Political Management and Economic Policy Reform: The Case of Thailand

by

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Abstract

This article analyzes the economic policy reform experience of Thailand during the 2018 in three policy areas, exchange rate, trade, and agriculture. A political management model that shows how strong but skillful political organizations and governments are as critical to policy reform success as is economic content is used for the analysis. The model proposes that government officials have to make policy reforms politically feasible if the reforms are to succeed. The assumption is that successful decision makers will take three kinds of political initiatives: (1) appeal to national sentiments, (2) seek the collaboration of affected interest groups, and (3) manage external actors. The article provides evidence that Thailand economic performance may be correlated with the degree of political initiative taken. The success or failure of Thailand also provides instructive experience for the next election government administration as it moves forward with a variety of policy reforms

Keywords: Political Management, Economic Policy, Leadership, Policy Reform

1. Introduction

Political management is very important that can affect the ability of political organizations and governments to achieve their goals. Business concepts of management have potential relevance to help understand how political organizations may reflect on the implications for governance, participation, and democracy. This paper sets out initials ideas arguing the political management involving planning, organizing, and reviewing of resources to achieve economic policy reform in Thailand. Political management identifies a range potential problem in practice such high staff turnover, over controlling leaders and over lose management practices in minister's offices. Normally, politicians and staffers are left to learn through working or volunteering in parties first or on the job, restricting representation to career politicians. According to Martinelli (1993), applying economic policy issues rely on the policymakers who should proceed what they commit to people before election. In doing so, it emphasizes the existence of credibility constraints and political constraints on the policymakers' optimization problem. Political constraints are originated in the fact that policymakers are restricted in their choices by the actions of other political actors. Credibility constraints are given by the fact that the public knows (even if imperfectly) that the government pursues some objectives and that it does so subject to political and other constraints. It is important to notice that credibility constraints would arise even in the absence of divergent objectives between the different members of society, while political constraints can only be binding if political agents have conflicting objectives.

While the political economic literature in general postulates a framework of political institutions corresponding to that of the developed nations, approaching economic reform issues entails to recognize the peculiar political conditions prevalent in the reforming countries. While in the literature at large it is assumed that voting is the only or the most relevant form of participation with respect to macroeconomic policy issues (Persson and Tabellini 1990), in developing countries electoral accountability can be less important as a political constraint than other forms of political involvement by the members of the public, such as lobbying by interest groups, public protests, and even violent actions, because democratic institutions are less common and tend to be fragile. Therefore, the research study focused on investigating how politics leading to economics reform in macroeconomic policy issues and the way in which bureaucratic in Thailand can be overcome to stimulate economy growth.

Objective of the Study

1. To investigate the factors (politics, economics, and security) affecting economics reform.
2. To investigate the influence of the factors (politics, economics, and security) affecting economics reform.
3. To develop the model for the relationship of politics, economics, and security towards economics reform.

Benefit of the Study

1. To recognize the model for the relationship of politics, economics, and security towards economics reform.
2. To recognize the factor affecting the model for the relationship of politics, economics, and security towards economics reform.
3. To recognize the guideline of the model for the relationship of politics, economics, and security towards economics reform.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition and Theory

Politics

Definition

Politics (meaning "affairs of the cities") is the process of making decisions that apply to members of a group. It refers to achieving and exercising positions of governance—organized control over a human community, particularly a state.

Classifications

Formal politics refers to the operation of a constitutional system of government and publicly defined institutions and procedures. Political parties, public policy or discussions about war and foreign affairs would fall under the category of Formal Politics. Many people view formal politics as something outside of themselves, but that can still affect their daily lives. Semi-formal politics is politics in government associations such as neighborhood associations, or student governments where student government political party politics is often important. Informal politics is understood as forming alliances, exercising power and protecting and advancing particular ideas or goals. Generally, this includes anything affecting one's daily life, such as the way an office or household is managed, or how one person or group exercises influence over another. Informal Politics is typically understood as everyday politics, hence the idea that "politics is everywhere".

Political management

Definition

Political management is a broad and ever evolving field encompassing a number of activities in professional politics. The field includes campaign management and consulting, advertisement creation/purchasing, grassroots politics, opposition research, issue advocacy, lobbying, fundraising, and polling. Some consider political management to be an applied form of political science.

History

Political managers first emerged during the early 20th century as American politics drifted away from party-centered politics towards an atmosphere focusing more on the individual candidates. Candidates began to hire their own staff to manage strategic decisions, fundraise, and handle the day-to-day campaign activities. Initially corporate public relations firms were hired to manage campaigns. However, eventually public relations firms specializing in political campaigns began to surface during the 1950s and 60s. One of the first professionals to be labeled a “political consultant” was Joseph Napolitan who went on to found the American Association for Political Consultants. Eventually consultants specializing in specific aspects of the campaign began to grow in popularity, like, Tony Schwartz, the creator of the now infamous "Daisy" ad, and one of the first media consultants to specialize in political campaigns. After media, polling was one of the first services sought out by campaign managers, followed by direct mail. Today, political managers specialize in a wide range of consulting areas including strategy, polling, direct mail, fundraising, web design, lobbying, and get out the vote efforts.

Economics

Definition

Economics is the social science that studies the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Economics focuses on the behavior and interactions of economic agents and how economies work. Microeconomics analyzes basic elements in the economy, including individual agents and markets, their interactions, and the outcomes of interactions. Individual agents may include, for example, households, firms, buyers, and sellers. Macroeconomics analyzes the entire economy (meaning aggregated production, consumption, savings, and investment) and issues affecting it, including unemployment of resources (labor, capital, and land), inflation, economic growth, and the public policies that address these issues (monetary, fiscal, and other policies). See glossary of economics. Other broad distinctions within economics include those between positive economics, describing "what is", and normative economics, advocating "what ought to be"; between economic theory and applied economics; between rational and behavioral economics; and between mainstream economics and heterodox economics.

Economics Policy

Definition

The economic policy of governments covers the systems for setting levels of taxation, government budgets, the money supply and interest rates as well as the labor market, national ownership, and many other areas of government interventions into the economy. Most factors of economic policy can be divided into either fiscal policy, which deals with government actions regarding taxation and spending, or monetary policy, which deals with central banking actions regarding the money supply and interest rates. Such policies are often influenced by international institutions like the International Monetary Fund or World Bank as well as political beliefs and the consequent policies of parties.

Types of economic policy

Almost every aspect of government has an important economic component. A few examples of the kinds of economic policies that exist include:

- Macroeconomic stabilization policy, which attempts to keep the money supply growing at a rate that does not result in excessive inflation, and attempts to smooth out the business cycle.
- Trade policy, which refers to tariffs, trade agreements and the international institutions that govern them.
- Policies designed to create economic growth or policies related to development economics.
- Policies dealing with the redistribution of income, property and/or wealth.
- Regulatory policy, anti-trust policy, industrial policy and technology-based economic development policy.

Economics Reform

Definition

Economics reform comprises policies directed to achieve improvements in economics efficiency, either by eliminating or reducing distortions in individual sectors of the economy or by reforming economy-wide policies such as tax policy and competition policy with an emphasis on economics efficiency, rather than other goals such as equity or employment growth. Economics reform" usually refers to deregulation, or at times to reduction in the size of government, to remove distortions caused by regulations or the presence of government, rather than new or increased regulations or government programs to reduce distortions caused by market failure. As such, these reform policies are in the tradition of laissez faire, emphasizing the distortions caused by government, rather than in ordoliberalism, which emphasizes the need for state regulation to maximize efficiency.

2.2 Literature Survey

Khemani (2017) reviewed the literature relevant to understanding political constraints to economic reforms. Reform refers to changes in government policies or institutional rules because status quo policies and institutions are not working well to achieve the goals of economic well-being and development. Further, reforms refer to the alternative policies and institutions that are available that would most likely perform better than the status quo. The main question examined in the political economy of reform literature has been why reforms are not undertaken when they are needed for the good of society. The succinct answer from the first generation of research is that conflict of interest between organized socio-political groups is responsible for some groups being able to stall reforms so that they can extract greater private rents from status quo policies. The next generation of research is tackling a more fundamental question: why does conflict of interest persist; or, why do some interest groups exert influence against reforms if there are indeed large gains to be had for society? These are questions about norms and preferences in society for public goods. The next step is to examine where norms and preferences for public goods come from, and which institutional arrangements are more conducive to solve the public goods problem of pursuing reforms. After reviewing the available and future directions for research, the paper concludes with what all of this means for policy makers who are interested in understanding the factors behind successful reforms. On the other hand, Aragona, (2015) questioned that: What are the socioeconomic impacts of resource abundance? Are these effects different at the national and local levels? How could resource booms benefit (or harm) local communities? This paper reviews a vast literature examining these questions, with an emphasis on empirical works. First, the evidence and theoretical arguments behind the so-called resource curse, and other impacts at the country level, are reviewed. This cross-country literature highlights the importance of institutions. Then, a simple analytical framework is developed to understand how resource booms could impact local communities, and the available empirical evidence is examined. This emerging literature exploits within-country variation and is opening new ways to think about the relation between natural resources and economic development. The main message is that others factors, such as market mechanisms and local spillovers, are also relevant for understanding the impact of resource abundance. Finally, the paper discusses issues related to fiscal decentralization and provides ideas for future research.

In 2014, Keefer and Milanovic advanced research on inequality with unique, new data on income distribution in 61 countries, including 20 Latin American countries, to explore the effects of political parties on redistribution. First, consistent with a central -- but still contested -- assumption of the political economy literature, left-wing governments redistribute more. In addition, consistent with recent research on the importance of party organization and the organizational differences between younger and older parties, older left-wing parties are more likely to internalize the long-run costs of redistribution and to be more credible in their commitment to redistribution, leading them to redistribute less. With entirely different data, the paper also provides evidence on mechanisms: left-wing governments not only redistribute more, they tax more; older left-wing parties, though, tax less than younger ones. However, Anderson, et al. (2013) stated that the agricultural and food sector is an ideal case for investigating the political economy of public policies. Many of the policy developments in this sector since the 1950s have been sudden and transformational, while others have been gradual but persistent. This paper reviews and synthesizes the literature on trends and fluctuations in market distortions and the political-economy explanations that have been advanced. Based on a rich global data set covering a half-century of evidence on commodities, countries, and policy instruments, the paper identifies hypotheses that have been explored in the literature on the extent of market distortions and the conditions under which reform may be feasible. Hanusch and Keefer (2013) introduced a new explanation for political budget cycles: politicians have stronger incentives to increase spending around elections in the presence of younger political parties. Previous research has shown that political budget cycles are larger when voters are uninformed about politician characteristics and when politicians are less credible. The effects of party age can be traced to organizational differences between younger and older parties that also affect voter information and politician credibility. Parties organized around particular individuals, rather than around policy labels or a party machine, are less likely to survive the departure of party leaders, to adopt organizational attributes that promote voter information and political credibility, and to limit political budget cycles. Previous research has also shown larger political budget cycles in younger democracies. Evidence presented here indicates that party age accounts for this effect. In the same year of 2013, Strand, Jon. revealed that while notoriously inefficient, fuel subsidies are widespread, and in many cases politically stable. This paper discusses and models various political economy aspects of fuel subsidies, focusing on gasoline and kerosene. Both economic and political are considered to explain differences in subsidies, with particular focus on democratic and autocratic governments. A political process is modeled whereby a promise of low fuel prices is used in democracies to attract voters, and in autocracies to mobilize support among key groups. Subsidies to fuels are viewed as either easier to observe, easier to commit to, easier to deliver, or better targeted at core groups, than other public goods or favors offered by rulers. Easier commitment and delivery than for regular public goods can explain the high prevalence of such policies in autocracies, and also in young democracies where the capacity to commit to or deliver complex public goods is not yet fully developed. The analysis provides a framework for empirical testing and verification.

Additionally, Bunse and Fritz (2012) found that supporting effective public sector reform is a major challenge that the World Bank and other agencies and stakeholders have been grappling with. It is increasingly recognized that political economy factors play a crucial role. However, beyond this broad proposition, specific questions arise: What country contexts are more/less propitious for public sector reforms and what reforms are likely to succeed where? And can more explicitly taking political economy challenges into account help to pursue public sector reforms even in less propitious contexts? This paper addresses these issues in two ways: first, it draws on the existing literature to identify key propositions about factors that can trigger or facilitate public sector reforms, and those that tend to work against (successful) reforms. Second, it investigates the experience of World Bank public sector operations over the decade 2000-2010. It finds that governments in many developing countries face incentives to initiate public sector reforms, but that at the implementation stage, political costs frequently outweigh potential gains; and hence reforms are abandoned or left to wither. Real breakthroughs have been achieved in countries experiencing major structural shifts and those having political leadership committed to higher-level goals. The review of operations shows that successful projects are significantly more widespread than the literature would lead to assume. Furthermore, it provides tentative evidence that investing in understanding political economy drivers has been associated with better project performance. Key implications are the need to differentiate between country contexts more clearly ex ante, concentrate more on reform implementation during windows of opportunity that are typically of limited duration, and design reforms with a clear plan of engagement with stakeholder incentives. Nonetheless, Adams-Kane and Lim (2011) developed an empirical measure of growth poles and uses it to examine the phenomenon of multipolarity. The authors formally define several alternative measures, provide theoretical justifications for these measures, and compute polarity values for nation states in the global economy. The calculations suggest that China, Western Europe, and the United States have been important growth poles over the broad course of world history, and in modern economic history the United States, Japan, Germany, and China have had prominent periods of growth polarity. The paper goes on to analyze the economic and institutional determinants, both at the proximate and fundamental level, that underlie this measure of polarity, as well as compute measures of dispersion in growth polarity shares for the major growth poles. In addition to political economy, Ayee, et al. (2011) mentioned that with a focus on the institutional set-up and the political environment as central to understanding and rectifying the poor impact of mining on Ghana's economic development, this paper highlights the vulnerabilities in mining sector governance along the industry value chain. The authors explain why it has been difficult to implement policies that would have improved social welfare. They find that incentive problems in institutions directly or peripherally involved in mining governance are a major factor, as are an excessively centralized policy-making process, a powerful executive president, strong party loyalty, a system of political patronage, lack of transparency, and weak institutional capacity at the political and regulatory levels. The paper argues that the net impact of mining on economic development is likely to be enhanced with appropriate reforms in governance. Most importantly, there should be a greater awareness of incentive problems at the political level and their possible implications for sector performance and the economy at large. The set of checks and balances, as stipulated by the Constitution, have to be reinforced. Furthermore, capacity building at different levels and institutions is needed and should be combined with efforts to enhance incentives for institutional performance.

Moreover, Gboyega, et al. (2011) stated that the relatively slow pace of Nigeria's development has often been attributed to the phenomenon of the resource curse whereby the nature of the state as a "rentier" dilutes accountability for development and political actors are able to manipulate institutions to sustain poor governance. The impact of the political elite's resource-control and allocation of revenues on core democratic mechanisms is central to understand the obstacles to development and governance failure. Given that problems of petroleum sector governance are extremely entrenched in Nigeria, the key question is whether and how it is possible to get out of a poor equilibrium after fifty years of oil production. This paper uses a political economy perspective to analyze the governance weaknesses along the petroleum sector value chain and attempts to establish the links between challenges in sector regulation and the following major political and economic attributes: (i) strong executive control on petroleum governance in a political environment of weak checks and balances; (ii) regulatory and operating roles bundled into one institution, thereby creating conflict of interest; and (iii) manipulation of elections and political appointments. The restoration of democratic government has helped improve transparency and management of oil revenue and reforms at the federal level and proposed reforms of the petroleum sector hold much promise. At the same time, the judiciary has started to restore confidence that it will serve as a check and balance on the executive and the electoral process. Yet, these reforms are fragile and need to be deepened and institutionalized. They must be addressed not as purely technocratic matters but as issues of political economy and vested interests that must, through regulation and reform, be aligned with the public interest and a vision of Nigerian development.

Furthermore, Khemani (2010) examined a puzzle in the political economy of infrastructure in India -- the co-existence of relatively low shares of capital spending in public budgets alongside evidence of large demand for village infrastructure from poor voters. It argues that this pattern is due to infrastructure projects being used at the margin for political rent-seeking, while spending on employment and welfare transfers are the preferred vehicles to win votes for re-election. New suggestive evidence on the variation of public spending composition across states, and within states over time is offered that is consistent with this argument. This evidence underscores a growing argument in the development literature that the level and composition of public spending per se may not be sufficient metrics to assess the quality of public goods policies -- greater infrastructure spending in some contexts may go to political rents rather than to the actual delivery of broad public goods for growth and poverty reduction. As well, Bodea, Cristina and Elbadawi (2008) analyzed the economic growth impact of organized political violence. First, the authors articulate the theoretical underpinnings of the growth impact of political violence in a popular model of growth under uncertainty. The authors show that, under plausible assumptions regarding attitudes toward risk, the overall effects of organized political violence are likely to be much higher than its direct capital destruction impact. Second, using a quantitative model of violence that distinguishes between three levels of political violence (riots, coups, and civil war), the authors use predicted probabilities of aggregate violence and its three manifestations to identify their growth effects in an encompassing growth model. Panel regressions suggest that organized political violence, especially civil war, significantly lowers long-term economic growth. Moreover, unlike most previous studies, the authors also find ethnic fractionalization to have a negative and direct effect on growth, though its effect is substantially ameliorated by the institutions specific to a non-factional partial democracy. Third, the results show that Sub-Saharan Africa has been disproportionately impacted by civil war, which explains a substantial share of its economic decline, including the widening income gap relative to

East Asia. Civil wars have also been costly for Sub-Saharan Africa. For the case of Sudan, a typical large African country experiencing a long-duration conflict, the cost of war amounts to $46 billion (in 2000 fixed prices), which is roughly double the country's current stock of external debt. Fourth, the authors suggest that to break free from its conflict-underdevelopment trap, Africa needs to better manage its ethnic diversity. The way to do this would be to develop inclusive, non-factional democracy. A democratic but factional polity would not work, and would be only marginally better than an authoritarian regime. In contrast, Gradstein (2003) identified that public provision of education has often been perceived as universal and egalitarian, but in reality it is not. Political pressure typically results in incidence bias in favor of the rich. The author argues that the bias in political influence resulting from extreme income inequalities is particularly likely to generate an incidence bias, which we call social exclusion. This may then lead to a feedback mechanism whereby inequality in the incidence of public spending on education breeds higher income inequality, thus generating multiple equilibria: with social exclusion and high inequality; and with social inclusion and relatively low inequality. The author also shows that the latter equilibrium leads to higher long-run growth than the former. An extension of the basic model reveals that spillover effects among members of social groups differentiated by race or ethnicity may reinforce the support for social exclusion.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework drawn from the above literature review was placed within a logical and sequential design. It was deduced from the relevant theories of politics, economics, security, and economics reform. The purposes of the construct framework were to clarify concepts and propose relationships among the concepts in this research study. The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.

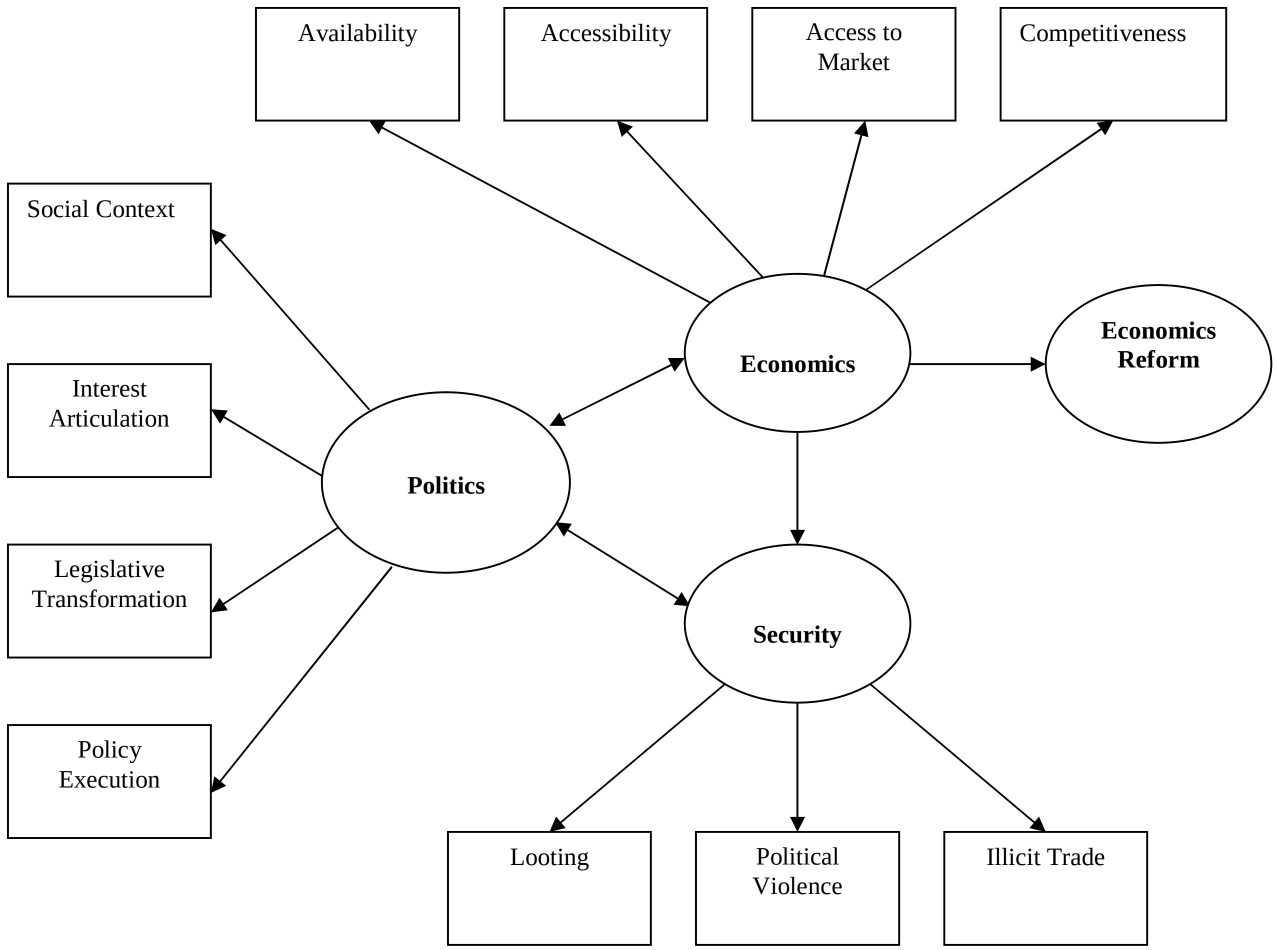


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

2.4 Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1:

H_0: Politics will not positively direct influence on economics
H_1: Politics will positively direct influence on economics

Hypothesis 2:

H_0: Politics will not positively direct influence on security
H_1: Politics will positively direct influence on security

Hypothesis 3:

H_0: Economics will not positively direct influence on security
H_1: Economics will positively direct influence on security

Hypothesis 4:

H_0: Economics will not positively direct influence on economics reform
H_1: Economics will positively direct influence on economics reform

3. Research Methodology

The study and research on development of model for relationship of politics, economics, and security towards economics reform is the mixed method through conducting of quantitative and qualitative research for data collection. The quantitative research is an analysis of the structural equation modeling (SEM), and in-depth interview as part of the qualitative research for developing a conceptual framework in order to validate model and opinions of people concerned.

3.1 Qualitative Research

In this research, the qualitative research is applied for building the research conceptual framework based on the relationship of politics, economics, and security towards economics reform with in-depth interview.

1. Population
Politicians contribute to economy development in Thailand.

2. Population Selection
A field study was conducted by the purposive sampling through selection from different political parties.

3. Data Collection
The researcher conducted interview document developed from the study of documents with relevant researches in order to prepare for a questionnaire. The researcher enclosed the letter to request for assistance on the interview for data collection with the politicians from different political parties through research method in accordance with research procedure.

3.2 Quantitative Research

1. Population and Sample Group
Population in research included politicians who contribute to economy development in Thailand.

2. Size of Sample Group
Sample groups used in this research study were politicians from different political parties. A procedure of the sample size determination is shown as follows.

2.1 According to determination of sample group size used in this research study, the researcher considered on the size of sample groups in accordance with suggestion of Schumacker & Lomax, 1996; Hair et al. (2010) that the ratio between sample groups per number of parameters or variables to be used should be 15-20 times of observed variables. In this research study, latent variables comprised of 4 variables, and observed variables comprised of 11 variables. Therefore, the appropriate and sufficient sample size should be in between 15 x 11 = 165, and 20 x 11 = 220.

Nevertheless, the research presented here chose 400 samples in order to assure for the most appropriate samples representing the best population.

2.2 In this research study, the researcher applied a multi-stage sampling method, probability sampling and simple random sampling. Drawing was made to get sample groups of politicians from different political parties.

2.3 Researcher applied convenience sampling using a questionnaire in data collection from politicians from different political parties. The questionnaire was distributed at each visit of the political parties dispersed around Bangkok metropolitan area.

2.4 In addition, the calculation for collection was classified for distribution in accordance with personal demography. The researcher collected data from more than 400 politicians, in order to reduce error of insufficient number of samples.

3) Data Collection

Instrument applied is the questionnaire that is classified into 4 parts as follows.

Part 1 is demography data of respondents.

Part 2 is the questionnaire asking for a significant level of each variable in politics, with a Likert scale.

Part 3 is the questionnaire asking for a significant level of each variable in economics, with a Likert scale.

Part 4 is the questionnaire asking for a significant level of each variable in security, with a Likert scale.

Part 5 is the questionnaire asking for an influence of politics, economics, and security towards economics reform, with a Likert scale.

Part 6 is the open-ended questionnaire related to additional opinion and suggestion.

4) Validation of Instrument Quality

The construction and measurement of instrument efficiency were classified as follows.

1. Measurement of instrument efficiency before data collection by deleting any queries that were not passed for Validity and Reliability.

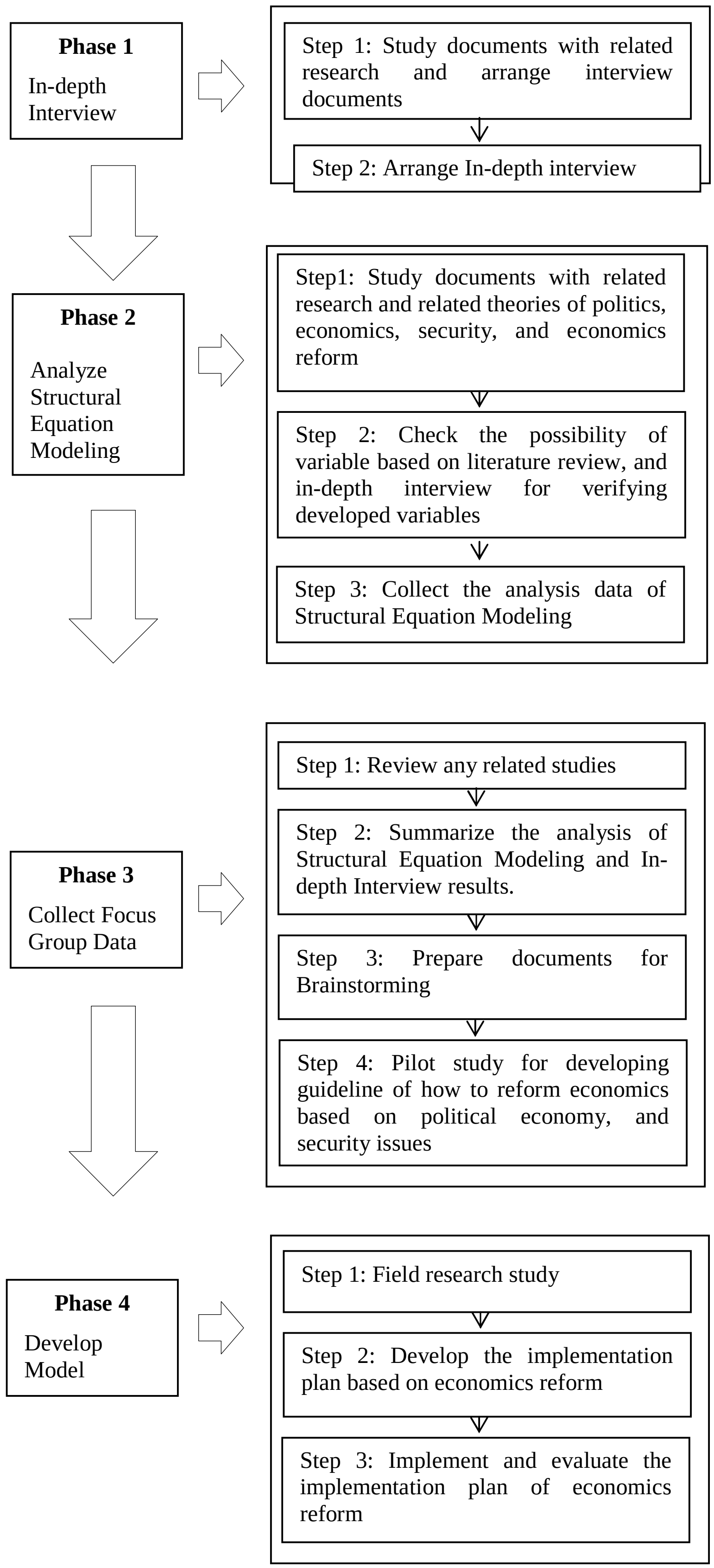
2. Validation of primary agreement before applying the LISREL program.

5) Statistical Analysis

1. Analyzing mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis, correlation coefficient, and statistics in finding instrument quality value with SPSS for Window.

2. SEM is a statistics technique applied for testing and estimating causal relationships, and a confirmatory factor analysis.

3.3 Research Procedure



4. Discussion and Conclusion

In Thailand, economics reform must be cooperated with how to restructure budget distributed to poor people as higher percentage. BBC News (2018) stated that Thailand is the only country in south-east Asia to have escaped colonial rule. Buddhist religion, the monarchy and the military have helped to shape its society and politics. The military has ruled for most of the period since 1947, with a few interludes in which the country had a democratically elected government. The Thai economy is now expected to maintain the current clip throughout 2018, with the government raising its export growth target to 6.8 percent for the current year from 5 percent in 2017. But whether or not better economic prospects can translate into a smoother political road for the recent government and Thailand more generally is unclear. The opposition to the junta has been growing, with elections that had been promised for 2015, then 2016, then 2017, then 2018, and now potentially out to 2019. Several issues need to be raised illustrated as follows:

· No political or institutional priority is given to economics reform management based on political turmoil and long conflict; it hardly appears in local government proposals.
· Little importance is given to economics reform issues in plans for local integral development and especially in the allocation of economic and financial resources.
· The concept of economics reform problems as a whole is feeble, which leads to a sectoral view of problems: poverty, crime, unstable economy, and drug smuggling.
· There is an imbalance between the economics reform impact of urbanization and the actions and efforts of municipalities, businesses, or communities themselves for economics development and rehabilitation.
· Countries' laws and regulations are too conditional and limited for adequate local economics reform management.
· The role of local nongovernmental actors in economics reform management is not clearly enough defined.
· Citizen action and participation in local economics reform management (sub-district, district, or province) are given low priority.

In view of the foregoing conclusions, the researcher will recommend the following actions for future study:

· To have local governments set priorities for their economics reform efforts in the various spheres of management: political, social, economic, and technological.
· To institutionalize local economics reform management in the context of sustainable development.
· To promote at the national and regional levels a review of the organization and functions of local governments, in order to institutionalize structural mechanisms that will promote effective management of the economics reform and of integral, sustainable local development.
· To promote organizational coordination of structures, programs, and projects at the various levels of government, institutions, or sectors in national economics reform systems.
· To strengthen the institutional capacity of the municipalities - their human, financial, and, in particular, technological resources - for proper economics reform.

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