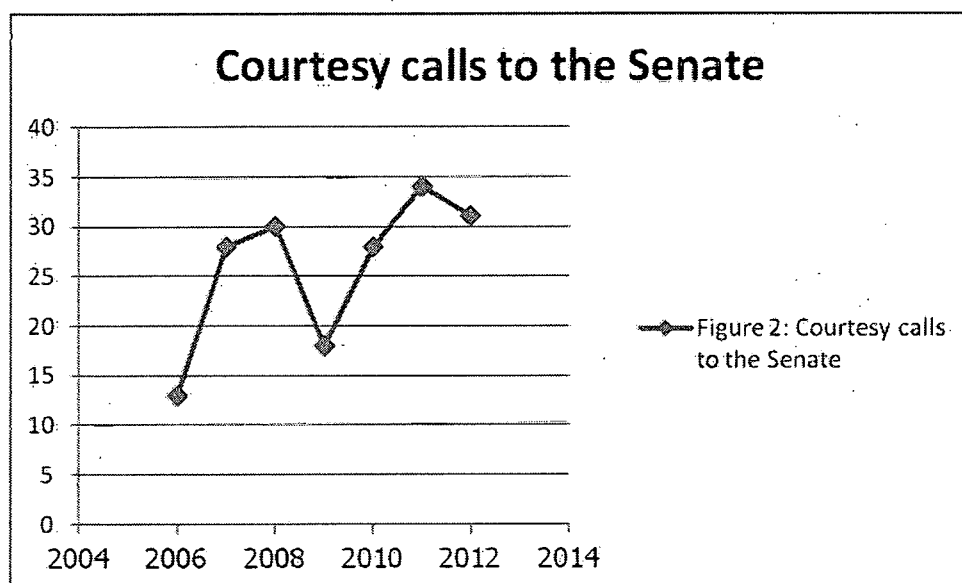
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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

Affairs in Bangkok during a conflicting period. Otherwise, most official visits will be to observe the systems, structures, and environment of the country. When the visits are over, a report summary is provided with details of the trip and brief summaries on places the delegates have visited. It can then be summarised at this point – seeing from the reports on foreign official visits – that only occasionally would official visits from the Senate committees contribute to diplomatic practices. Even if the delegation were lead by the President of the Senate, the visit would not have been much different from committee visits.

#### *Courtesy calls*

The courtesy calls are opportunities where foreign envoys or representatives pay a brief visit to the President, Vice-Presidents, or Committee Chairpersons. The main reason for courtesy calls is when foreign ambassadors who are based in Bangkok meet with the President, Vice-Presidents. Apart from exchanging views on current affairs that relates to both parties, referring to Thailand and the represented country, courtesy calls are also considered as opportunities for reassurance. The meeting between the foreign envoy and member of the Thai parliament during periods of conflict is to reassure that the political situation in Thailand is stable and not a threat to good democratic practice. However, the data absence during 2006, 2008, and 2009 respectively reflects a flaw in the record storage system of the Secretariat. The summaries of official visits have not been properly stored, therefore data which is supposed to be available cannot be presented. This flaw on data storage and filing systems reflect an institutional system where a concise outline on proper data storage and filing is lacking. As a result, this case should be properly considered for institutional improvements regarding the structuring of the institution itself, the roles and duties of institutional actors, stating precise departmental policies and models according to the staff responsibility.

**Figure 2: Courtesy calls to the Senate**

Courtesy calls are considered the most frequent activity, compared to other international diplomatic missions. This is because courtesy calls are from foreign envoys who are based in Bangkok, therefore it is more convenient for them to pay a visit to the President of the Senate, the Vice-Presidents, and Committee Chairpersons. The purposes of occasions where Ambassadors or foreign representatives pay an official visit to the Senate are usually to congratulate when the President and Vice-Presidents of the Senate take their positions at the beginning of the incumbency. During the term in office, regular courtesy calls would also be from foreign delegations on official visits to the Thai Parliament, in order to exchange opinions on certain issues or seek resolutions for recent conflicts that may have effect on bilateral relations.

Courtesy calls, from a personal observation, are mainly to address and discuss about certain issues. Considering from the frequency of numbers each year, it is clear that courtesy calls are a routine activity between foreign envoys to Thailand and executive government members to follow up on current situations. A courtesy call would normally comprise of the

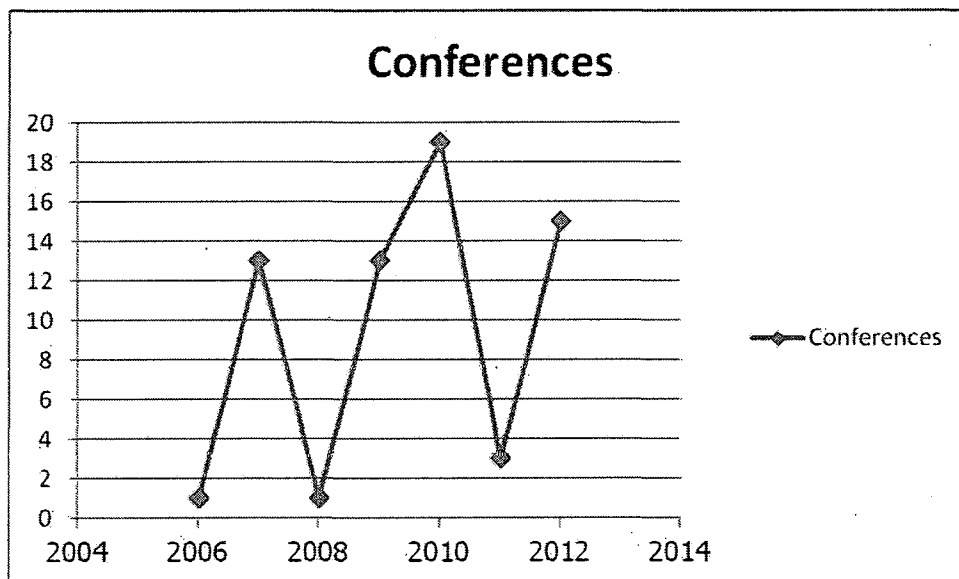
ambassador and several embassy staff; first secretary or the personal assistant to the ambassador. In some cases, the ambassador may pay a visit alone without any accompanying persons. This depends on the familiarity of the ambassador and the President of the Senate, the urgency of the matter, and the availability of the ambassador and embassy staff. Some ambassadors pay more courtesy calls to the President of the Senate, Vice-Presidents, or Committee chairpersons more frequent than other countries. An insider's observation would be that ambassadors from Asian countries eg. China, Japan, Lao PDR are the most frequent visitors to the Thai Senate. In the case of the ambassador from Lao PDR, the acquaintance is more convenient than the others as there are less language barriers and a translator is not usually required during the conversation. As a result, similar communicating languages can convey messages more straightforwardly than translated messages.

### *International conferences*

The attendance and participation in international conferences are one of the few opportunities where the senators get to represent the Thai parliament. Members of parliament would participate in international fora to discuss and exchange opinions on political, economic, social and cultural issues. Members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate would attend the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) conference, which is held twice annually in its headquarter office in Switzerland and rotating again in another member country. The recent hosting of the IPU conference in Thailand was during April 2010, when the Thai parliament had resumed its functioning status and its membership in the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Prior to this, during the transitional period of 2006 – 2008 the Thai parliament's membership in the IPU was temporarily suspended as it is an IPU regulation that member parliaments should represent a government with good and stable democratic values. Accordingly, the attendance in IPU conferences in 2006 and 2008 were low as these years were periods of political transition. The participation in international conferences is also seen

as an opportunity to confirm their attendance as IPU members. However, the chance to discuss and exchange opinions on certain issues would be possible only when parliamentarians attend smaller sessions during the conferences. These sessions are usually relevant to parliamentary committees that senators hold membership.

**Figure 3: Participation in International Parliamentary Conferences**



During the inter-parliamentary union conference, another conference that is usually held in tandem with the main conference is the Association for Secretary-Generals of Parliament (ASGP) conference. This function is organised for members of Secretariats of the IPU member parliaments, in order to provide an arena where members of staff from different departments can engage in discussion as well as exchange opinions on topics related to that held in the General Assembly. The idea on ASGP meetings is that the Secretariat staff have the responsibility of supporting and facilitating duties of parliamentarians, therefore it is essential that staff members from IPU member Secretariats should take this annual opportunity to discuss about their working experiences and methods to improve their

functionality. Moreover, the ASGP meeting would equally provide the opportunity for Secretariat staff to integrate their knowledge on maintaining a good relationship between the parliamentarians and the Secretariat staff. Other conferences that senators may chose to attend would mostly be specific conferences on parliamentary friendship groups, regional conferences associated with ASEAN, and subject-related conferences which is more relevant to committees or professional backgrounds and affiliation of senators.

The consequences of attending international conferences are usually only an exchange of opinions over topics, not to mention the annual attendance being a confirmation of the Thai parliament's membership in an international parliamentary function. After consulting archival documents from the Bureau of Foreign Affairs, reports on the attendance to international conferences would show topics included in the sessions, list of participants, and areas that were covered during conversation. There are not any evidence which showed that the attendance in international conferences has resulted in formal agreements, apart from exchanging views and discussion. Nevertheless, the opportunity to attend and participate in international conferences provide the chance for parliamentarians to interact and engage with foreign counterparts. As a result, they will be able to build new relations or carry on existing relations with representatives they are already familiar with. This applies not only to members of parliament but also to Secretariat staff who accompany the delegation attend other meetings that are held separately in tandem with the main functions. The group discussions between staff from different parliamentary secretariats is also considered as an opportunity to learn about various institutional policies and initiatives on duties to facilitate parliamentarians. A seminar on "The Role of Parliament in the Treaty Making Process"

Held on 24 November 2008 in Bangkok by the National Assembly of Thailand and King Prajadhipok's Institute in Cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union stressed the notion on importance of negotiation and treaties. Governments, further, can shape their approaches

to issues that lie beyond national borders. These issues include trade flows, international rights standard, environment, climate changes, and international crime. The rationale of the seminar also stated that parliaments are rarely involved at the negotiation stage of the treaties as this task is often seen as an executive power. Therefore, parliament should play an increasing role on specific issues at the negotiation process, particularly for the issues that affect people and other stakeholders. Additionally, they often lack the knowledge of international standards and mechanisms to fulfill the role that makes it difficult for them to perform their role. They are seldom aware of the work of the numerous treaty bodies in existence and therefore do not adequately monitor government compliance with their obligations. However, the recent constitutional amendments in Thailand recognise the growing influence of international treaties and commitments on the domestic legal system. The treaty making process has been reformed in a way which provides greater accountability to the Thai public. Specially, section 190 of the 2007 Constitution provides for the provision of information and requires consultation of community sector and prior approval by the Parliament of Thailand. The objectives of this seminar was to provide an opportunity for the parliamentary authorities to acquire an understanding of the role of parliament in the treaty making process, to examine the role of legislative and executive in the treaty making process by sharing parliamentary comparative experiences and lessons learnt, to enhance the role of parliament in monitoring the compliance of international treaties<sup>60</sup>.

The example of an international conference presented here is to highlight international conferences where senators participate. Members from the Thai Senate have participated in other conferences like this one, however their attendance would have been more likely to observe rather than join in a debate. This, again, can be applied to other international diplomatic duties of the Senate where the visit would be to confirm attendance and

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<sup>60</sup> Seminar report "the Role of Parliament in the Treaty Making Process", Bangkok, November 24, 2008.



observation. The impact of diplomacy does not really show through the senator's participation in international conferences. Their participation, however, is to confirm their attendance and receive information from other parliaments rather than provide information opinions on the specific topic. The senators who attend international conferences are mostly the president, vice-presidents, chairpersons and members of the specific committees that are relevant to the theme of the conference<sup>61</sup>.

The people they meet would be their international counterparts. Some senators may engage in a discussion but would only listen to other opinions rather than initiate a proper agenda. This can be concluded that the international diplomatic duties of the Senate – in general they give an outlook of activeness, but when it comes to specific details as such, their participation in international diplomatic activities do not reflect proper international relations practice. The conventional diplomatic practice in building international relations normally includes a discussion that leads to a formal agreement e.g. Declaration of policy or MOU. The international diplomatic duties of the Senate do not reflect agreements, but rather a coordinating in a more personal level. Again, this is not to say that parliamentary diplomacy through the Thai Senate does not have any positive effect on governmental relations.

The examples of international conferences are presented here to highlight international conferences where senators participate. Their participation, however, is to confirm their attendance and receive information from other parliaments rather than provide information and opinions on the specific topic. The senators who attend international conferences are mostly the president, vice-presidents, chairpersons and members of the specific committees that are relevant to the theme of the conference. The people they meet would be their international counterparts. Some senators may engage in a discussion but would only listen to

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<sup>61</sup> Report summary, Bureau of Foreign Affairs, Secretariat of the Senate.

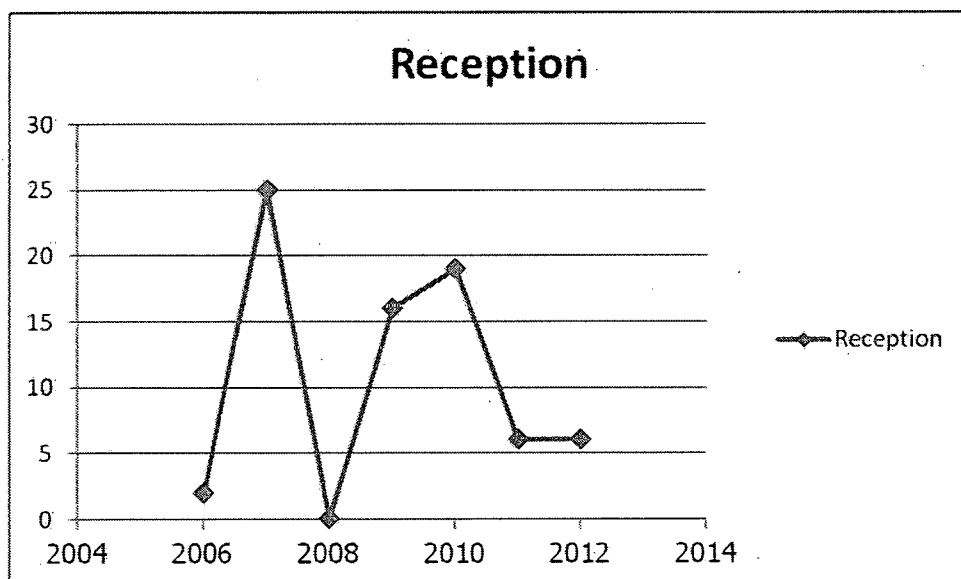
other opinions rather than initiate a proper agenda. This can be concluded that the international diplomatic duties of the Senate – in general they give an outlook of activeness, but when it comes to specific details as such, their participation in international diplomatic activities do not reflect proper international relations practice. This is contradictory to the conventional diplomatic practice in building international relations where a formal discussion would lead to a signing of agreement e.g. Declaration of policy or MOU, or disagreement. The international diplomatic duties of the Senate do not reflect agreements, but rather a coordinating in a more personal level. Again, this is not to say that that parliamentary diplomacy through the Thai Senate does not have any positive effect on governmental relations. The attendance in international conferences and meeting with foreign counterparts would be an opportunity to build relations with other parliamentarians who are from similar professional backgrounds. Again, this would depend on the scope of the conference whether it be a national, regional, or committee-specific conference.

#### *Reception hosting*

Reception hosting is part of welcoming delegations from foreign parliaments, when they have been invited for official visits to Thailand as guests of the Thai parliament. Foreign parliaments, in this case, also refers to foreign counterparts hosting formal dinner receptions for Thai delegates when they are visiting respective countries. Therefore, reception hostings are considered as part of parliamentary diplomatic protocol. Receptions are usually organised at traditional restaurants or international restaurants in hotels in central Bangkok. Staff from the Bureau of Foreign Affairs, Secretariat of the Senate are responsible for organising formal receptions. Protocol customs are required in the preparation procedure e.g. number of guests, dietary requirements, the level of formality, where they are staying etc. These information can assist in selecting the location for hosting the reception. Although it may seem as if hosting a dinner, but the procedure of reception hosting for foreign delegations require an

amount of time, formality, and preciseness. An awareness of cultural differences between foreign delegates is also an important point to consider when hosting receptions. During reception dinners, informal conversations are normally carried out. However, there are possibilities that those conversation can be taken forward in a more serious matter. The interpretation of this point is that conversation during dinner may be an informal discussion carried on from a previous matter, or matters suggested during an informal atmosphere during the dinner reception maybe an introductory conversation leading on to a more formal discussion.

**Figure 4: Reception hosting for international delegates**



The focused study period of the President of the Senate during the 2008-2010 incumbency, it is observed that reception hosting was quite frequent. A personal assumption on this issue is that the President and Second Vice-President of the Senate during that incumbency were very active in foreign diplomatic activities, therefore they would ensure that reception hosting as part of a parliamentary diplomatic process should be well-prepared in advance and be done as

complete as possible. This would, therefore, give a cordial gesture to international delegates that members of the Senate are professional and are aware of universal protocol customs. Beyond promoting standards of shared values and official behaviour, the club-like atmosphere of the diplomatic realm has supported the common view of diplomacy as a specialist and elusive pursuit (Kelley, 2010, p.287). The reason can also be explained further that reception hosting as part of a good diplomatic gesture has many detailed elements of protocol, combined with the personality, gesture, preferences of the hosts.

The explanation for the high peak in 2007 would be similar to that of receiving official visits as guests of the Senate that the interim government would plan to keep a normal functioning of diplomatic activities during the National Legislative Assembly period. It is noticed that compared to other international diplomatic activities, reception hosting for foreign delegates appear to be having a decline towards the recent incumbency. From the data collected during the interviews and from personal observation during the period between 2007-2009, reception hosting are only part of the hospitality of welcoming foreign delegates as official guests to the Thai Parliament. The impact it has on the exchange of views and opinions over a specific topic is not as formal as that of an official meeting or discussion.

### **Analysis of international diplomatic activities**

The international diplomatic activities of the Thai Senate have been categorised in graph forms. Supporting information can be seen from the four figured graphs respectively; official visits to and from the Senate, courtesy calls, international conferences, and receptions hosting. During the period presented in the graphs from 2006-2012, there have been 1 President of the National Legislative Assembly and three Presidents of the Senate respectively. The analysis that will be related to my research hypotheses will remain focused

on the President of the Senate and senators during the 2008-2010 incumbency<sup>62</sup>, as there is an amount of information from official records and personal observations to support my arguments.

As seen from the graphs, the peaks are mostly high in 2010, the period before the former President of the Senate finished his term in office. Analysis from the graphs adds to my observation that after an unstable period, the President of the Senate needs to stabilise the image and accountability of parliament, reflecting political and professional leadership. From the presented data, the President of the Senate in this current incumbency is not as active in foreign diplomatic duties compared to the previous President and the President of the National Legislative Assembly respectively<sup>63</sup>. It is obvious that an institutional regulation pattern is set up for each President to follow, but then again it also depends on the combination of each individual leadership style combined with the professional background of the person.

As regards leadership, not only does this apply to the President and Vice-Presidents of the Senate, but also with chairpersons of standing committees. The existing research has established that the type of the governmental system defines the roles that the government, parties and committees play in the legislative process (Khmelko, Pigenko, and Wise, 2007, p.211). Nonetheless, the role of the President of the Senate is quite limited. He can only represent the institution and give opinions, but does not have the authority to put forward any final decisions – as that has to be done by government members of the administrative e.g.

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<sup>62</sup> Information to support this research has been gathered mainly from records of the former President of the Senate from 2008-2010. The succeeding President held office term for a very brief period and had his position suspended due to fraudulence. The current President of the Senate was former First Vice-President during both previous incumbencies.

<sup>63</sup> At the time of writing, the former President of the Senate who held office from June 2011 until late July 2012 had to resign from the position on criminal records of corruption. He still remains a senator. The new President of the Senate was former First Vice-President, and has recently been appointed (31 August 2012).

Prime Minister or Minister of Foreign Affairs. During the Senate's representation in international diplomatic functions be it abroad or in the country, the role of the President, Vice-Presidents, and senators representing different committees are mostly limited to the exchange of opinions and courtesy gestures. Further, evidence from interviews has provided various views on the senators' perception on parliamentary diplomatic duties. All senators see the importance of building and extending relations with foreign counterparts, yet there are some senators who do not even know their duty framework (interviewed 25 March 2011). They only understand that foreign diplomatic trips are opportunities to travel abroad and meet new people from the same position and background. The extension of diplomatic agreements beyond that are very rare, as these groups of senators assume that it should be a separate role for Foreign Ministry envoys – the administrative sector.

The Thai propensity for changing constitutions has been referred to as "faction constitutionalism," whereby each successive draft reflects, makes legitimate, and strengthens major shifts in factional dominance. As was observed above, Thai constitutions have not been considered the fundamental law of the land but rather have functioned to facilitate the rule of the regime in power (Neher, 1970, p.240). From the empirical data gathered in this research, it can be observed that the collective performance on international diplomatic duties of the Thai Senate depends on the professionalism and leadership of the President, according to each particular constitution. For this research, the President of the Senate who took office in a period following a political crisis tended to be more active in domestic and foreign diplomatic missions, in order to build a better image and reputation to the unstable Thai parliament. Diplomacy becomes the means to create legitimacy. Broad-based support and consensus to make the political process efficient and secure are required in democratic political systems. However, the prospect of or the potential for regime change underlies an autocratic government while policy adjustments under a democratic government may help reduce long-

term radical political change (Feng, 2001, p.272). In a system of indirect democracy the people delegate their sovereignty to political and administrative institutions and actors, trusting that this mandate will be handled in an appropriate way as the legitimacy of these situations and actors is based largely on trust (Christensen and Lægreid, 2005, p.487).

A distinctive observation would still remain to the fact that the President of the Senate in whichever constituency holds the authority to steer the initiative of each foreign mission. In some views, concentrated power in Westminster model parliaments allows for the creation and bestowal of collective benefits through the political marketplace. Most of parliament's problems are not due to institutional design but to failures in the party system. The concentration of power inherent in the Westminster model may appear as a threat to individual freedom (Atkinson and Thomas, 1993, p.424). Findings from one working paper on the UK parliament, for example, were the very different perspectives on the Committee held by ministers and the bureaucracy. Ministers found the Committee's work useful in influencing policy on occasion and signaling political priorities. However, the bureaucracy was dismissive, arguing that the Committee was telling them nothing new and that parliamentary committees are made up of politicians behaving politically rather than professional policy makers<sup>64</sup> (Monk, 2010, p.3).

The findings from fieldwork would indeed support my initial theoretical argument on parliamentary diplomacy and sociological institutionalism – the main theoretical approaches to this research. From my personal observation at this stage: most of the countries the senators choose to go to would be developed countries, apart from countries that they already have bilateral relations with, the countries that have paid a visit to the Senate as official

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<sup>64</sup> See Hindmoor, A., Larkin, P. and Kennon, A., (2009), Assessing the Influence of Select Committees in the UK: The Education and Skills Committee, 1997–2005. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 15 (1), 71–89; O'Keeffe, P., (1992), The Scope and Functions of Parliamentary Committees. *Parliamentarian*, 73 (4), 270–275.

guests. The reason why senators go to countries categorised as developed countries can be explained as a combination of personal and professional. This could be related back to the critical opinion from the senior Secretariat staff from the Bureau of Strategy and Policy that the Senate has never had an institutional policy on international diplomatic missions before. Therefore, the presumed reason for senators to plan a visit to a specific country would be as to exchange visits between delegations and also to seek assistance with current plans or projects that the committee has in schedule. For example, the chairperson of the Committee on Foreign Affairs has given examples of current topics that have been discussed among fellow parliamentarians as well as with foreign counterparts. These topics included education, women and children welfare (interviewed 21 March 2011). Again, the exchange of opinions would also apply to senators from other committees. An observation is that when the senators travel to a foreign country and meet with a government representative of that country, he or she would prefer to receive briefings and information on specific topics rather than engage in a two-way conversation<sup>65</sup>.

Again, another suggestion from a senator of the Committee on Energy was that in terms of background prior to taking political positions in parliament senators were not diplomats. However, the chance for senators to become diplomats, or at least to consider themselves as diplomats, would depend on the generosity of the senators when communicating with foreign representatives on particular matters (interviewed 2 May 2011). Through a genealogical approach, diplomatic partners are peripheral to official accounts of the state that are located as central to everyday political processes (Domett, 2005, p.290). It can be argued that this could be one of the factors on how senators would realise and develop their potential to become parliamentary diplomats when they happen to be in a requiring situation. The ability

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<sup>65</sup> Unless the senators are able to communicate fluently in English and have a level of knowledge on that discussed topic.



to express opinions spontaneously as well as negotiate on issues that need to be discussed, senators should think further about the psychological effects of their communication, not limiting on looking for networks of interpersonal communication but have to think way beyond the purposes of informal communication that would lead on to interpersonal influence and whether that would be taken into consideration later on in the paths of their duties (Bauer, 1958, p.67). Again, factors which lead to the possibility of pursuing a diplomatic career later on would also depend on the opportunities and connections the senators have.

### *iii. Political Socialisation*

When applying data findings to the theoretical approach on sociological institutionalism, a main point stands out to support my adopted theory that the relations between the actors and the institutional regulations are obvious. Actors, referring to senators and senate staff, are from different social, educational, and professional backgrounds. When examining the relations in two individual groups; senators and the senate, senate staff and the secretariat, we are able to understand the impact of the actor's background towards their performance and duties. Therefore, their knowledge and understanding of their duties are reflected in various levels. Main factors that influence the performance of these actors not only would be the responsibilities and tasks within each diplomatic mission, but their background knowledge, training, and discipline. These latter factors would, to an extent, determine the level of success in the outcomes of these missions.

An obvious example would be from international conferences, referred from a senator who was secretary of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (interviewed 28 March 2011), that an international conference like the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) conference, members of parliaments would choose to attend specific sessions that suit their background interest, training, and professionalism, not to mention the areas in standing committees they hold

membership. My personal observation during the period of attending the 125<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference in Bern, Switzerland, in October 2011 was that senators do in fact attend the plenary sessions, to confirm their attendance as delegates from the Thai parliament. Again, the question leads on to how far do the senators take their attendance and details of these seminar sessions further in terms of implementation. This would be proven with further document analysis.

Applying the sociological institutionalist approach: the argument is that the senators act like a collective group of individuals. Accepting that they hold temporary posts in office, when they work together as a team they are able to perform their duties at hand more effectively. Groups of peoples coordinate their individual actions and perform a collective action under particular circumstances (Ernst and Chant, 2007, p.415). However, evidence from a senator from the Education Committee suggested that most senators tend to be quasi-individualistic, that is they think and plan work individually with their own team of personal assistants – who are not secretariat staff. For senators who prefer working as a team, then this would be considered as selfish and irresponsible. As a result, the reality within the institution contradicts with the policy expectations (interviewed 30 March 2011).

When thinking about the senate's policy, rules in the constitution combined with internal institutional policies are set for the members to follow and accomplish, but the policies on international diplomatic duties would have to be drawn up in each incumbency. All of the senators and the Senate staff interviewed would say that the President of the Senate would be the person responsible for constructing the policies on international diplomatic duties, therefore their attendance and participation on any foreign mission would depend upon the decision of the President. In other words, it is to say that the values and professionalism of the president of the senate would be the issues that would determine the direction of the

policy on international diplomatic duties of the Senate, thus shaping the outcomes of parliamentary diplomacy. In other words, the president of the senate – as the leader of the group – should have the knowledge and professionalism to establish rules, regulations, policies, and, most importantly, should have leadership; able to make abrupt and precise decision on certain issues.

One senator from the Committee of Transportations stressed that ‘everyone is a diplomat’ meaning that it does not matter whether you are a senator or hold any other profession (interview 3 May 2011). Once your duties require foreign contact, then you should have the knowledge, professionalism, and generosity to communicate with the other representative. It can also be argued that if a senator considers himself as a diplomat, apart from all these qualities he should also know how to communicate proficiently, where the diplomat would be able to talk and implement their own values through their conversation without constraining the atmosphere or stirring a dispute (Gomes de Matos, 2001, p.282). At this stage, diplomatic communication among the senators in the parliamentary level would be to create and maintain good relations rather than to negotiate or hoping for a formal agreement. Shifting back to the aspects on the senators membership, from an interview with the former President of the Senate (given at the end of his tenure, 11 March 2011)<sup>66</sup>: the candidate selected to become President of the Senate should have prospects on the international duties of the Senate, apart from domestic legislative scrutiny. The prospective President should also see parliamentary diplomacy as a bridge to strengthen international relations with foreign counterparts. Also, does not matter whether you are member of the House of Representatives or the Senate; as long as you are a parliamentarian you have every right to be a diplomatic representative of parliament.

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<sup>66</sup> A reminder that this research is focused on the 2008-2011 incumbency. Since June 2011 to present there has been a change of President of the Senate.

The general information on the National Legislative Assembly including its functioning and membership has been given in chapter 3 on the Thai Senate. In this chapter, the discussion will continue in detail on the impact of the NLA whether it has influenced the functioning of the 2008 Senatorial incumbency. My opinion on this point is that the temporary governing period of the National Legislative Assembly has not had any drastic impact in the consecutive performance of the Senate after the general elections because the period during which parliament was dissolved and the NLA was appointed was considered as a separate period. The prospects and functioning of a particular senatorial incumbency, I argue, would solely depend on the leadership of the President and Vice-Presidents.

In addition, the institutional norms and regulations would also have an impact in shaping the decisions and performance of the President and Vice-Presidents. By saying so, my opinion here can be related back to the theoretical approach on sociological institutionalism where the performance of the actor reflects his or her professional and personal background. High personnel who hold political positions tend to act as part of the political elite as well as members of the bureaucracy to create an organisational identity in a bureaucratic system, based on their societal norms and background. Normative variables used to measure the level of leadership constitute societal norms such as the propensity to innovate, policy traditions, religiosity, and political culture which may be defined as historical differences in habits, concerns and attitudes across states (Miller and Banaszak-Holl, 2005, p.192). From this, the fact of having both appointed and elected senators can create a balance of power in itself for the institution of the Thai Upper House. In any other way, both categories of senators are senior professionals with numerous years of experiences and therefore can contribute their knowledge to their duties in office. However, it is undeniable that among all the senators there are some who possess the skills and knowledge to perform in the Senate, but instead take their positions for granted particularly in foreign diplomatic duties. They seem to not

acknowledge the professional part of their duties, meaning that they would complete their duties to comply with the individual and institutional regulations. However, they see the professional part of the Senate's duties as secondary, while the 'luxury' part is seen as the primary reason to join the group. Details from a secretariat staff, Energy Committee, mentioned that some senators would see the opportunity of travelling abroad as a rewarding part of their senatorship. In fact, they should perceive international diplomatic duties as part of their responsibilities within the committee (interviewed 2 May 2011). In my opinion, the latter claim on rewarding benefits of trips abroad would apply to senators who do not yet acknowledge the significance of parliamentary foreign affairs, or those who do not see themselves as diplomatic actors. Also, the senators' term is considered as a temporary political opportunity. They are not allowed to stand for consecutive elections or appointments, as stated by the current Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, 2007. There are, in fact, some senators who choose to resign themselves from office before the end of their term in order to stand for the following elections or appointments, depending on their previous approval.

Additional information from other Secretariat of the Senate staff can be used to support these arguments. A junior official from the Committee on Economics, Industry and Transportation has suggested a problem on the diplomatic duties of some senators, despite their professional experience in a certain field, do not have sufficient knowledge to exchange opinions with foreign representatives. As a result, important courtesy calls or meetings in the proposed agenda has to be cancelled (interviewed 2 May 2011). From this, it is clear that the actors - senators and senate staff - have a lot of potential, but they do not use it to the fullest. This, from a personal perspective, is limited by institutional bureaucracy. If the Thai parliament were to follow the traditional diplomatic model of the foreign affairs ministry, they should at least have a concise policy on foreign affairs e.g. how it should be conducted, the expected

outcomes, and the qualification of the actors involved. An opinion from the deputy secretary-general on human resources and development (interviewed 3 May 2011) was to provide a parliamentary representative to be based at embassies in other countries, for there are currently representatives from the Commerce Ministry and the Military, so that the parliamentary diplomatic procedures would be more efficient.

A recent observation on the composition of delegation members on a particular foreign diplomatic trip would be a selection of senators from the same region. An example from an official visit to the UK, Northern Ireland, and France<sup>67</sup> was that the delegation was composed of senators who represented the Southern provinces of Thailand. The issues they discussed about with a member of the UK House of Lords during an official visit were ethnic minorities and immigration control respectively. On this arguing topic of political socialisation, the choice of members of the delegation are seen as a form of engaging senators who share similarities including the same regional dialect, similar political values<sup>68</sup>, and most of them have a professional background in education. On the purpose of the visit, in addition, the senators are from the Southern part of the country with 3 senators representing the Southernmost provinces. Therefore, the exchange of opinions with a member of the UK Lords was an opportunity to provide knowledge on the UK government's perspective on the conflict in Northern Ireland to representatives from the Thai government in handling the violence in the Southernmost provinces of Thailand. Further discussions on the senator's role in solving the Southernmost insurgencies will be expanded later in chapter 5.

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<sup>67</sup> Personal observation as part of the working staff during an official visit to the Houses of Parliament, UK, 4 December 2012.

<sup>68</sup> The southern part of Thailand are mainly democrat supporters, and have a high value for democracy. An more in-depth discussion on the value of democracy from this observation will be explained in chapter 3.

The similarities between the UK/Northern Ireland dispute and between the Southernmost provinces in Thailand are mainly religious conflicts. The UK/Northern Irish case has stemmed from the Catholic-Protestant dispute, thus it can be relevant to the conflict in the Southernmost provinces of Thailand that violence from political, social, and economic outcomes requires an understanding of the institutional context in every level (Brownlow, 2012, p.723). The latter case on the Thai Southernmost provinces, accordingly, has been an ongoing clash through decades between the Buddhist-Muslim population<sup>69</sup>. Further, the tension in the South has been overshadowed by the ongoing national conflict since late 2005 between the loyalists<sup>70</sup> who support the monarchy and the supporters of former Premier Thaksin Shinawatra (McCargo, 2009, p.55). Prior to that, confusion over responsibility for the attacks deepened in March 2004 when an arrested suspect alleged that two ruling party members of parliament had planned the initial raid. Further partial explanation might be that elements in the army have sponsored violence to justify their claims to a stepped-up role in maintaining security in the south. However, criminal groups linked to local politicians and senior government figures, including Thaksin, were to blame despite the struggling for people-trafficking activities and narcotics (Strategic Comments, p.1).

#### *iv. Diplomatic competency*

An efficient way to access the outcomes of parliamentary diplomatic actors is to look at the performance of the actors. In this part, I will give a brief report on the Senate staff and the Secretariat of the Senate based on the thematical approach of sociological institutionalism. If I were to say that the relationship is similar to that of the senators and the Senate, a fact that would distinguish them from one another is that senators come and go in a fixed period of

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<sup>69</sup> The historical origins of conflict in the 3 Southernmost conflicts in Thailand can be traced back to territorial loss during the colonial period (late 19<sup>th</sup> century – early 20<sup>th</sup> century). The cultural and religious difference, militant insurgency has also aggravated the tension between the people.

<sup>70</sup> The loyalists refer to the supporters of the monarchy, the military, and the traditional institutions. See McCargo, 2008.

time but most of the Senate staff stay from when they enter civil service in their early 20s until they officially retire at the age of 60. Therefore, the approximate duration of service would be 30-35 years, unless they choose to retire before their service ends. It is also possible that some staff might be transferred from one post to another within the Secretariat during their service period, at the same time transferring their existing knowledge and understanding from the previous duty towards the other. This explains, to an extent, that the majority of the Senate staff are responsible and understand their duties well, and are therefore 'trainable'; able to learn new knowledge and skills that would enable them to develop their competency.

From the interview findings, one of the major concerns for the Secretariat staff when it comes to international diplomatic duties includes language competency and in-depth knowledge on specific issues. The lack of knowledge – and courage – to communicate is considered a hindrance for performing international duties as the staff need to be familiar with the whole procedure of the international missions. The Senate staff, from a personal observation, usually perform their duties according to familiarity. Another observation would be that senators who are not very spontaneous in communicating in English or who are not able to speak English at all would develop a habit of 'tagging along' in certain foreign trips due to the fact they happen to share a collective identity – having been officially invited by the leader of the trip and being able to fit in with other delegate members on that trip<sup>71</sup>. In addition, senators going on international diplomatic trips would complete their duties according to previous examples and norms, therefore following a responsibility cycle. Each is orientated more or less towards the same idea of what is the right thing to do (MacCormick, 1998, p.307). As a result, new ideas do not emerge and is considered, in my opinion, as a hindrance to their skills improvement. However, to judge from only the individual would not

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<sup>71</sup> When mentioning about fitting into the group, it is referred to foreign visits where senators are from similar professional backgrounds, being either all appointed or all elected, and interestingly senators who are from the same region in Thailand where they speak the same regional dialect.



be fair or relevant. If we consider the institutional part, there is no clarity in the structure. Although there are general regulations stating the expected qualifications of the senators and the expected duties to accomplish, there is no proper guideline on how the mission should be conducted. This omission has direct impact on the Senate staff, as they need to support the duties of the senators.

A suggestion that the Secretariat of the Senate should establish a proper institutional policy on conducting foreign affairs was asserted by two interviewees. Both were secretariat staff, one from the Protocol Group, Bureau of Foreign Affairs, and the other was from the policy planning group, Bureau of Policy and Strategy. They also added that secretariat staff should be more assertive in a sense that not only they aim to perform their duties and get the mission completed, but they should also learn new things and transfer their administrative skills in future missions they are responsible for (interviewed 28 April and 2 May 2011 respectively). However, the institutional norms shaped by the bureaucratic culture has automatically influenced the Secretariat staff not to 'encroach' the skills and duties of the parliamentarians. A fact from an interview with the Deputy Secretary-General on Human Resources emerged that the Secretariat of the Thai Parliament used to be a single body, hence the name suggests, and that it was responsible to serve both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Later, in order to separate the work more proficiently and to support more Secretariat staff professionally, the Secretariat was divided into 2 distinctive institutions. They have since been responsible for each House (interviewed 3 May 2011). From a personal perspective, having a separate secretariat like present is more beneficial in distributing the responsibilities among staff and should be able to cover the administrative duties more efficiently. However, an advice from the director of the personnel training group, Bureau of Human Resources Development was that there has been discussions between the two secretariats about establishing a joint centre that would overlook the international diplomatic duties of both

Houses. This centre, in addition, would be the distributor and coordinator between the Thai parliament and other international organisations or establishments for which the Thai parliament holds membership. Moreover, the joint centre would also provide training as appropriate for secretariat staff who have direct responsibility in supporting the senators duties, both domestically and internationally (interviewed 3 May 2011).

As it has been explained, the relationship between the actor and the institution has two broad dimensions; the senators and the secretariat of the senate staff respectively. The discussion will now continue on the nature of the senators and senate staff working together. Earlier on, the hypothesis was put forward that the Senate staff are in fact more active in performing international parliamentary diplomatic duties. However, having gathered some information from the semi-structured interviews, a point to counter-hypothesise has risen; neither the senators or the senate staff have more capability than the other. All of them are individual actors who happen to have different levels of education, experience, and knowledge of their duties. Moreover, their positions within the institution would also prove to be crucial to determining and giving a framework to their responsibilities and decision-making. For instance, if we look at the senators and the senate staff individually, they are a group of individuals who perform according to their functions and have the underlying respect for each other by seniority. Democratic theory also dictates that both staff and line officials have their appropriate respective duties. Moreover, the objectives of the committee the senator holds membership in would outline the position and duty framework for the senator. This would inevitably encourage senators to pay official visits to countries in the same region or outside the region that have expertise or professional accomplishments on issues concerning that particular committee. If the facts about the tenure of senators and senate staff are weighed down, senators would have more professional experience from their backgrounds while senate staff would have intensive knowledge on the procedures of administration on

domestic and international parliamentary duties. Therefore, these two groups of actors are able to coordinate their professional skills during parliamentary diplomatic missions. However, it is crucial that senators and senate staff do not overlap their duty frameworks. In the first part of the literature review, conceptualising diplomacy and defining parliamentary diplomacy revealed that it is an emerging path of developing international relations. At the same time, we have considered an alternative approach. When talking about traditional diplomacy, we think of the customs and conducts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its actors; ambassadors that represent their country. However, if we assume that most of the governmental institutions follow the conventional diplomatic customs of the Foreign Office, then the Thai Senate does not count as such institution. The Senate, in fact, does not have a proper institutional policy.

*v. Political engineering: constructing an institutional mechanism*

The political culture of a country is considered a structural framework for the functioning of its institutions. Political engineering is a term used to define the mechanisms of an organisation where the performance of the members are adapted to suit the transnational flows of communication, capital, and knowledge (Trentmann, 1998, p.218). A well-structured institutional mechanism would be able to constitute towards an efficient functioning of the government in a collective and international level, at the same time stimulate the professional realisation of the institution members to complete their duties. The choices new representative institutions make about ways they interact with other actors in systems of multi-level governance reflect institutional capacities and priorities. At times of constitutional change, however, decisions about institutional roles made are subject to the constraints of imperfect information (Downs, 2000, p.68).

On a bureaucratic and norm-based approach, the spread of concepts and ideas through institutional paradigms are usually implemented to a higher level of competition in order to provide for better public services (Spano, 2009, p.329). Parliaments, as representatives of the people, are expected to provide information on government sittings, passing and scrutiny of bills. As a result, parliaments – as well as other political institutions – are obliged to readapt their internal structure and functionality so that they can maintain an efficient institutional mechanism. External surroundings including the political regime and government in power would also have impact on the internal structure of the institution. However, what matters more would be the duty outputs of the institutional actors and in the case of parliaments, transparency and accountability towards the people rather than a perfectly structured system. Then again, paradoxically, a well-structured parliament with a coherent policy outline would enable the institutional actors to perform their duties according to plan and provide a more efficient outcome. This is when the significance of political engineering emerges into the argument. Conditions that establish institutional recognition and anchoring of the democratic rules of the political game sufficient to stop slippage into authoritarianism may be seen as creating low levels of democratic consolidation, as high levels of democratic consolidation are associated with conditions which enable democratic institutions, processes, and culture to take deep root (Pasquino, 2002, p.230). A thought to consider when referring to adopting political engineering as means to restructure the institutional systems – in this case the Thai parliament, the outlook for an effective institutional function would mean to revise the constitution, particularly the laws on composition of political parties which will lead to the qualifications of parliamentary candidates. Institutions are portrayed as instruments for control, learning and improvement. The identity of agents and principals are usually based on formal legal institutions and normative theories of sovereignty, superiority and subordination. Therefore, a lack of effective accountability relations and processes undermines democracy and that democratic accountability requires well-developed institutions (Olsen, 2013, p.1-2).

*vi. Good governance in a democratic society*

An argument on the Thai political culture and bureaucratic system is that the structure and performance of all governmental institutions in Thailand are inevitably shaped by the historical patronage system in the Thai society. It is a widespread argument that the most common forms of government are bureaucratic hierarchies, however the present nature of national governments is that their governing structure has shifted more towards marketing and network. This raises a concerning question whether they are becoming less capable of getting their way or merely altered the ways in which they do so (Bevir, 2011, p.3). One senator from the Committee on Trade and Finance has asserted that the balance of power within the Senate, let alone the Thai parliament, has lost its accountability due to the fact that Thailand has an 'external power' apart from the authoritative power of parliament (interviewed 29 March 2011). The external power in this case would refer to the military; a brief explanation on how the military-dominated Thai political system relates to the governing model of the Thai parliament would be discussed briefly here. A study on organisational adaptation to complex environments arise primarily from the orientation of complexity theory towards systems rather than towards actors, and this lies in the all-too-ready assumption of environmental determinism (Child and Rodrigues, 2011, p.805). In the present situation of Thai politics, it is known that the military began to assert their influence in the politics of the country to increase the funds for the army just after the 2006 coup by expanding the powers of the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) in order to suppress antigovernment movements<sup>72</sup> (Jha, 2011, p.327).

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<sup>72</sup> Historically, the military has always been part of Thailand's political culture. Members of parliament and royal legal advisors would comprise of senior military officials.

A senator from the Committee on Education and the Committee on Trade and Finance, further, also stressed the domination of the 'external power'. In other words, they were saying that the military and that does not reflect true democracy (interviewed March, 2010). Moreover, elected senators are not really accepted by the majority of people, not to mention among other appointed peers. The other problem is that senators are seen as unapproachable. Thailand has got an 'external power' - the military. The definition for Thai politics now would be semi-democratic, bureaucratic military-ruled. Most of the senators are also senior military officials, therefore they would have a distinctive mind-set when they present their opinions or perform their duties. There are a lot of capable people out there, but they are restrained by the system and lack of freedom of speech. Moreover, another opinion from this senator was that the appointment of senators does not provide the opportunity for competent representatives, from his perspective referring to elected senators, to take position in the House. In my opinion, the reason for the lack of competent senators is because bureaucracy and elite politics have played a crucial role in shaping the Senate's structure and the actors' performance. It should appear that appointed senators are considered from their professional records and the majority of them would be the more senior individuals, while the elected senators are more likely to be younger senators. Nonetheless, when they all enter office then there would be an inevitable situation of internal politics within the institution, among appointed and elected senators. Reasons would most likely be from the different levels of educational qualifications than professional experience because all senators are senior experienced professionals on their own rights (Coghill, Holland, Donohue, Rozzoli, and Grant, 2008, p.73-75). Suggestions on bureaucratic organisations were mostly focused on Weber's characterisation on public administration focusing on the role of the civil servant and the bureaucratic machine in which he operated, impacting the person's individual liberty (Meyer, 1995, p.33). As senators are not permanent civil servants, but political servants, they are obliged to perform their duties within the institutional framework. My argument here fits

into the nature of sociological institutionalism as mentioned gradually in previous discussions that the actors' performance reflect their background. However, factors such as seniority or the taking on the position should not repress or limit the person's ability to express and perform their duties to their fullest potential, although organisations have a concept of formal statements of missions and standards of conduct, as well as the corresponding of the formal structure and related physical objects; in other words official organisational structures (Jermier, Slocum Jr, Fry, Gaines, 1991, p.171).

Another recent public announcement from an elected senator from the Committee on Tourism<sup>73</sup> announced a statement that some elected and appointed senators agreed that the Constitution should be revised, particularly on the act where elected senators are not allowed to take a recurrent term in office. The revision of the Constitution would also clarify the doubts about power transfer within parliament through each consecutive incumbencies. Considerations on the willingness and agreements between the government, the opposition, and all senators are the main basis for decisions to amend the Constitution (Thairath Newspaper online, 6 December 2012). This statement can encourage readers to think about a separate dimension of political inequality that occurs not only within the wider society, but among a limited group of politicians. Moreover, the amendment of the Constitution<sup>74</sup>, from a critical perspective, can be seen as the ultimate procedure to improve the parity among senators. Considering the impact of hierarchy in any organisations, equal opportunities would lead a communicative contribution to real time negotiation and improvisation of policy manuals (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009, p.4). However, legal practitioners who participate

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<sup>73</sup> Also holding membership in the Committee on Individual Ethics and Competency Scrunity for National Audit candidacies. A personal speculation is that this committee was specially formed and its duties have been emphasised after the termination of the former President of the Senate's position on a history of fraud. This person, however, still holds senatorship in parliament.

<sup>74</sup> A reminder that the Thai Constitution is a written document and has been amended 18 times since the regime change to Constitutional monarchy.

in litigation try to understand legislation, some even try to misunderstand what an Act of Parliament says – or the conduct required under a set of Regulations (Crabbe, 2010, p.12).

The major fact associated with the Constitutional amendment is directly related to my theoretical discussion on the authority of the Thai Senate in procedures on foreign diplomatic missions. From this previous public statement, at the moment it can be concluded that the senators' performance is strictly conducted under the regulations of the Constitution. This, moreover, would justify their actions and limitations of decision-making in international diplomatic missions. In the following chapter, I will be discussing in detail on separate cases in the Southeast Asian region where senators in former and present incumbencies have had experiences in playing specific roles in international conflict resolution as well as international cooperation and integration.

The continuity of the actors' position as a diplomatic actor or political entrepreneurship is, moreover, another important issue that has been discussed during the interviews. A statement on political and bureaucracy entrepreneurship gives an interpretation on the fact that individuals choose where they work for reasons potentially related to their entry into entrepreneurship, and driven factors would usually be personalities and risk attitudes (Sorensen, 2007, p.388). From the group of 11 senators interviewed, most of them considered pursuing a diplomatic career after their term finishes. Even though they may not have stated directly, but they have implied through the conversation that their professional backgrounds have evolved around making foreign connections. Their senatorship, in addition, has provided another dimension to maintain existing contacts and to build new relations with international parliamentary peers. However, the limitation about continuing a political career is the lack of funding, change of status – senators would usually return back to their previous or background occupation.



The other problem that is difficult to eliminate from Thai society concerns party politics, and specifically relates to vote buying, corruption (interviewed 28 March 2011). It has been stated earlier in the discussion that citizens who live in rural areas are likely to have less knowledge about politics than those who live in the city or those who have a politics-related career. The uneven distribution of economic wealth through Thai society, the structural background of social cleavages, the dominant role of traditional elites, and the exploitation by new populist leaders of the rural poor's resentment of those elites are factors that can explain Thailand's susceptibility to bouts of high-stake political conflict and continuing democratic fragility (Norton, 2012, p.47). As a result, it is more convenient for local politicians to bribe the local villagers into vote-buying in return of community benefits and welfare (Callahan, 2005, p.95). When the process of buying people into politics continues over and over again, the exercise of democracy will be disrupted. The main factor that influences this is also constitutional power: Thailand's political instability has been obviously reflected through the constant revision and rewriting of the Constitution. Each written document has a set of similar and adapted rules, only the first 3 acts are taken as grounded statements; the state, the King, and the Constitution (Kitisin, 2008).

“The legitimacy crisis has also spread to the National Assembly which is no longer regarded as “Grand Forum of the Realm” that could help resolve political problems. The courts and independent bodies have all been criticised openly and with distrust. The ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the government and the National Assembly was clearly demonstrated throughout 2008. The Thai parliament passed less than 10 laws, while the bureaucracy abstained from doing their duties for fear of being scrutinised and accused of political partiality. A general feeling was that government officials were in ‘neutral gear’, thereby causing the administration of the country to slow down significantly”

(Uwanno, 2009, p.58).

Another problematic issue is that while freedom of speech exists in principle, what you say may not be taken in seriously, and may be perceived to have adverse consequences. This all depends on who you are, your status in the society and your political position. Most people are refrained or limited to express their opinions and thoughts openly as it would not be appropriate and in certain cases might even probe risk to their personal security. Bureaucracies are products of stability, as they are designed to maintain course, to stabilise conditions, and to provide predictability amidst periods of uncertainty. The populace would be deeply affected when bureaucracies cease to reinforce social stability (Aberbach and Rockman, 2006, p.978). Political institutions, in addition, are expected to respect and embody certain basic liberties or freedoms where all citizens can afford a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties (Richardson, 2007, p.390). The free expression of ideas, views and beliefs are encouraged by deliberation to help identify what people think and what is important to them<sup>75</sup>. Relating these scholarly facts to the issue on freedom of speech in Thailand, the patron-client bureaucratic culture refrains valuable opinions from members of the public which would help improve or to the least influence decision-making and policy implementation to be proceeded. Even if diverse opinions and critiques flow seemingly, most are not taken into account as seriously as they should<sup>76</sup>. In other words, opinions that would be taken into account would be those from specific elite groups; politicians, high ranking military officials, the upper-middle class, and part of the middle class. An example on the freedom of expression was that freedom of expression means the freedom to receive and impart opinions, information and ideas without hindrance, intimidation, or interference. It

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<sup>75</sup> See Blowers, Boersema, & Martin, 2005, p.1. Ideally, it should be possible for participants to express and understand the provenance and status of different viewpoints provided the process abides by agreed rules. Deliberation should encourage rational argument as well as enabling participants to articulate their experience and intuitive judgement.

<sup>76</sup> Due to the social status of the person giving the opinion, the particular issue being referred to, and the cultural "appropriateness" of addressing that issue in public. The theoretical approach on March and Olsen's "Logic of Appropriateness" may be relevant to support the discussion on problems of freedom of speech in Thailand, apart from the parliamentary actors' performance which I have discussed earlier in the thesis.

belongs to all persons and may be exercised through publishing and broadcasting, writing, speaking or through physical acts. Freedom of expression is a universal human right, enshrined in many international and regional instruments, most notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Martin, 2002, p.524). So to speak, the distribution of equality as regards to freedom of speech in the Thai society is still considered uneven.

*vii. Public participation: a matter of interest or lack of information?*

The matter of public participation is another consideration when studying the relationship between parliamentarians and members of the public. A crucial issue that has risen from the data collection with senators, senate staff, and a number of members from the public was that very little people know about the duties of the Senate. The initial understanding was that the Senate are a distinguished group of professionals with extensive background and ‘help’ the members of the House of Representatives scrutinise legal drafts. Otherwise, senators are another group of politicians who attend regular meetings – sittings – at the Parliament house. Interestingly, a few of the interviewees from this group has given a rather harsh comment on the image and performance of the Thai Senate, that we need not think further on the international diplomatic duties but the actors themselves should focus their attention on their responsibilities and duties within the institution and how it would benefit towards the people in a wider scope (interview with biology teacher, April 2011). Such issue can be related to theoretical discussions on political participation and civic engagement in politics. When considering this issue on the research context, it may not be as relevant to the main discussions and theoretical approaches. However, the issue on civic engagement and political participation would help clarify the explanation in the previous part on the background of

Thai politics, as well as the nature of Thai political culture. Moreover, this issue highlights the part of the problem of democracy improvement in Thailand.

Civic engagement in Thailand, from the collected data, can be categorised into two general groups; the people who are interested in politics and those who are not interested. In another way to view this according to the nature of the Thai society would be the rural working class and the urban middle class<sup>77</sup>. The groups of people that are interested would mostly be from the working class in rural communities, and these are the people that are most likely to be drawn into politics by vote-buying. At the same time, the people who are not interested in politics are more likely to be the middle class. Reasons for members of the Thai middle class not having coherent political preferences – being pro-democratic or not - would be from several factors including anger, resentment, lost of faith in politicians, and the clash of economic stability and the concurrent revision of the Constitution (Englehart, 2003, pp.256-265). The interaction between political context and civic engagement to better understand how the dynamic of governmental institutions, leadership or structural forces can shape the nature and consequences of civic engagement (Oxendine, Sullivan, Borgida, Riedel, Jackson and Dial, 2007, p.32).

However, another problem on the basis of political participation which endures not only in the Thai society but other societies is that the distribution of knowledge on political rights - including civic engagement - is still not widely proceeded. An opinion from a member of staff from the Bureau of International Organisations, the Secretariat of the House of Representatives (interviewed 2 May 2011) that might be able to counter-argue and triangulate

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<sup>77</sup> The categorisation between the rural working class and urban middle class is only used to point out the facts about civic engagement in Thailand, and to support the previous categorising points of interest groups and non-interest groups. The main point does not intend to connote the lack of political knowledge and lack of access to politics in the society by class distinction.

with other external opinions was that the citizens by nature do not understand the law<sup>78</sup>. As a basis of an agricultural society, they would concern more whether they will be able to fill their stomachs by the end of the day. The group of citizens who would show interest in law would be the middle class or the upper-middle class. Also, law is a complicated matter, even for the middle class. Therefore, it would be even more complicated for the working class. My view towards this issue would be to look from both sides; the parliament and the public, as parliamentarians no matter being a member of the House of Representatives or member of the Senate are all representatives from the people. Findings from both parts are presented as follows; Parliament: only selected clips of sittings are broadcasted because government has not been very financially supportive in broadcasting parliamentary sittings - individual house and joint, or another assumption would be that they choose specific sessions to broadcast for a particular reason. On the public part: people do not have the basic knowledge about legislative affairs. Citizens who live in rural areas where information technology are not widely spread would usually have a lack of interest in political affairs – in other words they would distant themselves from politics. The paradox, however, is that these groups of people would be the ones easily drawn into vote-buying when the general elections take place.

Whilst the value of parliamentarianism has been reinforced, the scepticism towards legislatures has in fact increased over the last decade. Trust in parliamentary institutions has been steadily declining as they have never been more active in developing mechanisms to engage with the public. As a result, concerns on parliament's ability, its key actors, how much power the institution has and its level of ability to influence that power have all been criticised (Bandeira, 2012, p.266). However, on the Senate's part, the Public Relations Bureau has been conducting projects in public relations, disseminating information of senate affairs to the public and strengthening their understanding about what the senate does and the

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<sup>78</sup> As this research is focused on Thailand, the citizens in this case would refer to Thai citizens.

benefits it has. It is good to give basic knowledge to the public about parliamentary affairs, therefore strengthening their understanding on rights and values of the people in a democratic society. Unfortunately, the nature of Thai politics is that the majority of citizens, in particular people from the rural areas, are embedded in the habit of vote-buying. To this stage, lessons should be learnt from consequences in national elections – one raised here from the 1996 election. Problems including excessive use of money in the election campaigns, a widening urban-rural gap in voting behaviour, vote buying and violence including the assassination of canvassers characterise democratic development in Thailand (Bunbongkarn, 1997, p.154). Unless people understand the true value of citizen's democratic rights, which would likely see a sudden improve in the near future, then corruption problems will continue. Parliamentary diplomacy is the system of representation with members of parliament being diplomatic actors. The relevance to the previous discussion on the value of citizen's democratic rights and problems of corruption has been raised as a point for reflection on the importance of a stable democratic society. International diplomatic duties of parliamentarians are also considered as an opportunity for them to represent goodwill and democracy. The lessening of vote-buying, corruption, and electoral fraud depends on promoting good governance in a democratic society. Therefore, the relevance of parliamentary diplomacy for the elimination of corruption would require a united front in terms of stabilising and promoting democracy at the international level through the parliamentary diplomatic activities. Also, it will also reflect the parliamentarians' values on democracy.

### *b. Conclusion: prospects of the Thai Senate as a future diplomatic institution*

At present, putting my arguments together along with the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and official documents, it is possible to make a preliminary conclusion that the Thai Senate at its present stage does not have a definite outlook of developing into a prominent diplomatic institution. Several external and internal factors are related to this

conclusion. Part of the fact is that they do not have a concise policy model on foreign affairs, despite having a statement on how foreign affairs should be conducted and what outcomes are expected. Moreover, the senators are only temporary political representatives and perform their duties according to regulations stated in the Constitution. From this reason, most of them would only perform according to the requirements of their duties or special positions they hold. But then again, if the Constitution keeps on being revised and re-revised in the future, the chances of the senators' duty framework would not likely be static.

In this chapter, a theoretical discussion on several themes that have risen according to the triangulated information from semi-structured interviews and document analysis have been stressed. The discussions combined with the obtained evidence were able to provide an outlook of the Thai Senate as a diplomatic actor. Not only facts about the actual functioning of the Senate was provided, but also opinions and suggestions from the practitioners themselves were asserted. These points would be valuable guidelines for future improvement on the policy implementation and decision-making of parliamentarians in a democratic society. Existing measures of democracy often disregard direct role of citizens on policy issues - also referred to as direct popular decision making - an important democratic practice as more attention is put on the electoral connection between representatives and voters (Altman, 2012, p.2).

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews in Thailand has provided useful information and proof to my main hypothesis, that parliamentary diplomacy has a straightforward definition as its title. Nonetheless, the prospects of the Thai Senate in becoming a potential parliamentary diplomatic actor can be possible if actors involved in the parliamentary diplomatic process realise their potential and the values of developing parliamentary diplomacy in the long term. The diplomatic actors, the senators and senate

staff, have to work in tandem to develop parliamentary diplomacy. The senate staff support the senators, but also the senators duties (reflected through the senate or parliament as a legislative institution) supports the work of the administrative sector, that is the government.

All in all at present, the international diplomatic missions of the Thai Senate, or referring to the Thai parliament as a whole, are strictly aimed to be within the frame of supporting and strengthening democracy. The scope of this would include being within the institution, the society, and within the international community. There has been, however, public scrutiny that because they know very little about the Senate's affairs, this is not an example of exercising true democracy. Other factors would be corruption, power politics, as well as favouritism in the government among political representatives. Consequently, the role of the Thai Senate as a diplomatic actor – relating this back to the initial research focus on parliamentary diplomacy – is that their decision-making authority is limited by the Constitution. However, the Senate as part of a bicameral parliament of Thailand can still be considered as an example of an active political actor in foreign affairs. Moreover, prospects on developing the Senate's internal structure would be an advantageous method in improving the competency of its actors including senators and secretariat staff, thus improving collective performance of the Thai parliament.

In the following chapter, specific case studies including territorial disputes and the ASEAN regional corporation will be further discussed. The roles of the Thai Senate in parliamentary diplomatic duties will also be analysed from each conflict respectively, for the disputes may be able to point out the purposes and procedures of the international diplomatic duties of the Senate from a different angle – in other words from the conventional parliamentary diplomatic activities that have been discussed throughout this chapter.



## Chapter 5

### **Case Studies on the Thai Senate's Parliamentary Diplomatic Duties: Territorial Disputes and the ASEAN 2015 Community Development Plan**

“While the diverse organisational forms and capacities of governments in Asia do not prevent economic integration or moves to bring regional countries together in shows of unity, they do make cooperation on many ‘governance’ issues problematic. Actors and institutions at the domestic level influence the goals and strategies that governments pursue in international negotiations”

(Hamilton-Hart, 2003, p.223).

The case studies on the Thai-Cambodian border conflict and on the ASEAN 2015 development plan are distinctive cases which are raised in this chapter to support my discussion on parliamentary diplomacy. The purposes of addressing these two cases are different; the border conflict case reflects an international situation where the President of the Senate represents the negotiating delegation – but does not have any decision-making authority. On the case of the ASEAN 2015 regional integration, this is raised as a case where Thai senators are a separate group of political representatives from the Thai government and are expected to take part in the development plan. These two cases show that parliamentary diplomacy, interpreted from the activities of the Senate, can be initially explained as a rationality – the Senate has been given more opportunities to represent the government on the border conflict case, and on the case of ASEAN 2015 is an easier and more convenient opportunity for senators to represent their constituency in an international level. Yet again,

these cases emphasise more on the senators' representation than formal decision-making in international diplomatic missions.

In the previous chapter, the discussion had been based on the analysis of the Thai Senate's duties as a diplomatic actor. However, there are two separate cases that have risen during data triangulation; the Thai-Cambodian border conflict and the development of the ASEAN 2015 community development plan respectively. These case studies are presented here to give examples of international situations where the actors from the Thai Senate have been present and are currently playing an important role respectively. On the border conflict situation, the role of the former President of the Senate<sup>79</sup> as part of the negotiating team with Foreign Ministry diplomats and other government members in conflict resolution and representativeness of legislation will be discussed. Although they may not hold the major role in decision-making, yet they were part of the negotiating team so this would count as being present and having experience in a foreign diplomatic setting. On the ASEAN 2015 development plan, further, the discussion on this case is elaborated in order to present the senators' perspectives on the importance of regional stability and coordination. Discussions on purposes of the senator's participation and performance on these cases of international diplomatic missions will also be included. Moreover, internal and external impacts on the senators' duties in these respective cases will be explained so as to indicate the level of effectiveness when they represent the country as parliamentary diplomatic actors.

The information obtained from the interviews did in fact fit into ASEAN initial objectives as a regional institution in promoting a sense of community and creating awareness of consolidating unity in diversity (ASEAN 2015 handbook). Another way to think about these two issues would concern conflict resolution in the region in order to strengthen international

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<sup>79</sup> The President of the Senate from April 2008-February 2010.

relations among neighbouring countries, promote democracy in the region, and enhancing governmental correspondence for simultaneous collaboration. The development of resources, processes, and skills necessary to sustain and develop cultures of peace in non-violent conflict resolution provides the fundamental basis for a global 'peace praxis' (Woodhouse, 2000, p.8). Amongst Southeast Asian political elites, there is a sense of community based on shared interest in regime survival to avoid the costs of outright conflict and on a rudimentary underlying regional culture (Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia, 2003, p.1). These examples are related to my theoretical discussions on the factors that influence parliaments to emerge and develop their institutional competency in foreign affairs, enhancing abilities on decision-making and policy implementation. Power of domestic and international level variables varies in consistent ways across the different stages of a territorial dispute and differences in the political accountability of democratic leaders can be used to explain opposing patterns of accommodative as well as conflictual behaviour by democratic states (Huth and Allee, 2002, p.755).

The cognition and motivation of power holders' behaviour disproportionately influences and has bigger impact on negotiations than those of their powerless counterparts, as a result military and diplomatic policies are adopted by democratic leaders through multiple stages of international disputes (De Dreu, 2005, p.150). New circumstances require a redefining of existing skills or the development of new ones. Institutionalising new training curricula to provide managerial, technical and leadership competency for government administrators has become imperative now more than ever before in almost every profession. Unless other structural problems are also addressed then building new competencies will not necessarily fix all the existing institutional problems (Awortwi, 2010, p.724). A reflective analysis from the Thai-Cambodian border conflict issue and the ASEAN 2015 community development plan will then demonstrate the level of competitiveness of the parliamentary actors'

competency and responsibilities when it comes to dealing with a formal international situation where collaboration and decisions are required for improving the situation.

*a. Territorial disputes along the borders of Thailand*

Disputes between neighbouring countries either along the borderline or between governments constitute inevitable causal factors that mainly occur from political proximity issues and the exercising of administrative power. Borders have been conceptualised as lines of separation that divide social, economic, and political spaces. A previous discussion on territorial proximity has been mentioned earlier on in chapter 2. While geographers see this territorial space as being driven by a bordering process entailing both management functions and demarcation, political scientists have concentrated on the power relations involved in that management and demarcation including border reconfiguration (Simmons, 2005, p.827). In addition, a few common understandings on the concept of territorial cohesion are aimed at ensuring development in all regions—geographically be they rural, urban, sparsely populated, peripheral, mountainous, coastal, in accordance with their own territorial capital. Then on the economic side, territorial cohesion seeks to find the most appropriate balance between territorial measures to ensure social cohesion, increase economic competitiveness, and strive for sustainable development (Van Well, 2012, p.1550).

In this part, three border conflict cases will be raised as examples to present the roles of former senators who have taken part and had impact in the negotiating process of persuading the other foreign part to improve its situation. The bilateral disputes that will be discussed about are presented respectively as follows; the Myanmar case on democracy, the Thai-Cambodian border conflict, and the problem on the three Southernmost provinces. Each of these border conflict cases would reflect different levels of authority and positions of the Thai senators in certain situations. Moreover, the position of the senators and their professional

impact in each scenario will provide a further explanation on the institutional dimension on the senator's position as parliamentary diplomatic actors.

*i. Myanmar: military junta and democracy*

Myanmar – formally known as Burma – is a neighbouring country to Thailand to the West. The main problems in Myanmar that have triggered tension in an international level include drug trafficking, refugees, and democracy. There has been series of diplomatic engagements to handle borderland security and domestic situations in Myanmar during the last few decades. The case on the Myanmar-Thai relations where a Thai senator has been active as regards conflict resolution has been raised as an issue in order to support this argument on territorial dispute. During the period of 2000-2006, Mr. Kraisaak Choonhavan<sup>80</sup> was senator and Chairperson of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and was active in the promotion of democracy in Myanmar<sup>81</sup>. There has always been an underlying problem on democracy in Myanmar, therefore Mr. Kraisaak played an important role in promoting democracy with the Myanmar military government.

A series of events were organised as follows; the Thai government lent the Myanmar government 7,000 million baht for the laying of gas pipes, 40 million baht for drug trafficking elimination, and a large amount of loans for a planned road construction through Thailand-Myanmar-India. Due to the instability of the domestic situation in Myanmar, Mr. Kraisaak even suggested that Myanmar should withdraw its ASEAN membership if there are no improvements regarding democracy. The continuity of Myanmar's membership in ASEAN would not make any difference, at the same time ASEAN's negotiating ability has

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<sup>80</sup> Mr. Kraisaak Choonhavan, senior academic and politician, is the son of former Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan (in office from 1988 to 1991 – disposed by military coup d'etat).

<sup>81</sup> At present, Mr. Kraisaak is President of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC), which is composed of like-minded ASEAN members of parliaments who work together towards instituting democracy and restoring freedom in Myanmar.

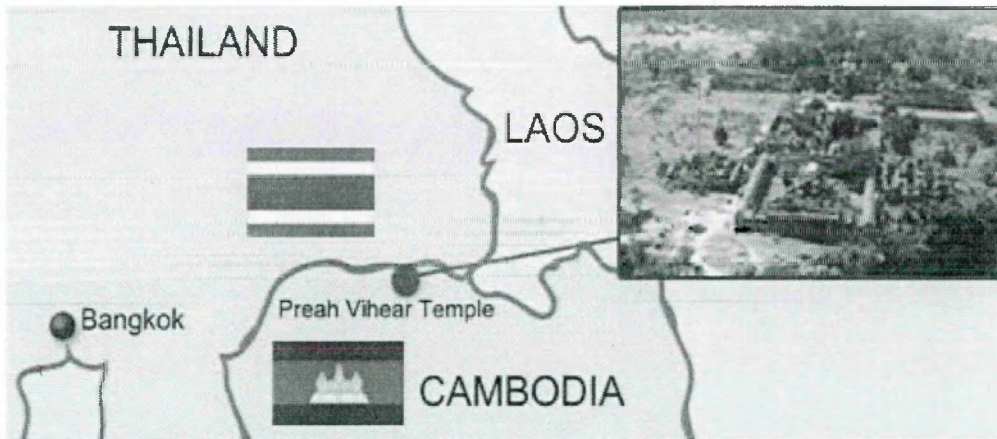
gone completely downhill (information retrieved 20/2/2013). There are innumerable defense, security, and intelligence agencies on policy implementation and coordination with roles and responsibilities concerning borderland matters on Myanmar, especially organisations concerned with the political relationship with Rangoon. The management of local cross-border and provincial commerce, refugee issues, immigration and counter-narcotics (Ball, 2003, p.18).

During the period of the National Legislative Assembly – the period following the military coup to oust former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, which was also the period after Mr. Kraissak Choonhavan was Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee – there was a courtesy call from Ms. Susan Sutton, Political Councillor from the American Embassy in Thailand to Mr. Pichai Vasanong, Chairperson of the National Legislative Assembly Committee on Foreign Affairs. Both parties exchanged views on the situation in Myanmar and the U.S prospects towards the situation (10 October 2007). This reflects an urge to solve the problems on democracy in Myanmar, and that the issue has clearly been an ongoing problem from the previous incumbency. There is a complicating factor in interactions between justice and sanctions. In the Myanmar case, the United States was reported in August 2010 to be consulting key stakeholders and partners about an international commission on alleged junta war crimes<sup>82</sup>. However, the expanding reach of universal jurisdiction and the global anti-impunity movement may undermine the utility of international sanctions (David and Holliday, 2012, p.122).

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<sup>82</sup> The Irrawaddy Magazine, News on Myanmar (2010) in David and Holliday, 2012.

*ii. Border conflict issue: Thailand – Cambodia*



Source: <http://www.vaitor.com/?p=2272> (retrieved 19/1/2013).

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Thailand and Cambodia have had a long relationship history, being neighbouring countries and sharing territorial borderlines. A recent ongoing conflict was disputed about the Preah Vihear Temple<sup>83</sup>. Cambodia had been wracked by a civil war and a series of brutally repressive governments that had cost the country millions of lives for over twenty years. Negotiations for conflicts in Cambodia were held under the auspices of ASEAN, which succeeded in bringing the interested parties together for discussions, overcoming several obstacles (Hampson, 1996, p.171-178). In this part, the border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia will be highlighted as an international situation where the former President of the Senate from 2008-2011 has played an important part in the negotiating process. International negotiation emphasises competition, autonomy, and rationality over cooperation, relationality, and independence. The negotiation context, as such, can exert an indirect effect on negotiation outcomes as the expression of creativity of individual negotiators are influenced (De Pauw, Venter, Neethling, 2011, p.43-44). As the border conflict incident is

<sup>83</sup> The Preah Vihear temple is a UNESCO Heritage site which is situated near the Thai-Cambodian border. The dispute has erupted from an issue about the entrance from the Thai side. See Q&A: Thailand-Cambodia Temple Dispute, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12378001>, 14/9/2011 (retrieved 24/10/2012).

still a lengthy ongoing debate between the two governments, the following discussion will be examining the role of the Senate as a legislation representative in conflict resolution.

The former President of the Senate played a crucial role as part of the negotiating team during the height of tension along the border in December 2010 when 2 Thai citizens were arrested and sentenced up to 8 years imprisonment in Panom Phenh. The accusations against them concerned illegal border crossing and spying for the government<sup>84</sup>. The sentence, however, immediately followed the successful conclusion of the seventh meeting of the Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia (JC) at which both countries had agreed to extend cooperation in all areas and to hold a meeting of the Joint Commission on Demarcation for the Land Boundary (JBC) in Thailand in the near future<sup>85</sup>.

“Border clashes between Thailand and Cambodia that caused dozens of casualties and displaced thousands have challenged the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to finally turn its rhetoric on peace and security into action. Between the listing and the fighting in February there were many occasions for the two sides to talk. The prime ministers met either in each other’s capital or on the sidelines of regional forums. Foreign ministers had the same opportunities, as well as an annual set piece Thailand-Cambodia Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation (JC) session. All included relevant interior ministry, police, customs, intelligence and foreign ministry officials. Each Thai administration from 2008 to 2011 has an inward focus because of the

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<sup>84</sup> See BBC News: Cambodia profile timeline [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13006828](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13006828), 6/9/2012 (retrieved 26/9/2012).

<sup>85</sup> See “Border Clashes between Thailand and Cambodia”, European Parliament Resolution of 17 February on the border clashes between Thailand and Cambodia, *Official Journal of the European Union*, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:188E:0057:0059:EN:PDF> (retrieved 26/09/2012).



country's political volatility. Changes in leaders and ministers, as well as the turnover of key working-level officials, also made bilateral policymaking difficult. Problematic interpretations of the constitution added to diplomatic inertia".

(International Crisis Group Asia Report no.215, 2011, pp.7-9)

The former President of the Senate<sup>86</sup> and a senator who was President of the Committee on Constitutional Organisation Affairs and Public Accounts have stressed that there are several channels for the Thai parliament - referring to both Houses - to build and strengthen international relations with foreign counterparts; for instance the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPA), and other bilateral friendship groups referring to parliamentary friendship groups. Considering the border conflict issue, this senator has mentioned that the committee had a brief meeting with the French President of the Constitutional Court during an official visit to France. Critical discussions during that meeting concerned the role of parliament as maintaining a critical balance in the separation of powers<sup>87</sup>. Comments from the French President of the Constitutional Court were that the separation of powers in Thailand seems to be problematic, based on information from the conflicts and political transitions that had occurred during the past few years. Moreover, on another occasion, during a Thai-Cambodian Parliamentary friendship group meeting in Phnom Penh prior to the breakout of the border conflict, the President of the Senate of Cambodia had suggested that trade prospects between the two countries would have been in better terms<sup>88</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> The main person interviewed for this research; referred to Mr. Prasobsook Boondech, President of the Senate during April 2008 to February 2011 incumbency.

<sup>87</sup> The separation of power consists of the administration, the legislative, and the judiciary. These three sectors maintain the balance of government.

<sup>88</sup> After the breakout of the border conflict, Cambodia has shifted its trade and cultural relations towards Vietnam, Malaysia, and Japan (interviewed March 2011, Bangkok).

As a result, the border conflict as viewed from the Cambodian President of the Senate was a major obstacle for international cooperation especially for neighbouring countries. A comment from the Legal Advisor, Secretariat of the Senate (interviewed 3 May 2011, Bangkok) was that during a recent joint sitting with the Foreign Affairs Minister, one senator advised on establishing a special sub-committee on the Thai-Cambodia conflict to monitor the situation<sup>89</sup>. Not only Thailand has problems on political unrests, but if Cambodia were included into the argument then this would give a clearer picture of harsh civil situations. Problems on civil administration<sup>90</sup>, police and judicial support, economic revival and development, humanitarian assistance, human rights monitoring and training, and even a degree of leadership are underlying problems in countries with civil conflict (Malone, 2003, p.71). In the case of Cambodia, the necessary rule of law cannot be provided as legal institutions were virtually destroyed when they became under attack and under-institutionalised before the outbreak of conflict (Barria and Roper, 2005, p.6).

The attendance of the former President of the Senate during the negotiating process, moreover, can be critically seen from two perspectives. Firstly, the attendance is officially part of the Thai delegation to represent the legislative sector. Secondly, the professional background of the former President of the Senate may also be another factor that emphasises on the reason he was selected as part of the negotiating team. Being a former judge in the Constitutional Court may also have had beneficial reasons for the Thai government negotiating team. A personal assumption is that the former President of the Senate must have attempted to negotiate and discuss with Cambodian governmental representatives to pardon or, if possible by law, release the two Thai citizens who were sentenced. However, the

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<sup>89</sup> The use of the term 'recent sitting' was based on the studied incumbency of 2008-2011 at the time of the interview, May 2011.

<sup>90</sup> On this study, countries with civil unrest that were specified on were Namibia, Cambodia, and Former Yugoslavia. See Barria, L.A. and Roper, S.D. (2005), "Providing justice and reconciliation: The criminal tribunals for Sierra Leone and Cambodia" in *Human Rights Review*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 5-26.

strength of his negotiating conversation may not have been taken into account as much as that from the Foreign Affairs Ministry team. As a result, it may be likely that the President of the Senate may have to request a pardon or for some consideration to lessen the penalty in a more private manner, depending on the level of relationship between the two parliaments. Coming back to the issue on the two Thai prisoners in Cambodia, this matter of requesting for pardoning of the Thai political prisoners has been carried on continuously to the current government<sup>91</sup> (See Appendix 4).

Following on from the territorial matter of the border conflict, Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia has criticised former Thai Prime Minister and opposition cabinet leader Abhisit Vejjajiva on linking the border conflict issue with internal political conflicts. The Cambodian Prime Minister stated that the former Premier Abhisit has made claims relating to ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on maritime territorial rights. The Cambodian Premier claimed that the Thai government has become more indifferent towards the border conflict over Preah Vihear temple, in exchange of benefits on natural resources including fuel and gas. Therefore, former Prime Minister Abhisit should provide legal evidence on these claims (Thairath online, 7/6/2011).

Another news source on the Thai-Cambodian relations has announced that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand has announced to end diplomatic relations with Cambodia, in response to Cambodian Premier Hun Sen appointing sentenced former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra as his personal advisor and as economic advisor to the Cambodian government. The statement on cutting diplomatic ties with Cambodia were stated accordingly

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<sup>91</sup> Since the military coup in 2006 to oust former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, there has been 2 prime ministers up to present; Mr. Abhisit Vejjajiva (2006-2010) and Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra (2010 to present). Ms. Yingluck is the first female Premier and youngest sister of former Prime Minister Thaksin. From this reason, there has been a lot of political conspiracy about family connections running the country.

as follows; the Thai government has informed the Cambodian government on various occasions that international relations should be the priority than personal relations. Therefore, any actions on the Cambodian part regarding Mr. Thaksin cannot be categorised from the Thai-Cambodian bilateral relations as Mr. Thaksin is sentenced as a national criminal. In addition, the appointment of Mr. Thaksin as an economic advisor and as a personal advisor is considered as politically offence to the Thai government. This is inevitably considered as an insult and denial to the Thai legal system. The Thai government, consequently, has decided to withdraw its ambassador from Phnom Penh and reconsider diplomatic relations with Cambodia supported by public opinion and general high levels of disappointment. Further decisions regarding Thai-Cambodian diplomatic relations will aim for the well-being of their peoples and to lessen the tension between Cambodia and other ASEAN member countries (Naew-Na News, 6/11/2009).

*Possibility for pardon? the Imprisonment of Veera and Ratri in Cambodia*

The case of two Thai citizens, Mr. Veera Somkwamkid and Ms. Ratri Pipattanapaiboon, currently imprisoned in Cambodia on espionage has caused a long-term strain to the relations between Thailand and Cambodia. They were arrested in December 2010 and sentenced to 8 years imprisonment. This attached letter is a current update on the situation; a request for pardon from the Thai Prime Minister, Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra during the 21<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Summit in Phnom Phenh. Considerations for pardon, as stated in the letter, has been forward to the Cambodian Ministry of Justice. Therefore, decisions should be made and informed to the Thai government in due course.

*Border conflicts aggravating strains on bilateral relationships*

Border conflicts inevitably aggravate tension and strain between governmental relations. In the Thai-Cambodian case, the imprisonment of two Thai citizens on suspicion of espionage, although it may seem as a separate issue and not directly relevant to the border conflict dispute, it is considered a strain which adds up to the tension already existing between the two governments. As mentioned previously in the text, this matter has been carried out continuously from the previous government. This case has been raised to highlight the role of the former President of the Senate as part of the negotiating team by stressing the former president's professional background as senior judge from the Constitutional court. Although his authority during the negotiating process was not utilised accordingly to his professional background, the request for the pardoning of the 2 Thai prisoners was a continuing case where the former president was present.

The possibility of granting a pardon or releasing the Thai prisoners would be based upon a re-consideration of the case regarding the intentions of the two Thai citizens and the circumstances of both governments at the time of sentencing the prisoners. If the pardoning of these 2 citizens were to be approved as officially requested in the letter, then the strain between the Thai and Cambodian government may lessen. At the time of writing<sup>92</sup>, one of the prisoners – Ratri Pipattanapaiboon – has been released from prison on pardon. Nonetheless, the decision to pardon or release these two Thai citizens should be made according to the rightful situation – based on evidence, not favouritism or taking sides. From the researcher's opinion, the border conflict and the imprisonment of Ratri and Veera are separate cases - the latter happened to trigger the heat of tension already existing along the border line. As a result, both representatives from the governments of Thailand and Cambodia would have to

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<sup>92</sup> Details on the pardoning of Ms. Ratri, updated 22 February 2013.

continue negotiating on the situation so that no more serious military clashes would occur in the future.

As of the latest situation on the request for pardon for the two Thai prisoners, Ms. Ratri Pipattanapaiboon has been released from prison on the occasion of the royal cremation of the late King Narodom Sihanouk (source Thairath Online, 1/1/2013). This is considered as another step reflecting the effectiveness of bilateral relations between the two countries. In a way the pardon of this prisoner can be perceived as results of persuasion that may have happened from existing relations between former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen. This relationship has continued to the current cabinet lead by Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, current Prime Minister and younger sister of former Premier Thaksin Shinawatra. The impact of personal relations between state leaders, level of coordination, political proximity, power competition and relations between political leaders all contribute to the effectiveness of the negotiating process. Negotiation theory has evolved in a cultural context that can be based on knowledge and information, cognitive and behavioural competencies. Competition and rationality over interdependence, cooperation and emotionality, and autonomy have always been emphasised during negotiating processes (Koc-Menard, 2009, p.335). The governmental relations between the former Thai Prime Ministers and the Cambodian Prime Minister has highlighted situations where personal relations between politicians have influenced power proximity.

Another piece of news came recently when Ms. Ratri Pipattanapaiboon attended a meeting with Airforce General Wirawit Kongsak, senator from the Human Rights Committee. Ms. Ratri gave a statement on human rights while being imprisoned and criticised the previous government (led by PM Abhisit) on the basis that the government did not pay much attention to the welfare and well-being of prisoners. Mr. Veera Somkwamkid, the other Thai prisoner

still held under custody in Cambodia, has been prohibited from reading books and communicating with Thai people. The reason is because the Cambodian authority sees him as a threat to their government. Ms. Ratri has claimed that the Thai authorities did not carry out their investigation as thoroughly as they should. Moreover, she claimed that the treatment of Mr. Veera in prison is against human rights. Therefore, she has reported this matter to the Senate Committee on Human Rights to address the authorities to help negotiate with the Cambodian government in transferring Mr. Veera to receive penalties and be sentenced under Thai law (Thairath online, [www.thairath.co.th/content/pol/325275](http://www.thairath.co.th/content/pol/325275), retrieved 9/2/2013). This issue on Ms. Ratri's statement to the Human Rights committee has reflected different relations between previous Thai governments and Cambodia. An assumption was that relations between former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and Cambodian Premier were beneficial towards each other – most likely in terms of business, therefore when he was ousted by the military coup then it may have strained relations with the Cambodian government. This would then inevitably affect the Thai-Cambodian bilateral relations with the following democrat-led government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva.

Suggestions to help improve the situation were that the Thai Senate should aim to strengthen the capacity of the committee and the friendship groups; representation and authority in decision-making. This would also have to depend on policies and initiatives of the President of parliament – which is the President of the House of Representatives – and the President of the Senate on foreign affairs. And this would help benefit the public and private sectors. Evidence from the Secretary of the Thai-Cambodian friendship group (interviewed 2 May 2011) stated that a delegation from the Thai Senate visited the Cambodian Senate shortly prior to the outbreak of the conflict. The summary of the discussion was that trust is very important during times of conflict. Parliamentarians, as representatives of the people, need to trust each other during official parliamentary visits. Geniality and a strong work ethic are also

important facts that senators should always bear in mind. From this senator's opinion, international diplomatic duties are not only the Foreign Ministry's responsibility but all Thai citizens in every sector of the society, where it be agriculture, education, business, academia.

From the territorial dispute cases raised for discussion in this part, we can see that members of the Thai government all need to take part in solving the problem by lessening the tension to maintain a steady bilateral relation – if not always a pleasant and harmonious one. Considering the role of the Senate in these territorial disputes, members of the Senate in different incumbencies have been key figures in handling the situation. On the Myanmar and Southernmost conflicts, the attempt to promote and strengthen democracy in the area has always gradually been encouraged. In this context, the discussion on territorial disputes has remained a current issue. The case of the Myanmar-Thai conflict, is particularly noteworthy here, as evidence has been provided based on available information dated as further back as 2000. Although there are historical facts that underlie these territorial disputes, they have however been omitted from the discussions as the arguments here are more to do with current factors. The shifts of worldly state affairs have enhanced international cooperation in every level. In managing the struggle between governments on the one hand and markets on the other hand, governments will need to find new ways to cooperate in order to build more innovative regional and global institutions (Ikenberry, 1998, p.2). From the evidence, moreover, Mr. Kraissak Choonhavan has given early reference on the Thai-Cambodian conflict situation that there have been three Prime Ministers on the Thai government part, while there has been only one Prime Minister on the Cambodian part. The understanding and decision-making ability, therefore, is seen to be more beneficial towards the Cambodian government. It can then be concluded that the strategic plan in dealing with border conflicts and territorial disputes depends on the understanding of the country's leaders of the situations



and concerning the continuity of the resolution plans as well as the political values of the government leaders (interviewed 5/5/2012).

*iii. The insurgencies in the 3 Southernmost provinces: Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat*

The conflict in the three Southernmost provinces acts as a different dimension on the role and activeness of the Senate as a diplomatic actor. The reason for adding this statement to distinguish the Southernmost conflict from the two previous territorial disputes is that the Southernmost conflicts are considered as more to do with internal diplomacy rather than external diplomacy between parliaments. This case has been added to the discussion on territorial disputes to strengthen the arguments on the Senate as a diplomatic actor, by presenting a contradictory case where the senators need to be alert in lessening domestic violence. Although the situation in the Southernmost provinces has not yet been resolved, political representatives are all aware about the ongoing conflicts. The level of coordination and control over the situation, nonetheless, differs within each sector.

The senators who represent the three Southernmost provinces also represent the large Muslim population from that area. Their impact in solving the insurgency has not been particularly effective with regard to the conflict resolution on the Thai-Myanmese issue or to the Thai-Cambodian conflict. In the previous two conflicts, members of the Senate were more active in attempts to reduce the tension in the situation, if not resolving it totally. A non-standing committee on monitoring the Southernmost conflicts has been established to follow up on the situation and the well-being of the citizens who live in the troubled area<sup>93</sup>. From examples of the schedules of this non-standing committee, visits to the Southernmost provinces and other

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<sup>93</sup> A schedule on the official visit, the non-standing committee on monitoring the Southernmost conflict can be seen as followed (original document in Thai). Non-standing committees function on specific cases in the country where extra monitoring and scrutiny is deemed necessary. Also, the chairperson of this non-standing committee is a military general. This fact inevitably reflects the authority of the military over domestic insurgencies, although it may not be as directly portrayed in the Senate as in other political bodies. [http://www.senate.go.th/w3c/senate/pictures/comm/545/file\\_1363942445.pdf](http://www.senate.go.th/w3c/senate/pictures/comm/545/file_1363942445.pdf) (retrieved 1/4/2013).

provinces nearby in the area reflect a typical attendance to formal briefings with local executives. When relating the nature of these provincial visits to international diplomatic missions abroad, they bear similarities in terms of places and people they visit.

The conflict along the Thai-Malaysian border is distinctively different from the territorial dispute along the West – with Myanmar, and along the East – with Cambodia. The most distinctive conflict here is the Thai-Cambodian conflict, as the matter is concerned with a UNESCO world heritage site and legal reconsideration has been stressed forward to the World Court, the Hague. The Myanmar conflict is similar to the Southernmost conflict in terms of militant unrests having an ongoing impact on the state of democracy in the country – referring to Myanmar and Thailand respectively. The difference is that in the Myanmar case a former senator and chairperson of the foreign affairs committee (Mr. Kraissak) has put himself forward to endeavour to persuade the then military - dictator government to stabilise the country's democratic situation. It also alerted attention from the United Nations and international peace.

The Southernmost provinces case, on the other hand, do not attract as much global attention yet is still a concern within the region, as it is an internal dispute which does not exceed beyond the Thai-Malaysian border. Nonetheless, the conflict has become so more critical that former ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Surin Pitsuwan urged responsible authorities to consider special administrative regions as a potential solution to reduce insurgencies in these three southernmost provinces (Thairath Online, 22/3/2013). A special administrative region for the conflict in the Southernmost conflict would act as a separate unit in coordination with the central government to tackle with unpredicted violence among the ethnic minorities in the provinces. Although the southernmost provinces are along the Thai-Malaysian border line, the insurgency does not extend beyond the border. According to the former ASEAN

Secretary-General, the Thai government is determined to take control over the insurgencies in the Southernmost provinces in order to avoid international intervention or, in a worse scenario, regional sanctions.

Dr. Surin Pitsuwan<sup>94</sup>, former ASEAN Secretary-General has stated recently that he agrees with the government's plan of negotiating with the Southernmost militants. However, the government needs to clarify the persons involved in the discussion, the topic to be discussed, and the structure of the organisation. He also stressed that another matter to consider critically is the capability of the Thai government representatives in taking control of the situation, as it would be more ideal than leaving the situation to deteriorate to the point that international intervention is necessary. As for "Mahanakorn Pattani"<sup>95</sup>, or the special administrative region governed under the Constitution in order to tackle the insurgency and preserve the security of citizens in the Southernmost provinces (Thairath online, 22/3/2012). Additional information from the King Prajathipok Institute of Democracy on "Mahanakorn Pattani" will be presented here briefly to elaborate the initiative so as to set up this special administrative region. According to the report, longitudinal findings from interviews and public speeches have been gathered from 2009-2011 among various groups of representatives; academics, local citizens, former underground members, ethnic Buddhist-Muslim representatives.

“The governing system must be under the democratic rules stated in the Constitution and must assure political sovereignty and equality to all sectors in the

<sup>94</sup> Dr. Surin Pitsuwan served as 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Secretary-General from 2008-2013. He was member of parliament for Nakorn Sri Thammarat in 1986, and is Muslim from a family of Malay descent.

<sup>95</sup> See บัดตานิมหานคร: รูปแบบการปกครองท้องถิ่นพิเศษภายใต้กฎหมายรัฐธรรมนูญ แนวทางการแก้ปัญหาความขัดแย้งอย่างสันติวิธี (translated as "Pattani Mahanakorn: Special Administrative Region under the Constitution, a peaceful method in conflict resolution").

[www.deepsouthwatch.org](http://www.deepsouthwatch.org) (retrieved 2/2/2013).

community. The governing body should comprise of ethnic Buddhist and Thai-Melayu Muslim citizens from the Southernmost provinces to encourage equal opportunities. Most importantly, the governing system in the Southernmost provinces should promote public participation and policy monitoring according to Section 281 in the Constitution on local governance by citizens. Local candidates for the special administrative region governing committee should be scrutinised in order to build trust among the people in the area and the official language should be both Thai and Melayu. Education systems should be a combination of formal education to comply with the Education Ministry policy and religious education. More specifically, religious law should be enacted in particular laws on family, inheritance, and social ethics in provinces where the majority of population are Muslim”(King Prajathopik Institute for Democracy project handbook, [www.deepsouthwatch.org](http://www.deepsouthwatch.org)).

A specific discussion on Pattani Mahanakorn has not been mentioned during interviews with senators who represent the three Southernmost provinces. Nonetheless, the initiative on Mahanakorn Pattani has drawn attention from public and private sectors, including the parliament. Members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate have been active in following up and monitoring the situation. Notwithstanding this, the Southernmost conflict is considered a historically sensitive issue. The plans for establishing this special administrative region should be developed carefully, as the former ASEAN Secretary-General has stressed that the security of the local people and the compromise between ethnic minorities should be considered the priority in putting forward any formal decisions. This fact on the citizens’ security and welfare, moreover, can be applied to other territorial disputes and domestic conflicts. In this respect, not only senators who represent the Southern provinces should be active in the conflict resolution plan, but senators in every position should coordinate

according to their professional knowledge. Therefore, senators would have the opportunity to be active in internal diplomacy while negotiating and coordinating with other government representatives in structuring efficient governing policies. Being part of the central government, the senators' duty in legislative scrutiny can also contribute to governing policies of the special administrative region in the future once it is officially approved for function.

Despite the different nature of each conflict mentioned above, they all share one main similarity – the restoration of peace, the maintenance of cooperation, and democracy in the region. At present, the urge to resolve the disputes would also comply with the ASEAN 2015 integration plan on the strengthening of regional unity among diversity. According to the Inter-Parliamentary handbook on parliaments and security control, not all conflicts pose a threat to peace and security in democratic societies. It is often that tensions escalate beyond control and turn into violent conflict in the absence of well-functioning democratic institutions. Freedom of expression in a democracy allows people to relay their views to their elected representatives. In turn, these representatives have the task of discussing and weighing the issues at stake through a public debate, thus enabling democracies to seek viable compromises and defuse conflict having the support of society at large (IPU handbook, 2009, p.15)<sup>96</sup>.

The context of these territorial dispute cases are presented to demonstrate the attempt of the Thai and foreign governments in conflict resolution, whether it be territorial conflicts (Cambodia), civil unrest in a neighbouring country (Myanmar), and internal disputes among ethnic minorities in Thailand. The similarities of these territorial disputes is that the Thai government representatives – including the senators – all intend to promote and secure a

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<sup>96</sup> Parliaments can also contribute to peace and security in creating legal parameters for security issues. Members of parliament play an important role in reviewing law drafts on security, as they are able to suggest amendments so as to ensure that the new legal provisions are adequately proposed (IPU handbook, 2009, p.18).

democratic-based governing system albeit the difference in their participation and authority of the conflicts. Most importantly, the restoration of democracy in unsettled areas would need to focus on the peace and security of the people who live there. The degree to which parliaments and parliamentarians hold governments to account for foreign affairs is a question of increasing practical and normative importance, as electoral incentives and informational deficiencies limit legislators' orientation towards foreign policy (Martin, 2013, p.114-115)<sup>97</sup>. Although the involvement of senators in the previous and present incumbencies do not reflect an outstanding impact of parliamentary diplomacy on the country's foreign affairs, their presence and involvement in territorial disputes and civil unrest can show an extent of awareness in regards to conflict resolution. Not only the actions of parliamentarians are important, but public awareness and opinion should also be taken into account in cases of conflict resolution. Mutual recognition and acknowledgement of needs and interests is critical to the resolution of cross-cultural conflicts, and involves four steps as follows:

“Educating parties on the need for the shared values of freedom, equality, justice and peace, and how and why they are critical to cross-cultural interaction; recognition of the other as human, and of their needs, interests and identity; support which involves empowering parties to voice issues of concern; and resolution of the conflict through a process which promotes values”

(Ojelabi, 2010, p.53)

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<sup>97</sup> Political and economic globalisation and regional integration all act to ensure that national borders no longer limit the country's politics. See Kahler & Lake, 2003 in Martin, 2013.

According to Mr. Kraisaak Choonhavan – former Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs committee - on the Cambodian conflict, citizens of neighbouring countries in ASEAN should be able to express their opinions openly as all people are entitled to freedom of speech. Moreover, citizen's opinions would more or less count towards governmental procedures on conflict resolution. In a way, this method of surveying citizen's opinions on cross-territorial or internal conflicts would be more accurate than doing poll surveys. It is argued that the context of freedom of speech lacks substantive meaning, despite it having impact on press freedom and control. Logistical factors, moreover, are more applicable to the publicising of people's opinions in all countries irrespective of ideology, form of government, or level of development (Ibelema, Powell, and Self, 2000). From a critical point of view, in situations of conflict and turmoil, citizen's opinions should be taken into account as an important reason for the government's decision on conflict resolution. Not only will it contribute towards the good exercising of democracy in the society, but also to good relations between neighbouring countries and – in the case of ASEAN – a stable regional consensus.

In the following section, the case discussion will move on to the regional cooperation plan; ASEAN 2015. Apart from the territorial dispute discussion, this case has also been raised during the interviews as another main prospect for the Thai senators – being representatives of the Thai government to ASEAN - to contribute their professionalism and knowledge. The cases on the Thai-Cambodian border conflict and the following case on the ASEAN 2015 community development plan are clear examples that reflect a combination of the Senate's legislative and diplomatic proficiency in solving territorial disputes and enhancing governmental capability in regional cooperation respectively.

*b. Regional Cooperation: ASEAN 2015 community development plan*

Earlier on in chapter 2, one of the factors that has been raised as an influence on the development of parliamentary diplomacy was economic globalisation. Considering that the Thai Parliament is a member institution of the regional establishment ASEAN, members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate play significant roles in representing parliament internationally. This case topic will then be discussed in accordance to the factor for parliamentary diplomacy improvement, as the ASEAN 2015 plan was another focal point that has been stressed frequently during the interviews with senators. This case on regional cooperation in 2015 does not show what the senators have done, but shows an ongoing opportunity where senators – as members of the Thai government – can adjust themselves in the area of duties and direct powers about laws concerning with the trade and investment, particularly in the speeding up of the procurement of law amendments to enter the ASEAN 2015 community. Parliamentarians must undergo a paradigm shift in learning in order to help solve the problems which may arise from the investment of large businesses from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand (Dong, 2009, p.5). A Roadmap for an ASEAN Community has been drafted covering the period from 2009 – 2015, the proposed year for completed targets. As a result, senators from the previous and present incumbencies have all been enthusiastic on strengthening the institution's competencies to fulfill this regional development plan<sup>98</sup>.

*Roadmap to ASEAN 2015: Economic integration and drug trafficking elimination*

The roadmap of ASEAN 2009-2015 has outlined a plan to improve all sectors of the ASEAN member countries by 2015 including politics and government, economics, social and cultural awareness. Two major goals that will be raised here are plans of enhancing regional

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<sup>98</sup> For an introductory VDO on the Thai Senate's aim to collaborate in the ASEAN 2015 community plan, see link <http://www.senate.go.th/w3c/senate/> (presented in Thai, retrieved 8/11/2012).



economic integration and the elimination of drug trafficking from one of the recent ASEAN members; the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is one of the three ASEAN Community Councils. Its goal is to seek regional economic integration by 2015. The areas of cooperation include:

- human resources development and capacity building
- recognition of professional qualifications
- consultation on economic and financial policies
- trade financing
- infrastructure and communications connectivity
- electronic transactions through e-ASEAN
- industrial integration to promote regional sourcing
- enhancing private sector involvement for the building of AEC 2015, ASEAN will be transformed into a region with free movement of services, goods, free flow of capital, skilled labour, and investment.

(Charumane, 2012)

On the part of drug trafficking elimination, the cultivation of addictive plants especially opium has been a long problematic issue in Southeast Asia, enabled by the regional terrains and climate. The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) has been following up on plans and progress of drug trafficking elimination in the Lao PDR, one of the major areas of cultivation and drug trafficking, and has published news on the elimination plan progress as follows;

“The Lao National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision (LCDC) has held discussions with the Asean Ambassadors Group in Laos, aiming to make the Asean region a drug free zone by 2015. LCDC Chairman

Mr. Soubanh Srithirath said leaders met in Phnom Penh in May 2012 and adopted a Declaration which in the strongest terms emphasises the need to make the Asean region a drug free zone by 2015. However, increased trafficking of chemical precursors and increased production and abuse of methamphetamines has heightened the struggle between regional drug syndicates and police forces, which has resulted in very serious threats from organised transnational crime”.

(Latsaphao, 2012)

As mentioned in the previous section, the Thai Senate – as part of the bicameral Thai parliament – also hold membership in international parliamentary establishments. Regional trading areas like ASEAN have eroded the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs and have transformed the division of responsibilities between state and subnational governments, encouraging changes at the level of the state and international system, and in political and economic developments within regions (Keating, 1999, p.1). At the regional level, members of the Thai parliament represent the government as an ASEAN member state. Apart from membership in the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Thai parliament also holds membership in the ASEAN Inter-parliamentary Association (AIPA), ASEAN Inter-parliamentary Union (AIPU). Most of the senators stressed this point partly because, one can suspect, the senators themselves are representatives of the citizens from the different sectors. Holding senatorship also represents the national parliament. A book review on African parliaments<sup>99</sup> supports the understanding between democratization and roles of parliament. The parliaments of the countries chosen for the study exist within diverse political systems and very different constitutional frameworks and diverse political systems, and therefore with different rules applying to the relationships between executive and legislature (Avezedo-

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<sup>99</sup> The study was focused on 6 African parliaments: Kenya, Uganda, Benin, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa. See *Legislative Power in Emerging African Democracies* edited by Joel D. Barkan. Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009.

Harman, 2011, p.550). One of the hypotheses explored in studies on legislation is that individual legislators will be the key for reforms in parliaments.

Therefore, during the senators' term they represent the Thai parliament in ASEAN – the Association for Southeast Asian Nations. As a result, most senators would have objectives in contributing their knowledge and experience, as well as initiating plans and projects for institutional improvement. This argument fits into the micro-macro improvement model; beginning from a smaller institution then expanding to a collective sphere. A re-articulation of the regional space, the coordination of action, and mobilisation across jurisdictional and institutional borders has been driven by global economic pressures (Andersen and Pierre, 2010, p.219). The improvement of functionality at the institutional level can contribute towards efficiency in regional cooperation and development<sup>100</sup>. Between states, international politics shows how recognition of states has been exploited by great and small powers alike as a form of diplomatic tool, while international law looks at how recognition of a prior state confers legal status and personality (Ong, 2012, p.514).

The key factors with the potential to enable the realisation of ASEAN's regionalist project as well as to determine how such outcomes affect the nature of state behaviour (e.g. common values, cooperation and institutionalisation), strengthen its position in the region. Following on from the border conflict discussion, to maintain pleasant foreign relations with neighbouring countries. In this case, countries that share borders should not leave the strain of disputes and conflicts to become more serious or out of hand. The resolution of any governmental dispute in the early stages by adopting the diplomatic processes of negotiation and using their skills to assist the main representatives from the government. The original

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<sup>100</sup> The five non-communist states of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand formed the original core of the ASEAN.

creation of ASEAN was determined by the desire of its original member states to minimise the risk of militarized conflicts and handle existing and potential inter-state disputes through peaceful measures (Amer, 1998, p.34). In addition, the argument that these two case studies can have effects not only on the foreign relations but also on regional development. Therefore, any underlying conflicts and disputes should be resolved as soon as possible. The respective national governments are expected to promote domestic stability on a comprehensive basis to build national resilience so that the resultant secure states can withstand external and internal stresses and thus contribute to the attainment of regional resilience in Southeast Asia (Emmers, 2009, p.160).

When considering regionalisation, topics including economic integration and cooperation would usually emerge in the discussion. However, other important factors would also constitute towards the Senate's diplomatic functionality and its collective performance as a government representative in regional collaboration. Norms that constitute a collective identity are constructed through identity change at the domestic level and local interaction in the existing international system or as promoted by outside actors (Rother, 2012, p.51). These factors include the exchange of knowledge and skills in multicultural-related projects. When we think about Thailand as one of the founders of ASEAN, it is evident that the country has been continuously ameliorating social and economic competencies to be a solid regional power. Integration in general concerns how different issues of regional integration are constructed, represented and negotiated by different actors in different sorts of discourses (Slocum and Langenhove, 2004, p.229). ASEAN's overall record in promoting collaboration among its members may have played an important role in confidence building among member economies and thus in facilitating improved interstate relations (Ravenhill, 2008, p.471). Regional cooperation of competition policies binds more countries and regions under

common rules, compared to bilateral cooperation where membership is limited and weakened once an international cartel competition becomes restrictive (Qi, 2009, p.85).

Several interviewed data are drawn to support this statement on improving the Senate's competency. A recent opinion from a senator from the Committee on Education (interviewed 10 July 2012) was that the Thai Senate is currently developing itself to become part of the ASEAN 2015 community. One of the most important facts is to improve the competency of the Secretariat staff by, for instance, offering financial support for training or higher education in the ASEAN member countries. This would also help for individuals who have higher proactive capability as they are more likely to seek out opportunities to improve their situations, to take initiative to effect their environment, and to create conditions to improve their social context than those who have lower proactive capability (Shi, Chen, and Zhou, 2011, p.360). As a result, the staff would then be able to provide specific information on an ASEAN member country to the senators, and the issues would depend on the committee the senator holds membership in, or on the purpose of particular exchange visits.

A suggested initiative from another senator who is secretary of the Foreign Affairs committee (interviewed 28 March 2011, Bangkok) is to create an exchange group of students - focused on youths and children - from ASEAN member countries to learn about each other's cultures and education system. All the member countries should be in a "win-win" situation, either bilateral or multilateral. Moreover, despite the Senate's domestic duty on legislative scrutiny they are not restricted from improving international relations and developing themselves into diplomatic actors. In fact, the House of Representatives is responsible for the majority of the legislative affairs so the Senate should be able to focus more on international diplomatic affairs that would be beneficial for the country and its position in ASEAN. Acknowledging the importance of younger learners, from this senator's point of view, is a constructive

method to build foundational understanding in politics. Local youth projects have been ascribed a number of advantages by officials, politicians, and project leaders as they allow for testing new and non-traditional methods. The exchange programmes will aim to promote communication skills, entrepreneurship, and social integration of young people thus better adapting to young people's needs (Hansson and Lundhal, 2004, p.162).

Furthermore, among the opinions given to support the point on building the Senate's competency, a senator from the committee on transportation (interviewed March 2011, Bangkok) has emphasised the importance of maintaining a stable position in the region. The Senate may not be directly involved in foreign affairs or diplomacy. At present, nonetheless, the Senate as a representative institution of the Thai government is strengthening its authoritative position in the region. The reason is to comply with the ASEAN 2015 community plan in stabilising regional trade, investment, and exportation. The problem, nevertheless, about inefficient communication among ministries still occurs and – from the senator's opinion – is an obstacle to effective decision-making or agreements. Hopefully, parliamentarians in general have open and flexible minds. Thus, after they finish their term in office they should use the opportunity to continue participating in charitable work through organisations, local establishments, and supporting the community. Finally, the government and the media should have a standpoint on maintaining and publicising international relations with neighbouring countries. Regardless of title and tenure, public relations practitioners have always been engaged in traditional public relations activities, including a variety of writing and media relations activities<sup>101</sup> (Waters, Tindall, and Morton, 2012, p.242). Consequently, national political institutions are substantial elements of a transnational public. A national deliberative public and a new space of transnational public communication not only inspires

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<sup>101</sup> For politics and public relations, see Spicer, C. (1995), *Organizational public relations: A political perspective*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

current debates but also needs to conceptually situate public legitimacy in the contextual framework of national and transnational communication as embedded (Volkmer, 2010, p.54).

This would lead to another comment on the topic of legislation among Southeast Asian countries. Socially, Southeast Asia is home to rich political, economic and social institutions that give rise to distinctive dynamics of political contention. A distinctive feature of Southeast Asian contentious politics concerns ideologically motivated and well-organised insurgencies (Vu, 2006, p.394). In terms of legislation, in an interview with the Chairperson of the Committee on Finance and Banking (interviewed 28 March 2011), the point of exchanging thorough knowledge about legislation of ASEAN member countries was discussed. Legislation, according to the interview data, is considered a fundamental base for every democratic government in policy implementation. As a result, Thai parliamentarians should have a 'vision' to strengthen legislation by learning from other further developed countries e.g. Malaysia, Singapore, while providing sufficient democratic legislative issues for emerging ASEAN members e.g. Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar. Since its formation, ASEAN respected and accepted its members' diversity of systems and political ideologies as well as declaring non-interference in domestic affairs of member states as the *sine qua non* of regional cooperation<sup>102</sup> (Dosch, 2008, p.528). Yet, a fact to bear in mind on state behaviour and foreign relations in the region is that ASEAN has maintained a non-interference strategy based on the interests of the region's dominant social forces in maintaining particular social and political orders<sup>103</sup> (Jones, 2010, p.480).

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<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, the explicit promotion of democracy, political values and norms were deliberately excluded from the organization's agenda in the early periods of ASEAN establishment.

<sup>103</sup> The issues on non-interference has been criticised for retarding ASEAN from taking meaningful action over transnational security threats, problematic members like Myanmar, and economic crises. See Jones, L. (2010), "ASEAN's unchanged melody? The theory and practice of 'non-interference' in Southeast Asia" in *The Pacific Review*, Vol.23, No.4, pp. 479-502.

The concept of establishing an E-government was also mentioned in terms of a method to strengthen regional cooperation, by connecting parliamentary and government affairs with the people<sup>104</sup>. A member of the Thai Senate has stressed this point that in the age of globalisation where information flows are continuous, we should take advantage of technology in establishing a central data service system between all ministries and public institutions. In this way, not only will government agents be able to coordinate and transfer official information but also to provide wider access for the public. Highlights of most literature on e-Government focus on its potential to support democracy, efficiency, and social and economic development, thus transforming public administrations in developing countries' into modern and knowledge-based institutions (Cochiglia and Vernaschi, 2006, p.4). Stabilising transparency and accountability among political agencies and among public institutions and the people are considered, from this senator's opinion, as a benefit towards democracy promotion in the society. In addition, the flow and accessibility of information through the E-government system would constitute a foundation for Thailand's future advancement in the region. However, a point to consider is that the consequence of a governmental agency recreating a completely new administrative process is that new e-government applications tend to fall into the pattern of well-liked and existing familiar paper processes (Bock, 2005, p.91). When establishing e-governments, therefore, public opinion and anticipation should be taken into account critically as this is considered the foundation for an efficient democratic-orientated regional coordination in every aspect including political, economical, and social improvements.

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<sup>104</sup> Discussion with the Chairperson on Finance and Banking, continued from issue on exchange of legislation knowledge.



In sum, the shared idea to these proposals is that candidates from Thailand, whichever sector, level, age range, are expected to gain experience and improvise their knowledge from the exchange visits with other neighbouring countries. The imposition of fixed borders around resources, territories, and people, and the establishment of administrative systems to regulate everything within those borders, underwrote the global legitimation of the hegemonic model of sovereignty<sup>105</sup> (De Costa, 2007, p.13). The senators and senate staff are expected to use that knowledge along with personal competency to improve their skills and performance. Discussions with a Senate staff from the Committee on Energy stressed the generic duty framework of legislative staff and the importance of committee exchange visits (interviewed 2 May 2011). Foreign visits according to the objectives of each committee are important not only that they provide opportunities for members of the Thai parliament<sup>106</sup> to learn from other parliaments in terms of technical advancements, policies, or obstacles. As a result, in the individual level senate staff would be able to familiarise themselves with knowledge from other parliaments and provide supporting information on issues relevant to the committee's objectives for senators. In a collective level, further, senators would be able to improvise advanced knowledge from foreign exchange visits abroad into forms of legislation which would be passed forward for administrative approval.

In addition, an implication on a transformation of the conventional system was asserted through the interview discussions. While formal cooperation involves written agreements where obligations of the contractual partners are clearly stipulated among or between local government units, informal agreements may only consist of a handshake among officials expressing their understanding of the terms of the agreement (d'Apolito, 2012, p.105). The

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<sup>105</sup> International relations has stemmed from the distinct set of human traditions and diverse experiences of encountering and engaging among communities. See De Costa, 2007.

<sup>106</sup> Including senators, members of the House of Representatives, and parliamentary staff who work for both secretariats.

majority of opinions stressed on the evolution of practicing politics and international affairs, that actors should be included from all establishments<sup>107</sup>. In international relations, there are cases where non-state actors pursue their own interests in groups of individually, altering the political, economical and social conditions by stimulating the government and the structure of diplomacy in their country (Mahler, 2000, p.198). In the case of the Thai Senate, a senior senate staff from the Bureau of Foreign Languages, Secretariat of the Senate (interviewed 28 March 2011, Bangkok) has given information that reflected the impact of international conference speeches and exchange visit speeches in having a discursive impact on communication and messages conveyed to other foreign counterparts on specifically discussed topics. Senators usually follow the details provided by word in the speech, which is usually about a current situation in the host country at the time of the speech. In some instances, they would add personal remarks as a form of good measure. However, the argument here is that although speeches are written by senate staff or are composed at hand by the senator, the note sent out to the audience would possibly have impact on communication, decisions, and actions concerning the respective situation that may take place after the conference.

### *Conclusion*

The case studies on the Thai-Cambodian border conflict and the ASEAN 2015 community development plan have been raised to emphasise the role of the Thai Senate as a diplomatic actor. In both cases, the role of the President of the Senate in the border conflict case and the representation of the President and senators from particular committees in the ASEAN 2015 development case reflected the somewhat structured limitation of their authority. This also applies to other parliamentary diplomatic missions, where the senators from different

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<sup>107</sup> Not only limited to Foreign Ministry envoys.

committees would represent the government, engage in discussions and give opinions, but they would not be making any decision regarding the event. The Senate's power is only limited to legislative representation and scrutiny, whereas formal negotiations and decisions will have to be made by the administration. Governments within their borders are the dominant manifestations of polities today. Polities are institutions for exercising collective authority, structures for making rules and collective decisions regarding power, selection, citizenship, removal of individuals, and processes to resolve conflicts and sanctions for undesired behaviours (Kirlin, 2003, p.1379). As a result, the representation of the Thai Senate in both cases can be critically viewed as convenient opportunities for the Senate. These cases, therefore, are distinctive cases which highlight the ongoing effort of national governments to stabilise power relations, and reinforce and strengthen community structures. In the case of Thailand, in particular, the fact of being the sole country in the region to maintain its sovereignty has encouraged the government to maintain a solid position in handling conflicts with neighbouring countries, as well as seeking resolutions to solve internal conflicts in the Southernmost provinces. Variations and levels of communal conflicts over long historical periods can be analysed by bringing together a path dependent theory of continuity and change and a multi-dimensional, systemic model of the constitution of communal conflict (Ruane, 2006, p.509-510). In this sense, governmental actors including senators would be able to build a more efficient strategy in tackling territorial disputes and civil insurgencies in the long run.

The issue on regional cooperation and improving the institutional capacity to comply with the ASEAN 2015 community development plan can be related to a previous discussion on political engineering. A reminder on the issues discussed was that political engineering is defined as methods and mechanisms to improve the functioning and structure of the institution by considering the policies and actors within the institution. Specifically, the

constructing of institutional policies to suit with the actors' knowledge and skills, the government's political objectives, and the citizen's interests. However, according to the ASEAN regulations it takes up to 800 days to enact law. The idea has been emphasised on the importance of the reenactment of law in each ASEAN member government to be ready, prepared, and competent for the integration goals set for 2015. The main goal for the ASEAN integration is the awareness for member countries to develop their country's political, economical, and social competency in order to improve their power and status in the region (ASEAN 2015 blueprint)<sup>108</sup>.

In the discussion on the border conflict, the authority of the Senate in decision-making during international negotiations is limited by the institutional framework. Nonetheless, the representation of the President of the Senate along with the conventional diplomat from the Foreign Ministry in an international setting as part of the negotiating team compliments one another as a balance in the separation of powers. Over recent times of increasing scrutiny of the institutions of governance and mounting support for fundamental constitutional change, it is necessary to maintain the balance of the separation of powers on its basis of being an essential aspect of modern constitutionalism (Patapan, 1999, p.391). Geographical proximity is an important factor in the influencing and control of power dimensions. The negotiation process would have to be carried out according to diplomatic procedures to maintain harmonious relations without tainting existing diplomatic relationships. As the argument goes, to understand when diplomacy is successful or when it breaks down is to understand how disputants get to the table in the attempts at negotiation. This may be because such diplomatic initiatives paradoxically occur in contexts in which they are least likely to be

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<sup>108</sup> Also see "The Readiness Preparation for Entering the ASEAN Community in 2015 of the House of Representatives and the Senate"  
[http://www.thai-senate.com/senate\\_inter/upload-download/article/show\\_file.php?id=49](http://www.thai-senate.com/senate_inter/upload-download/article/show_file.php?id=49)  
(retrieved 5/2/2013).

successful (Greig, 2006, p.356). Yet again, the most important lesson on border conflicts for governments to bear in mind is the ability to maintain pleasant and effective diplomatic relations through the political representative's professionalism despite the seriousness of the conflict. This, in a way, would assist with negotiation procedures by smoothing rigid surfaces on both parties and not aggravate the already tense situation.

Moving to the discussion on the ASEAN 2015 community development plan, suggestions from supporting evidence reflected the senators' perspectives on plans to expand training opportunities in order to enhance parliamentary actors' competency. Moreover, opinions on building a strong foundation by offering education exchange programmes for youths was another prospective initiative enabling the Thai parliament to play a more active role as a representative institution of inter-regional cooperation in the region. Economic co-operation has always been the dominant agenda for regional concordance, with political and security concerns receiving only limited attention because of the premium accorded to sovereignty (Khadiagala, 2009, p.433). Evidence from interviews with senators and senate staff have pointed out other relevant issues that can possibly be initiated through parliamentary diplomacy in order to enhance regional cooperation, thus gradually fulfilling the plans for ASEAN to become a proficient regional establishment by 2015.

The opinions from the interviewed senators have suggested development initiatives that would be beneficial for a long-term regional development plan. Also, many types of initiatives would help improve individual and collective skills as well as knowledge of the parliamentary actors. Maintaining good diplomatic relations will help keep the balance of power flowing among regional and global legislative peers. The future resolution of the Southernmost conflicts will be a positive start for the Thai government to re-establish a solid position in the region, beginning from using internal diplomacy among parliamentarians and

military personnel in order to solve civil insurgencies. Once the civil unrest in the South has settled, then it would be less of concern for government representatives to strengthen diplomatic ties with foreign counterparts.

**Conclusion:****Prospects for Parliamentary Diplomacy**

“Parliaments have thus become almost ubiquitous as institutions of modern governance. The basic pre-condition for the establishment and survival of governments depends on the ability of the political parties to control their representatives, to aggregate positions and policies, to present a coherent ideological image, to operate effectively in the legislative arena and to function as a stable basis for the political process”.

(Hazan, 2006, p.1)

Parliamentary diplomacy is a subject for an endless debate. While the series of discussions placed in this research has presented details of defining and conceptualising parliamentary diplomacy by drawing various theoretical arguments and supported by evidence from primary and secondary data sources, the arguments on the exact purposes and position as well as the contribution of diplomacy conducted in the parliamentary level would still remain as another issue in the studies of international relations. There is nothing odd about this, as specific research on parliamentary diplomacy is still in its prime despite the definition and the practice itself as having existed for several decades already. According to Dean Rusk's definition, parliamentary diplomacy refers to the new processes which involves nations with widely differing goals in activity formally organised as a continuing system of regulated debate (Rosenbaum, 1967, p.218). My definition of parliamentary diplomacy would be that it is a method of building relations within the parliamentary level with parliamentarians and parliamentary staff being diplomatic actors. The process of building relations would be through a variety of methods; bilateral sessions including courtesy calls from international representatives in Thailand, the attendance at formal functions hosted by foreign embassies.

Moreover, multilateral routes on building foreign relations among parliamentarians would include connections and membership within parliamentary friendship groups and parliamentary associations respectively, as well as the participation of Thai parliamentarians in international conferences. Parliamentary associations have potential benefits for members of parliament in the possibility of developing a more outward orientation from their own parochial affairs, and at the same time constituting an additional element by providing equipment available to the conduct of public affairs to individuals and nations (Levy, 1974, p.352).

However, despite the level of activeness in foreign diplomatic duties, members of parliament have limited authority in decision-making. As a result, they can be part of the negotiating procedure but then the final decision would fall on the administrative sector – that is conventional diplomats from the Foreign Office. The limitations of diplomacy is emphasised when the prestige and standing of the diplomat shows through vigour and force in the conduct of foreign policy, thus his standing becomes a casualty of forces of national politics (Thompson, 1974, p.303). To summarise in brief, parliamentary diplomacy is another alternative path of creating international relations among parliamentary peers, to exchange professional knowledge through committee membership, specific discussions in international arenas, and worldly issues that may be important to their respective countries. The question, nonetheless, still remains whether it is necessary at all to have parliamentarians as diplomatic actors.

To answer such question, for the meantime, the Thai Senate is not a proper example as a prominent parliamentary diplomatic actor. Fundamentally, this is due to their authority limitations. This argument is concluded from a personal observation and from the data



collected during fieldwork. Yet, there is a possibility that in the future the Senate would be able to develop – individually and institutionally – to become an alternative diplomatic actor with a more notable record as the world becomes more and more globalised. This, nevertheless, would also depend on the constitutional amendments and the reorganisation of internal institutional structure. Inevitably, politics, chance, and bounded rationality are cognitive and social phenomena that influence the decision process in organisations<sup>109</sup> (MacIntosh and MacLean, 1999, p.299). The organised groups either benefit at the expense of unorganised groups or that the lesser susceptibility to collective-action problems would result in any policy bias in favour of small groups or large individuals (Gehlbach, 2006, p.802).

In the following parts, the discussions will be presented according to the prospects of parliamentary diplomacy by summarising and analysing the findings from my collected data. These details and explanations have been tested on my initial hypotheses to be tested prior to collecting data. My hypotheses were presented as follows; The Thai Senate is a distinguished institution in domestic legislative scrutiny, but is yet to develop in becoming a prominent diplomatic actor. However, prospects of the Thai Senate in becoming a prominent diplomatic actor lies upon the actors' values and perceptions on the importance of international diplomatic duties. Another hypothesis is that senate staff have a better understanding of the process and procedures of parliamentary diplomacy than the senators; the staff are the “steering wheel”. Senators are contemporary political actors, while senate staff are permanent civil servants. Therefore, their understandings and experiences on foreign diplomatic duties are different. The final hypothesis was that the diplomatic actors in this study, senators and

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<sup>109</sup> This research on organisational change comprising strategic change, organisational learning, and business processes. See MacIntosh, and MacLean, 1999.

senate staff, perform their duties according to their existing knowledge, professional background, norms and regulations within the institution.

The presented summary will also relate to my theoretical conclusion on the definition of parliamentary diplomacy, the functioning relations between the institution and the actors reflected from a sociological institutionalist approach, lessons learnt from the Thai Senate, contribution of actors towards its member institution, and the future – directions and development of parliamentary diplomacy.

My personal opinion, as a counterargument to the initial hypothesis, is that at present the Thai Senate is not a good example of a parliamentary diplomatic actor. However, there are chances that the Senate, or to put it more generally the Thai parliament, can develop to become a prospective parliamentary diplomatic actor in the future. This would depend on a number of factors; to name a few, the institutional structure, the stability of the Thai constitution, and the level of professionalism of the President of the Senate. An example from members of the German Bundestag showed that the conception of parliament where socially distinguished and privately wealthy notables would represent the "interests" of the German state at their leisure. But then again, the reality of a developing cadre of professional parliamentarians does not depend on the widespread party organisational experience nor the candidates' levels of commitment or ambition to a career in politics (Fishel, 1972, p.65). Moreover, the Thai political culture holds a typical bureaucratic model where the separation of official from private life, the use of formal, rationally constructed rules and regulations, the spread of a new rational action and ethos of legality; and the institutionalisation of all this in a modern administration (Evers, 1987, p.667). These are some reasons for the concluding point on the Thai Senate currently not being a proper example of a parliamentary diplomatic actor, let

alone a strong political representative. This point, consequently, can be related back to the discussion in chapter 3 on the Thai Senate about parliamentarians taking politics as a vocation (Tickamyer, 1981). Again, the purpose of this research is not to engage into an in-depth discussion on Max Weber's account on understanding the premises of human culture and its conference into creating reality of world (Strong, 1985, p.396). However, the sociological argument on the constitution of human nature has been applied to the understanding of the senators' perception and values while conducting international diplomatic duties.

The professional reaction among the senators in office, in particular, can also be considered as a form of political socialisation where actors from different professional backgrounds exercise their skills, knowledge and values in a political arena while they have the opportunity, even if it be temporary. The knowledge that thoughts, behaviour, and political ideology are formed as a result of factors other than direct agent influence is far from restricted to the resocialisation of individuals (Gustafsson, 1987, p.229). My argument continues from this point, based on the evidence collected for this research that political socialisation among parliamentarians can also establish and develop collective institutional power. There are two major perspectives that dominate socialisation theory; the normative locates power within societal structures, and the interpretative which locates power within the individual (Gbrich, 1990, p.517). The issues on political socialisation, both normative and interpretative, can be related to my hypothesis on the theoretical implication of sociological institutionalism that the actors raised in this study, including the senators and senate staff perform their duties according to their personal and professional backgrounds, existing knowledge, norms and institutional regulations.

The triangulation of data from the semi-structured interviews and official documents have revealed evidence to support my hypotheses. At the same time, the triangulation of the information among the 3 interview groups, in particular the interview data from professional representatives who are not affiliated with parliamentary affairs have provided a variety of opinions to analyse the initial research questions and hypotheses on the prospect of the Thai Senate as a diplomatic actor. The outcomes of these diplomatic missions as seen from the case study in this research on the Thai Senate does not reflect a prospective outlook of the development of parliamentary diplomacy. In other words, the Thai Senate is a less competent example of a political institution which would represent parliamentary diplomacy considering from the supporting data collected during fieldwork and from my initial observation from an insider's perspective.

However, if we consider actors from other Upper Houses then there may be more clear examples or they may have a better proven result on parliamentary diplomacy. A speculation would be that in different countries, different social and political cultures would influence the functioning of the institution and its actors respectively. Action templates were used as a term to explain the great slippage between the actual use of means and value preferences by individuals and collectivities in different cultures (Hudson, 1999, p.768). The international diplomatic activities of the Thai Senate, on the contrary and from the collected data, only reflected a bridge of relation-building between parliamentary counterparts.

*a. Theoretical contribution: parliamentary diplomacy*

Towards the end of this research, the definition of parliamentary diplomacy can be presented as a representation of parliamentarians as diplomatic actors in the conduct of building and maintaining foreign affairs. This definition, however, has been drawn from scholarly literature on diplomacy and other relevant factors that encourage parliament in becoming active in foreign diplomatic duties. At the national and international levels, governments have adopted privatisation, deregulation, and currency liberalisation measures to create more appropriate conditions and foster corporate internationalisation for public and private corporations in becoming a stable component of the global system (Vattani, 2000, p.280-281). Focusing on the Thai parliament, in addition, the extent of diplomatic duties of the Thai Senate are limited by the Constitution. However, any planned foreign affairs mission that would be relevant to national security needs to be approved by parliament (under Act 190, current Constitution version 2007). Parliamentary questions asked during sessions may reveal interests in national, international policy or local constituency-orientated issues. They can also reflect the behaviour and the function of legislatures by identification of a question's topic and thus formation of an opinion regarding the agenda and policy interests of the questioner (Martin, 2011, p.260). From this point, although the decision-making authority is limited but then again it shows that the Senate has the rights to approve any international diplomatic mission being carried out.

On parliamentary diplomacy, the arrangements of the Constitution do have an impact on shaping the perspectives and attitudes of the legislators on foreign affairs. Considering the aforementioned fact that the straightforward definition of parliamentary diplomacy has not yet been stated, and that the definition of parliamentary diplomacy has been drawn together from existing scholarly literature, constitutional arrangements limit but do not restrict

parliamentary diplomacy. Consequently, the constitutional limitations on the Thai Senate's diplomatic duties can thus reconstruct a contributing scholarship for future research on parliamentary diplomacy.

From the evidence presented from the Thai Senate, legislative actors have authority limitations yet they hold the position in scrutinising and approving foreign affair missions prior to them being carried out at a national level. Stressing this point on parliamentary diplomacy scholarship, the constitutional arrangements of a national parliament can limit and, at the same time, empower the practice of the government's foreign affairs. This statement can be applied to all national parliaments universally, and can reflect the impact of the Constitution on parliament's authority in diplomacy. From the researcher's perspective combined with evidence for this theoretical contribution, amendments of the Constitution would then alter the authority for diplomatic procedures in the parliamentary level – not to mention adjust parliament's legitimacy in general. Parliament is a sovereign body, able to enact, repeal or amend any law, including any self-imposed limitations. An entrenched constitution, accordingly, is not an inherent guarantee of an effective limitation upon excessive executive, legislative, or judicial independence or the necessity of a better government (Cox, 2013, p.52-53).

Moreover, the military has got a major role in the shaping of the political culture in Thailand. As discussed in chapter 2 in the formal level, the military represents the majority of the governmental institutions including the Senate. However, in a more specific level – looking at the example of the Senate, senators who are military generals do not hold the most distinctive roles in parliamentary diplomacy. Although that may be over-represented in the Senate, this is not to say that they are not active at all in international diplomatic activities.

Their membership in committees enable senators with military background to be active in diplomatic missions as other senators who are from different backgrounds. Yet, the background of the senators are not considered as the variable which would determine their activeness in parliamentary diplomatic duties. The language barrier, moreover, is a more important factor that would determine the activeness and participation of senators in foreign missions.

*b. Contribution of actors towards its member institution*

This study has reflected a contribution of political actors towards its member institution. Although the parliamentary actors in this study – senators and secretariat staff – do not currently represent a prominent example of a parliamentary diplomatic institution, their performance has to some extent contributed towards the structure and functioning of the institution. The reason for stressing this point is because findings from the interviews suggested that the performance and perceptions of actors reflect the level of competency not only among individual actors, but also the institutional policy and strategy on international affairs. The main debate was triggered during an interview with a senior member of staff from the Bureau of Strategy and Policy on the lack of clarity and inefficiency of the Senate's institutional objectives and policies. In a study on the contribution of political candidates of similar party affiliation and ideology in large corporations, factors that stimulate elite's behaviour include common political behaviour, social relations between firms, and economic interdependence might contribute primarily to members of committees that serve the interests of their particular industries (Mizruchi, 1990, p.21). A lesson learnt from the case study of the Thai Senate as a diplomatic actor is that the institution's lack of competency on foreign diplomatic duties, not to mention on the domestic duties they are expected to achieve, would encourage other parliamentary institutions and its actors to be conscious about the importance

of the clarity and structure of the institution as well as – “put the right man for the right job”. All senators and secretariat actors can perform their duties according to each committee and the rules within each committee. The President of the Senate, or the chairperson of each particular committee, has the authority to choose the participants from different committees, not in terms of personal favour but rather in terms of specialism.

Another focal point worth mentioning here on how the works of parliamentary actors in diplomatic duties contribute towards their institution was reflected from an exchange of opinions among parliamentary scholars and practitioners during the 125<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference (IPU), October 2011. A conference paper presented here was to initiate a project to exchange parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to Thai embassies across the world, starting from within the ASEAN region (Chaitep, 2011, p.12). This was suggested as a method to improve the skills and competency of parliamentary staff in facilitating senators’ diplomatic duties and collectively enhancing the performance of parliament. Recently, the proposed plan has been referred to by the Thai Prime Minister, Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, on an official visit to Australia to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Thailand-Australia diplomatic relations. During her visit, the Premier initiated an improvement of trade and export, and also an exchange of Thai and Australian parliamentarians<sup>110</sup>. Details on formal agreements or official postings of member of parliaments abroad were not available, yet this piece of news has provided an example of this current government’s scheme to enhance bilateral relations with other parliaments.

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<sup>110</sup> See National News Bureau of Thailand Public Relations Department, “Prime Minister Yingluck pleased with visit to Australia”, 2 June 2012.  
<http://thainews.prd.go.th/en/news.php?id=255506020003> (retrieved 18 June 2012).



Again, it may also be worth thinking about the actors' orientation towards politics when discussing opportunities to exchange members of parliament or members of Secretariat staff for training in parliaments abroad. Considering political roles from an occupational perspective, the increasing need for advanced knowledge, training, and skills for political decision-making is considered as part of the complexity of the systems with which the politician deals increases. But the process is incomplete, as the politician is a representative of an older social order where political class determines political functions (Conway, 1963; Hall, 1975; Lenski 1966). Past work has not directly confronted the issue of whether vocationalism influences decision-making although there has been interest in factors relating to political experience and office (Tickamyer, 1981, p.26).

It has been mentioned in the previous parts of this research that Secretariat staff assist the duties of senators, and at the same time senators' duties aim to contribute towards the government's decision on international negotiations and discussions. The professional relationship between the senators and the staff from the Secretariat of the Senate is also an obvious example of a semi-democratic bureaucratic system on the Thai society. An explanation on the weak point of democracy in Thailand, which also explains a lot about the characteristics of politicians, is stated as follows;

“Concerning contestation, the weak point in Thai democracy is the lack of electoral competition for political posts wielding power at the intermediate level. The only political officials with significant power subjected to regular elections are members of Parliament. Elected municipal and provincial councils have little real authority, while the more powerful positions of district officer and provincial governor continue to be appointed by the Minister of Interior. Furthermore,

extensive vote-buying at election time calls into question the integrity of the electoral process”.

(LoGerfo, 1996, p.906)

From this, it is concluded that members of political institutions do have a level of contribution towards the institution by following the norms and regulations. Again, it would be beneficial if the actors not only follow the regulations, but also adjust themselves accordingly to the political culture and specific committee objectives. This would be a way to help improve both the domestic and international duties of actors at all levels. When considering the relations between the senators, the senate staff, and the Senate as an institution examining from their duties within the parliament can also reflect a check and balance of the organisational structure. The outcomes of their performance can lead to re-consideration of the level of efficiency of the institutional policy on international affairs. The role of bureaucrats and the impact of organisational behaviour on the making and the implementation of decisions are part of bureaucratic politics (Smith, 1989, p.109). As senators and senate staff work together in tandem, they are able to check each other's performance.

At the moment, the sole observation is that in different constituencies each President of the Senate would have different policies on domestic and foreign affairs. An individual adopts an estimation of that function which is both relatively unwarranted and absolutely, through the repetitions of various actions and continued performance of a certain function required by such performance (Langerock, 1915, p.31). According to the Director of International Organisations Bureau, Secretariat of the House of Representatives, international diplomatic relations in the parliament level are crucial in developing the institutional structure. This

includes the institution itself and the actors involved (interviewed 28 April 2011). Senators, being members of each committee, would go on foreign trips to learn and exchange knowledge about specific issues in order to improvise and draft legislative documents. The argument for this point is that it is beneficial to observe and learn about the working procedures of other national parliaments' international duties. However, this does not mean that we have to copy every detail. The Thai Senate needs to develop its own solid policy on international diplomatic affairs, for the benefits of the institutional proficiency in the future. At the meantime, what has been observed from the institutional regulations are only frameworks and guidelines for the actors to follow. It is crucial that these guidelines are developed into more concrete institutional policies; where a proper project is carried out, followed up, and evaluated for future improvements. Most importantly, these regulations on the conduct of domestic and international affairs should waver to the least despite any future constitutional amendments or political instabilities that would effect the functioning of parliament and the incumbencies.

A solid policy model would be beneficial for the improvement of individual and collective performance. However, according to the director of the personnel training group from the Bureau of Human Resources Development (interviewed May 2011), permanent civil servants from the Secretariat are expected to provide the policy for senators during their term in office. Some might say this is the way of working in tandem, but there are some other people - including the researcher - who would say that this is a hindrance to the self-improvement of senators understanding and skills as diplomatic actors. By doing so, they would fit into the bureaucratic model of a typical patron-client relationship, used to being served and provided for and this would be totally contrast to the reality that they are expected to contribute their knowledge and experiences to their political duties. But then again it is the regulations that

senators follow their duties according to the acts stated in the Constitution. The identity of the institution is determined on the hierarchical and bureaucracy. However, there is no act or restriction in keeping them abound from implementing any duties regarding diplomatic affairs that would be of benefit to the parliament. The diplomatic actors - senators and senate staff - need to have interest in the nature of the job and how they can contribute their knowledge and professional background to their duties.

*c. The Senate and the public*

The relations and accountability of parliament and the public is also a strong point to consider in improving the Senate's functionality. My suggestion as regards this would be that any approved project to enhance public knowledge and participation should always follow a concise procedure of planning, structuring, proceeding, following-up and the evaluation of results. Results from the evaluation would then be able to predict the possibility and success of public knowledge and engagement on the Senate's affairs in the future, as well as reflect the level of public trust and the accountability of parliament. Public opinion and scrutiny acts like a chain reaction of check and balance in the society. The public has the right to scrutinise parliament in general about everything, afterwards issues are carried forward to the administrative sector where appropriate methods and discussions are taken out. A quote on the functioning of parliament is referred to as follows;

“The whole structure of the constitution, the way in which parliament works, is that it is a party machine and that means that the majority party and the government have a common interest and they are interdependent. The government majority back benchers have an interest in making sure the government does its job, but that it also manages to put into effect the policies

of a government and equally, the government depends on its majority in order to get things through”.

(Griffith, 1992, p.6)

Then again, it is questioned whether the issue of the public have wider knowledge about the affairs of the Senate does matter on the institutional performance and the actor's decisions in conducting domestic and international duties. A reflection of the problem of elite functioning in Thai politics is that as long as the freedom of speech is limited within the society, then the basic level of parliament scrutiny will not be that effective. Therefore, instead of trying to change the political culture, citizens should try to adopt their role accordingly to the non-changeable political culture.

#### *d. Methods for improvement*

The methods for an improvement in the performance and outcome of the international diplomatic duties of the Senate would have to go back and reconsider the whole political culture that underlies the structure of the parliamentary institution. It will always be inevitable that political elites have more authority to control and mandate politics than the citizens. Therefore, democracy in Thailand is a result of a patron-client leadership model which has been running throughout each transitional era (Prasertkul, 2005, p.9). As the argument has relied solely on the role of parliamentarians and secretariat staff as diplomatic actors – and basing an example on the Thai Senate – it has become more certain that parliamentary actors do not suffice in promoting a better stance of parliamentary diplomacy. From the conducting of fieldwork and data analysis, several issues have stimulated methods for future improvement on the actor's competency. These issues include the application of improvement methods on an individual and institutional level eg. plans, projects, strategies,

specific training etc. Further, intensive training should be provided for new members of the Senate as well as new members of the Secretariat, apart from basic knowledge and competency training. The intensive training schemes would have to be well-planned and well-structured to gain the most of participation, and an evaluation of the outcomes should always be conducted to measure the impact of the training on the individual. However, the possibility of launching intensive training schemes will have to depend on the possibility of the government budgets. The exercising of representative democracy from the outlook of the current diplomatic activities of the Thai Senate is still difficult to predict the future of parliamentary diplomacy. At the moment, instead of a proper actor on parliamentary diplomacy, it may be better to refer to parliamentary actors according to the nature of their conduct on international diplomatic affairs as 'new state representatives'.

Additional information in order to build diplomatic competency, the Secretariat of the Senate should establish a parliamentary diplomatic affairs research unit apart from the currently existing foreign affairs department. This would be an opportunity for secretariat staff who have experience or specialism in parliamentary diplomatic affairs to develop empirical research and gain information from other parliaments in developed nations in order to improve the functions, strategies, and policies on the Thai Senate's foreign duties. The research scholarship and publications can then be circulated within the institution and publicised to other relevant sectors in government and throughout the public (conversation between researcher and senator, 4 December 2012). Having gone through a long process of institutionalisation, parliaments renew themselves institutionally under such pressures as the competition with executive power, international political environment, and the impact of new cohorts of members (Longley and Davidson, 1998, p.2). Moreover, a parliamentary research unit would also provide better opportunities for parliamentary affairs be published towards

the public, therefore enhancing their knowledge about the duties of the Senate and gaining a better understanding of what the Senate actually does considering it being a closed community. The media has constantly played a crucial role as being an indispensable channel of information communication in the changing society, as a result positive interactions between legislators and the media will encourage legislators to design a legal system that best serves the needs of society and contributing to a rational change in the legal system (Wu, 2010, p.21).

*e.Limitations of research*

During the period of conducting and writing up this thesis, there had been a number of limitations to the research. These limitations, however, did not majorly interfere with the overall research process. On the positive side, they were able to help test the initial hypotheses and provide an even structured research framework to work on. The limitations of this research that occurred during the research process are stated accordingly in the following paragraph.

Limited access to information: the researcher has access to governmental documents in certain departments of the Secretariat of the Senate. Moreover, information older than 10 years is destroyed so information which may have been valuable to this research prior to the time frame of 10 years is not available. The information storage is also considered another obstacle in retrieving raw data to support the research arguments. There is not a proper information storage system, thus only limited statistical data on international diplomatic duties of the Senate were collected. The interviews with senators were also quite limited, as the researcher was not able to access some of the senators or foreign office diplomats for interviews, although some correspondence had been arranged and constantly followed up.

This limitation on interviews leads forward to constraints about specific discussions on the Thai political system or certain public figures: people have diverse political views in Thailand as in many other countries across the world. Therefore, this research has been written up in a neutral but critical manner, so not to be overly-biased due to the advantage of the researcher as an insider. The final obstacle while conducting the research was the distance of case studies: extensive travelling was required to collect first hand semi-structured interview data and official documents, as the sources of information were all based in Bangkok, Thailand. As a result, precise planning had to be arranged prior to each travel. However, additional interview data was able to be acquired from 2 diplomatic missions to London, UK, in July and November 2012 respectively. These follow-up interviews helped provided data that was useful to add up with the existing research material.

The analysis of the acquired data and the concluding points to answer the research questions and hypotheses were presented on the basis of this political fact. Another issue concerning limitations for the research was the unavailability of data from Foreign Ministry officials. Speculated reasons would be due to time constraints and professional engagements. Had there been more information from Foreign Ministry representatives, then the data analysis to distinguish conventional diplomacy and parliamentary diplomacy would have been clearer. Nevertheless, it is legitimate to define parliamentary diplomacy and conventional diplomacy from all the other evidence that has been gathered to this concluding point by the actors, the levels of which the activities are conducted, and the authority in decision-making.



*f. Suggestions for future research*

This research has reflected a great deal of advice and suggestions for future studies on parliamentary diplomacy. The first suggestion is that national parliaments should contemplate on the significance of diplomacy and creating foreign relations with international counterparts. The reason is because parliaments, as well as other government representatives, are now considered as main contact for foreign counterparts. An ideal parliamentary diplomatic actor, where it be an institution or individual representative, should have a clear and concise strategy of each diplomatic mission. On the Thai Senate case, foreign trips that involve senators travelling abroad should state precise objectives of the mission, expected outcomes, and a formal evaluation of certain diplomatic missions to measure the level of success. This is a whole summary of the evidence gathered to support this research project. Again, the extent of positive outlooks on such international diplomatic mission would fall on the understanding and values of the senators, while they hold their office terms and have the opportunity to engage themselves and represent their committee in international diplomatic activities. As representatives of the people, the individual and collective skills of legislators are expected to be a combination of representation, conflict management skills, and partisan incentives altogether (Skogstad, 1985, p.740). However, some recent work contends that there is less collective action of some kinds than most people think: depending on less involvement by political action committee, less lobbying, fewer and smaller campaign contributions (Burstein and Sausner, 2005, p. 404).

For methodological matters on the criteria and selection of interviewees in case study research where interviews are required to gather information to support the research, it is advisable to select the prospective interviewees in the earlier stages of the research. When referring to the early stages, from my experience, it is advisable to construct a clear

theoretical framework and methodology. A concise research structure will then enable the researcher to make a better choice of prospective interviewees and also handle obstacles prior to the interview process before hand. These obstacles include cancellations of interview appointments and access limitation to prospective interviewees. Further, during interviews the interviewees may express bias and aggressiveness according to their orientation towards the interview<sup>111</sup> (Yanos and Hopper, 2008, p.230).

As devised in the previous chapters of this thesis, parliamentary diplomacy has enabled government representatives from different continents across the world to build relations with foreign counterparts, therefore expanding the networks of international relations conventionally limited to foreign ministries. My initial arguments were that parliamentary institutions and actors have emerged and developed their role in international diplomatic duties. If considered in a general context, parliamentary diplomacy will continue to develop in the future as the world is rapidly interconnecting. Political agencies are emerging and diplomatic actors will not solely be limited to envoys from the Foreign Office. The direction and success of diplomatic practice through parliament, however, would depend on the intentions and perseverance of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff who are responsible for carrying out the foreign diplomatic duties. This research, nonetheless, having attempted to theorise and define parliamentary diplomacy by raising the Thai Senate as a case study of a parliamentary institution and the role its actors play in conducting international affairs, for the meantime it can be vague or even difficult to pinpoint a certain outlook of parliamentary diplomacy through this particular example. Thus, several questions arise on the competency of the institution and actors who form part of the institution. Part of the reason stemmed from

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<sup>111</sup> Pierre Bourdieu's methodological essay, '*Understanding*' referred to this interview trap as 'false, collusive objectification': false, because it is unfaithful to the particularities of the life under scrutiny; collusive, because the interviewer unwittingly goes along with the artifice; and objectifying because a readymade account has been substituted for the lived, unfinished angularities of a reflective subject. See Bourdieu, P. (1999) in Yanos and Hopper (2008).

the researcher's personal scrutiny combined with relevant findings from fieldwork data. Findings from evidence, as have already been mentioned in the previous chapter, was that the studied group of senators were senior elite politicians who are from various backgrounds and are expected to take up their positions in parliament in order to contribute their professional knowledge and experience to legislative scrutiny and specific committee obligations. From an ethnographic observation combined with the collected data, it is evident that some senators do take their duties very seriously whilst others only consider this temporary political career as a stepping stone or a catapult to build their reputation. Applying this fact to my main theoretical debate, my view towards this would be that the functioning nature of the senators include creating networks among their peers in the House and beyond. International diplomatic missions of the Senate, consequently, should aim for a concrete outcome and each mission should always be followed up for results – not just seeing it as an advantage to travel abroad. Moreover, while this discussion has been based on the sociological institutionalist approach to study the organisational behaviour of the Thai Senate, it may have also fitted into the description of the rational choice institutionalist approach. Rationality in institutions would influence dynamics of decision-making by maximizing the utilities of the actors, limiting individual rationality and affecting the courses of society (Hira and Hira, 2000, p.269). Further, the arrangements within the institutions may be entirely new or built on less formal arrangements, and that certain behaviour may be permitted or prohibited (Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal, 2001, p.763).

However, the sociological institutionalism approach; “logic of appropriateness” was used for this research instead as it has helped examine and understand the relationship between the institution and its actors, as well as the background motivation for the actors' performance on their domestic and international duties. Moreover, it is an attempt to understand the

functioning structure, the communication pattern, and the behaviour of its actors. It is clear that the actors follow the institutional regulations on performing both their domestic and international duties using a combination of professional skills and training experience. In other words, the institutional norms and regulations direct the performance of the actors. When recurring problems need to be solved, moreover, actors in the institution would adopt a set of habitualised actions and develop these actions empirically to a degree that they are evoked with minimal decision-making effort (Zilber, 2002, p.234). Problems about their performance, however, are reflected from their senator peers, secretariat staff who assist the senators' duties, and members of the public who act as a double scrutiny of parliament. Another obstacle is the communication skills of the actors, but these skills can be improved from the experience of other policy-makers abroad, businesses, civil society actors and the media as public communication is not the afterthought but at the heart of the new paradigm of diplomacy (Leonard and Avakeson, 2002, p.4). The said problems would relate to the entire functioning of the Senate; the ambiguity of the incumbents' performance and the accountability of the institution itself. Evidence has shown that there is a lack of a concise model on foreign affairs, despite having a statement on how foreign affairs should be conducted and what outcomes are expected. A senior official from the Bureau of Policy and Strategy (interviewed 3 May 2011) has stated that records from the policy bureau does not show any main policy or code of conduct on foreign affairs, due to the fact that the Secretariat of the Senate administers and supports the senators' duties rather than outlining policies for them to follow.

A summary of the hypotheses testing is described as follows; parliamentary diplomacy of the Thai Senate is limited by the Constitution, as the authority of making decisions lies with the conventional diplomats from the Foreign Office. Further, institutional actors including

senators and Senate staff should work together in tandem. The major obstacle for the performance of senators and senate staff is that there is no concise institutional policy framework. A lack of transparency and accountability between senators and the staff is also another main problem which constrains the advancement of the domestic and diplomatic duties. The solution for these obstacles would rely more on ways to improve the structure, by developing proper institutional functions. Skills and knowledge improvement of staff: more competency to facilitate and assist senators in international diplomatic missions. Although it is impossible to transform the political culture and change the regime system, these methods would more or less help to improve the functionality of the Senate.

*g. Lessons learnt from the Thai Senate*

In the earlier chapters, I have attempted to elaborate a rather limited definition of parliamentary diplomacy by drawing together various theoretical and scholarly explanations on conventional diplomatic practices. Further, an example of an institutional actor – the Thai Senate - was given to demonstrate and clarify the role and competency of a political institution apart from the conventional diplomatic institution – the Foreign Office. A reflection from the Thai Senate as a diplomatic actor can offer a broadened perspective on parliaments' engagement in foreign affairs. One of my previous hypotheses was that the Thai Senate can be considered as an emerging diplomatic actor, but has yet to become a prominent actor in developing parliamentary diplomacy, let alone international relations. Having tested these hypotheses by gathering relevant information from semi-structured interviews, results have shown that actors from the Thai Senate – including the senators and civil servants from the Secretariat of the Senate – perform their duties according to the institutional regulations. However, the perceptions on international diplomatic duties of each group of actors are slightly different as followed;

The political posts of senators are temporary. Therefore, they think that they should make the most of their time and opportunity while in office. The main responsibilities, apart from legislative scrutiny, is that they need to take part in conducting international diplomatic duties with foreign counterparts. However, some senators think that the diplomatic duties are not permanent. They would only participate in such duties when they have the opportunity during their term in office.

Senate staff, in addition, are permanent civil servants. Their main responsibilities are to facilitate the duties of the senators, depending on the department they are assigned to. It is likely that during the life-long tenure of their civil service, the staff are likely to be transferred to other departments in order to rotate the functioning of the Secretariat. Nonetheless, my argument would remain firm that permanent civil servants are likely to have more experience in the procedures of international diplomatic duties. This would also compliment to the professional knowledge of the senators, despite them having less diplomatic experience.

Considering the terms of the Senate's functioning it may be more feasible to adopt the rational choice institutionalist approach to such particular study on the role of parliaments and parliamentarians. However, the decision to adopt a sociological institutionalist approach for this study was because of my initial justification that the official performance of the parliamentary actors reflect their interactions and behavior in a personal setting. Moreover, when they are together as members of a parliamentary community, a level of socialisation within the parliament setting occur. In addition, the sociological approach has had a most descriptive focus with the seldom well-articulated assumption that people's group memberships, social, and spatial memberships are largely determined by their political

actions. This would also shape the geographic and demographic correlates of citizens' electoral behaviour (Dennis, 1991, p.57).

The shifting and transferring of knowledge and duties are more so flowing among senators and the secretariat staff. A distinctive point when the distribution of responsibilities are wavered when the senators bring their personal assistance to facilitate their duties. This, in a way, has two-folded effects on the senators' and secretariat staff's performance. The positive side is that most of the senators' personal aides have already had experience working with that particular senator in his/her previous profession prior to the commencement in office. Therefore, they are able to coordinate with the senator's demands and requirements more swiftly. On the other hand, while the familiarity with the senator enables the senators and their assistants to work together efficiently, the gap between the senators and the secretariat staff<sup>112</sup> is likely to widen, not to mention the gap between the senators themselves. The gap between parliamentarians and staff vary according to department and committee. This makes it more likely that senators in some committees tend to perform their duties separately with their own personnel, despite the fact that they are expected to perform their duties collectively with other peers. Causes of the gap between parliamentarians and staff, to list a few, would include different levels of knowledge, skills and ability, seniority issues, social background, the latter reason making the Senate staff either feel intimidated or overly patronised<sup>113</sup>.

One senator from the Committee on Monetary, Finance, Banking and Financial Institutions (interviewed 23 March 2011) mentioned during the interviews that some senators tend to

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<sup>112</sup> Referring to the secretariat staff from the Committee Bureaus who have direct contact with the senators from each standing committee.

<sup>113</sup> In chapter 3, underlying factors on the class distinction that has created an invisible gap in the Thai society include upper-middle class, agricultural background, economic status, education.

discuss and make decisions 'discretely' in their group, referring to the actual senator and his or her personal assistants. As a result, it would have an effect on the senators' collective performance and decision-making. During the limited time in office the senators would have their personal aides to assist and facilitate their duties. As a result, the distribution of knowledge would not be efficient among the diplomatic actors. In other words, senators – who are supposed to be the main diplomatic actors – would not have any knowledge regarding the specific mission they are expected to complete. This is a typical reflection of bureaucracy in the Thai society and inevitably viewed as a hindrance on the improvement of interpersonal skills, institutional function, parliamentary diplomacy, and last but not least, democracy.

Therefore, it is important for senators and senate staff to have a solid understanding and knowledge on the procedures of their main responsibilities and general knowledge on international diplomatic duties, especially in the case of those who are more frequently active in international missions. This is to say that they should have thorough knowledge which could be transferable later on once they finish their senatorship, not just knowledge on the surface. This, moreover, would apply to the secretariat staff whose grounded responsibilities are to assist and support the duties of senators. As their positions are likely to be rotated during the course of their civil service, these professional skills would therefore be of use in their prospective positions.

In brief, each national parliament has their own institutional rules and regulations for the members to follow, whether be regulations on domestic or international duties. However, if we consider international diplomatic duties of parliaments, to some this may not be as important as their domestic duties of legislative drafting and passing on bills. Moreover, the



authority of parliament is also limited by their country's constitution, thus it may be more appropriate to view them as policy advisors rather than policy makers. On the external factors, a case from France has showed that very few studies on mass political behaviour and the impact of worldwide market activity reflect the politician's perception of policy maker competency, policy efficacy, and what voters demand from their representatives<sup>114</sup> (Hellwig, 2007, p.146). Bringing the discussion back to the Thai Senate, the current Constitution, A.D.2007, has set a framework for the senators' duties – as stated in chapter 3.

Nonetheless, my argument would remain that parliamentarians from unicameral parliaments or bicameral parliaments can develop their skills to become alternative diplomatic actors in their own rights – even if their authorities are legally limited and if the formal negotiation process and final decisions would have to be made by the Ambassador or head of state. The major concern for the case of the Thai Senate would be that as long as bureaucracy and patronage is deeply rooted in the system, not to mention the societal background and institutional norms, then it would be extremely difficult for the actors to accept the values of a transparent and efficient political career. Thus, a positive outlook of parliamentary diplomacy would be out of the question. But then again it is the regulations that senators follow their duties according to the acts stated in the Constitution. The identity of the institution is determined on the hierarchical and bureaucratic. However, there is no act or restrictions to keep them abound from implementing any duties regarding diplomatic affairs that would be of benefit to the parliament. The diplomatic actors – senators and senate staff – need to have interest in the nature of the job and how they can contribute their knowledge and professional background to their duties.

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<sup>114</sup> The impact of globalisation has raised the intensity of competition in political and economic establishments, and this can draw political actors to become more business, profit-orientated rather than considering views from the people who voted for them. See Hellwig, 2007, pp. 146-158.

Senate staff, having pointed out that they are the main mechanisms to a successful diplomatic parliamentary mission, would still be repressed and limited by the position in the secretariat (interviews with Secretariat staff from the Bureau of Foreign Affairs and the Bureau of Foreign Languages, March 2011). Parliaments, as the cradle of democracy, should present right values and policy directions. Joint efforts of secretaries general, parliamentary cooperation and upgraded professionalism of parliamentary secretariats are among the key elements in advancing global parliamentary democracy in an era of new civilisation, an enormous amount of knowledge and experience accumulated in different spheres of culture and civilisation converges on the back of developing science and technology and growing economies (Dong, 2009). In other words, no matter how much knowledge they have than the senators, they would have to act and perform their duties according to the conventions within the institution. However, conventions are likely to evolve, modify themselves, and sometimes disappear according to internal and external dynamics of routinisation. As a result, nonjustified norms, interrelation between objects, discourses, and the symbolic meanings that shape the behaviours of actors' symbolic meetings can be taken for granted (Gomez and Jones, 2000, p.700-701). Senate staff are permanent civil servants whose main duties are to support both the domestic and international diplomatic duties of the senators. Most importantly, it was shown from the research that the staff are more familiar with the procedures of international diplomatic duties. Their duties on assisting the senators are considered as recurring; they need to prepare the process over and over again. As long as patronage and favouratism exists within the institution, nonetheless, the opportunity for the actors who could have constituted and improved parliamentary diplomacy would be inhibited.

*h. Conclusion*

The directions and development of parliamentary diplomacy are as yet unpredictable. The Thai Senate is only another example of a domestic political institution, the main functioning being legislative scrutiny and the international responsibility is to build and maintain foreign relations with international counterparts. From the supporting evidence gathered up to now, parliamentary diplomacy is only another path of creating and maintaining international relations among fellow parliamentarians, but does not have impact in making decisions, negotiations, or implement any agreements. Senators would only initiate a discussion, build a relationship, and that is how it will remain unless the constitutional framework on the Senate should be revised otherwise. National parliaments were originally established as legislative institutions, therefore they have limited powers on implementing and carrying on any discussions or, if any, agreements further into a pragmatic project. As a result, the decision-making process is the responsibility of the administrative sector; the government. However, as I have attempted to show the Thai Senate is currently not an obvious example of a political institution that can deliver prospects of a parliamentary diplomatic representative, the future of diplomacy would remain affected by the fact that the main diplomatic institution is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As for the Thai Senate, the conclusion of this research is not a definite rejection of a chance for improvement. The selected period for research – the Senate incumbency from 2008 – 2011 – reflected an example of yet another period when parliament needs to stabilise its position and authority after events of political transition. At the same time, this reflects the constant instability and uncertainty of Thai politics<sup>115</sup>. On the positive part, the case study of

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<sup>115</sup> Political instability, in my opinion, cannot be compared as it varies from country to country according to a number of factors including the political culture, regime type, politicians who hold authority, and diverse political views and actions of the citizens.

this incumbency has provided evidence to show leadership and professionalism of the former President of the Senate. The international diplomatic duties lead by the former President was, in a way, to convey trust to foreign counterparts and reassure that the domestic situation was being under control. This remark leads to a fact that it is impossible to transform the political culture and change the regime of the country, particularly in the case of Thailand where patriotism and a sense of national identity is considered strong. On the Senate, I would say there are possibilities that the institution may be able to improve itself structure-wise to become a more successful domestic and diplomatic actor. This, however, would depend on a variety of factors which would need to be reconsidered and put into action gradually over time. Returning to one of my hypotheses, *the prospects of the Thai Senate in becoming a prominent diplomatic actor lies upon the actors' values and perceptions on the importance of international diplomatic duties*; this statement has been gradually emphasised throughout the research. During the temporary period of their term in office, senators should make the most of their duties and professionalism. The engagement in work that is preliminary intellectual and serves civic or individual need, requires specialised skills and training, mainly autonomous and self-regulating, committed to furtherance of basic ethical norms, are characteristics of a professional (Meyers, Wyatt, Borden, & Wasserman, 2012, p.190). Also, their values, perceptions, attitude towards both domestic and international diplomatic duties would add up to a better performance and prospective mission outcomes.

Yet again, this is not to suggest that the senators are only a group of senior professionals who take their positions for granted but the research has been an attempt to clarify the nature of the Senate as an institution and the nature of its members, the senators. The historical background of Thai politics has definitely shaped the rituals of conduct within the political institution and it is difficult to determine whether there would be any transformations to the

system in the near or later future. However, what would be suggested at this point is that senators, as individuals, have the ability to contemplate and make decisions based on their background professions and knowledge about their duties as senators. Political views are also another important element that each person has rights to believe in, but they should not use this as a constraint or a domineering factor during their performance in office.

On a particular foreign trip, for instance with the President of the Senate or with a standing committee, a Secretariat staff usually would be assigned as delegation secretary. Staff from the Bureau of Foreign Affairs would be assigned if the President were head of the delegation, but staff from individual committees would be responsible for following the delegation if the head of the delegation were Chairperson of a committee. The duties include updating contacts and appointments to whom the delegation would be meeting and the places they will be visiting. Therefore, Senate staff who act as delegation secretary should definitely understand their duties thoroughly and keep themselves alert at all times. When problems arise, they would also need to handle the situation professionally. My argument to this point is that the international diplomatic duties of the Thai Senate can be defined by the quality of the two actors which have been raised in this research; the senators and the senate staff. From the start, they need to have a positive relationship in working together and realise the importance of keeping oneself up-to-dated with worldly information and as diplomacy is a regulated process of communication between at least two subjects, conducted by their representative agents over a particular object (Constantinou, 1996, p.25).

Skills and knowledge improvement of staff to be more competent in order to facilitate and assist senators in international diplomatic missions are also crucial. Even though the Senate staff do understand the process and procedures of parliamentary diplomacy, they cannot

exceed the framework of their duties. At the same time, senators would not be able to exceed their duty framework as stated by the Constitution either. What has been learnt is that the institutional rules and constitutional limitations provide a grounded duty framework for the actors, therefore they strictly follow what they are expected to do. However, in certain situations thinking 'outside of the box', by being more assertive or utilising first-hand problem solving skills. In other words, apart from the formal regulations they are obliged to follow, the actors should assimilate themselves with the institutional norms. The statement is implying that it would be ideal if the actors are able to combine their duties according to the Constitution and to the institutional requirements, or by following the collective rules of the group as it is often likely that individual once they 'socialise' together they tend to form a collective norm among the members. Even if the argument was stressed that the Senate staff have better understanding about the international diplomatic duties of the Senate than the senators who are supposed to be the primary actors themselves, both groups of actors – being part of the institution and working together in tandem – should constitute their duties to the long-term improvement of the Senate's overall functioning. In fact, senators are contemporary political actors while senate staff are permanent civil servants. Therefore, their understandings and experiences on foreign diplomatic duties are different. This fact then leads to the presentation of the diplomatic actors in this study, referring to the senators and senate staff, performing their duties according to their existing knowledge, professional background, norms and regulations within the institution.

The globalised world has encouraged increasing numbers of diplomatic actors. Although the conventional diplomatic establishment would remain within the nation's Foreign Office, my prediction would be that other alternative international diplomatic actors would continue to create and maintain bilateral or multilateral relations among their foreign counterparts. This,

significantly, will have a contributing impact on the conventional path of diplomacy and international relations building. Directions and development for present – the Thai Senate, as well as the Thai parliament as a whole – should have a solid and clear institutional structure, properly outlined for members to follow. Also, during their term in office the senators should see themselves with dual responsibilities; on legislative scrutiny and on the international diplomatic duties. Even if these roles are temporary, they should perceive it not only as an opportunity to represent the government but also to utilise their professional knowledge and skills to what may be of beneficial to the country.

The conclusion of parliamentary diplomacy can be summarised as follows accordingly. Parliamentary diplomacy is predicted to keep on developing, as it is still in its early stages. It may well be that the conceptualisation of parliamentary diplomacy would be to build and maintain relations among actors in the parliamentary level, through the exchange of knowledge and values – this may include official cooperation – on legislative affairs or specific issues that will enable benefits towards each party involved. Further, parliamentary diplomacy is a path to stimulate, brainstorm ideas and thoughts on how to improve a particular situation. But most of the meetings and activities involved are more likely to talk about a situation rather than aim at conflict resolution (except for the case of the Thai-Cambodian border conflict).

Moreover, the direction of parliamentary diplomacy would depend firstly on the perceptions of the actors during their term in office, whether they take their responsibilities seriously. It is an inevitable fact that professional individuals enter parliament to utilise their skills and knowledge. However, they should always bear in mind that during their senatorship in parliament they should focus on their professional contribution to parliamentary affairs e.g.

specific committee affairs, their provincial representation, and other responsibilities related to their background profession. Most importantly, senators should be aware that as representatives of the citizens from every province they should contribute fully to their appointed duties than rationalising benefits and fame from a temporary political career in parliament. Suggested further research would be on issues including a concise outline of institutional policy within the framework of the Senate and studies on bicameral parliaments, the position of the institutional actors in parliamentary diplomatic activities, and the contribution of parliamentary institutions to diplomacy and democracy-building.

This research was not only conducted in order to theorise parliamentary diplomacy and study the role of the Thai Senate as a diplomatic actor, but also to add a contribution towards the studies of legislatures in developing countries in Southeast Asia. The Thai Senate has been raised as a case study on parliamentary functionings in terms of the institutional mechanism, and an intensive example on legislative institutions being diplomatic actors. The conclusion would often come up as parliaments in this region were sometimes powerful but in practically no case were they the decisive institution for policy output, as other important factors shape politics in these countries (Ziegenhain, 2008, p.5).

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## APPENDICES

### **A.1 Semi-structured interview outline**

#### **Interview points: Perspectives on the Thai Senate's International Diplomatic duties**

##### *Introduction*

- Purpose of interview: to collect primary qualitative information for PhD level research on parliamentary diplomacy
- Time: approximately 30 – 45 minutes
- Ethical issues
  - o Permission to record the interview for transcription and analysis
  - o Privacy of obtained information

##### *Duties*

- Personal background
  - o Professional experience
  - o Specialised area
- Nature of duties / responsibilities in the Thai Senate
  - o Domestic duties
  - o International duties
- Senate committee
  - o Membership in committee(s)
  - o Position in committee(s)
  - o Reason/factors for becoming members in particular committee(s)
  - o Duties in committee(s)
- Diplomatic actor: individual
  - o Role / duties

- Perspectives on parliamentary diplomacy
- Future prospects : plans after senatorship
- Diplomatic actor: institutional
  - Role / duties
  - Perspectives on parliamentary diplomacy
  - Future prospects
- Any further helpful suggestions on parliamentary diplomacy?

### **Example of main questions**

*detailed questions were further elaborated during the course of each interview*

- Please give your opinion on the international diplomatic duties of the Senate
- Do you think diplomatic duties are important? From your point of view and your responsibility?
- Do you consider yourself as a diplomatic actor?
- Please give your opinion on prospects of the international diplomatic duties of the Senate and whether the Senate can be seen as a diplomatic actor in the future?
- Any further comments or suggestions on the Thai Senate being a parliamentary diplomatic actor?

## A.2 List of international diplomatic duties

The numbers and figures presented in the following tables were collected from summary reports from the Bureau of Foreign Affairs. Data and numbers were recorded according to the countries where the President of the Senate and senators from different committees have officially visited. However, 'N/A' refers to the fact that data was not applicable for collection due to incomplete data records, and '0' refers to the no activities.

### Foreign Visits

YEAR	NUMBER OF VISITS
2006	N/A
2007	7
2008	0
2009	N/A
2010	19
2011	6
2012	2

### Courtesy calls

YEAR	NUMBER OF VISITS
2006	13
2007	28
2008	30

	Japan, Romania, India, Finland, Cuba, Cambodia, France, Morocco, Russia, America, Czech, Chile, New Zealand, Lao PDR, Luxembourg, Kazakhstan, Peru, Italy, Australia, Madagascar, Vietnam, Germany.
2009	18 Netherlands, China, UK, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, Greece, Germany, Lao PDR, Austria, Belgium, Romania, Chile, Israel, Canada, Myanmar, Bhutan, Iran, South Korea, Argentina, New Zealand, Italy, Poland, Czech Republic, Singapore, Australia.
2010	28
2011	34
2012	31

**International Conferences**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>NUMBER OF VISITS</b>
2006	1
2007	13
2008	1
2009	13 Spain, Morocco, USA, Mexico, Singapore, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Austria, China, Bhutan, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Italy, South Africa, Malta, Italy, Argentina, Brazil
2010	19
2011	3
2012	15

**Reception hosting**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>NUMBER OF VISITS</b>
2006	2
2007	25
2008	N/A

2009	16 UK, China, Germany, Lao PDR, Egypt, Poland, Romania, Myanmar, Cambodia, Japan.
2010	19 Bhutan, Russia, India, Philippines, South Korea, Switzerland, Bahrain, China, Namibia, Japan, Germany, Peru, Argentina, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan, Vietnam, Cyprus, Spain.
2011	6 China, Romania, Nigeria, Spain, UK, Japan, Iran, Vietnam, Peru, Singapore, Israel, New Zealand, Pakistan, Italy, South Korea, Switzerland, Russia.
2012	6

**Source:** Based on individual reports from the Bureau of Foreign Affairs, Secretariat of the Senate, Bangkok.

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##### *Senators*

Name	Position	Date of interview
H.E. Mr. Prasobsook Boondech	President of the Senate (2008-2011)	17/3/2011
Mr. Nikom Vairajpanich	First Vice-President of the Senate	17/3/2011
Mr. Buncha Pongaryukool	Senator, Committee on Agriculture	25/3/2011
Mr. Jittipoj Viriyaroj	Senator, Committee on Constitutional Institution Affairs and Auditing Budgets	24/3/2011
Ms. Paradee Jongsuthanamanee	Senator, Committee on Transportation	28/3/2011
Ms. Pikulkeaw Krairiksh	Chairperson, Committee on Foreign Affairs	17/3/2011
Mr. Siriwat Kraisin	Chairperson, Committee on Education	30/3/2011
Mr. Surachai Chaitrakulthong	Chairperson, Committee on Economics, Trade, and Industry	23/3/2011

Mr. Suradet Jiratthichareon	Chairperson, Committee on Energy	2/5/2011
Mr. Tuanabdullah Daudmareyo	Senator, Committee on Foreign Affairs	25/3/2011
Mr. Vittaya Inala	Chairperson, Committee on Monetary, Finance, Banking, and Financial Institutions	23/3/2011



*Secretariat of the Senate staff*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
Ms.La-or Puthornjai	Director, Bureau of Foreign Affairs	28/4/2011
Mr. Somsak Manunpichu	Deputy Secretary-General	3/5/2011
Mr.Montri Rupsuwan	Legal Advisor	25/3/2011
Ms. Saijai Ketsuwan	Legal officer, Committee on Economics, trade, and Industry	23/3/2011
Anonymous (female)	Group director, Bureau of Strategies and Policy	24/3/2011
Mr.Rawat Wannurak	Officer, Bureau of Foreign Languages	21/3/2011
Anonymous (female)	Officer, Bureau of Foreign Languages	21/3/2011
Ms. Somying Thadathibeth	Protocol group director, Bureau of Foreign Affairs	27/4/2011
Ms. Nattaya Suksagnuen	Officer, Bureau of Official Information	21/3/2011

*Secretariat of the House of Representatives*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
Anonymous (female)	Group director, Bureau of International Organisations	29/3/2011
Ms. Kanteera Leelanond	Officer, Bureau of International Organisations	29/3/2011

*External representatives*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
Anonymous (male)	Retired senior official, Rice Department, Ministry of Agriculture	23/3/2011
Dr. Thawinwadee Bureekul	Department Director, Prapokkklao Institute	26/4/2011
Anonymous (female)	Biology teacher, Yupparaj Wittayalai School, Chiang Mai	19/4/2011
Ms. Napamon Roongwitoo	Journalist, Bangkok Post	28/4/2011
Mr. Surachet Yothadee	Freelance lawyer	19/4/2011

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