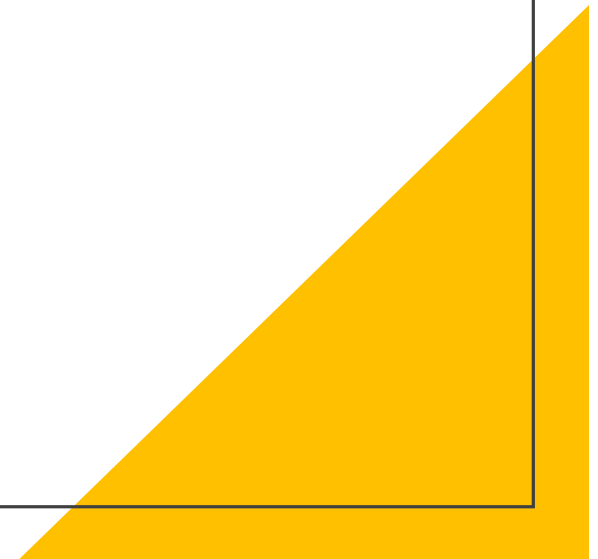




Single Case Studies and Process Tracing

Doing Political Research



Single Case Studies



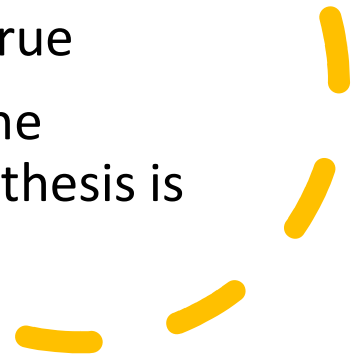
- What is a case?
 - Same as last week: An instance of a political system, event or phenomenon in a specified place and/or at a certain time
 - We need to know the universe of cases
- Why use single case studies?
 - Focus on a particular causal process
 - Helps us to generate theory
 - Anomalous cases can be vital eg Lijphart's 1968 study of democracy in the Netherlands

Table 10.1 *Types of evidence and their implications*

		Certitude	
		<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
Uniqueness	High	<i>Doubly decisive</i>	<i>Smoking gun</i>
	Low	<i>Hoop</i>	<i>Straw-in-the-wind</i>

Classifying Types of Evidence (Van Evera)

- Certitude: the likelihood that the evidence will be there if the hypothesis is true
- Uniqueness: the likelihood that the evidence will be there if the hypothesis is not true





Problems with Single Case Studies



Generalisability

Requires good
existing concepts
and background
knowledge

Difficulty finding
evidence, which is
often partial and
biased



Styles of Single Case Study Research

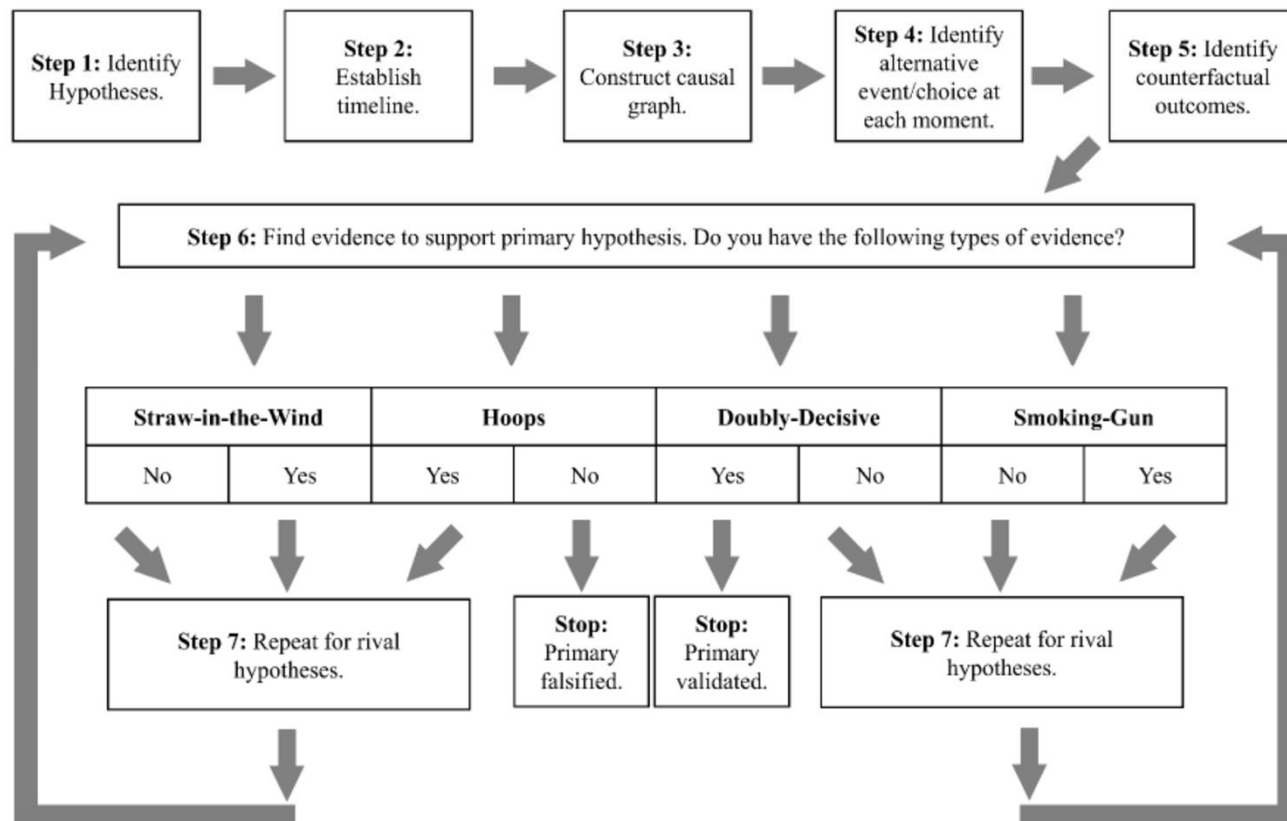
Interpretative *thick description*

Rational choice *analytic narratives*

Process tracing

- focus on causal mechanisms and processes
 - connecting variables and events
 - testing hypotheses based on causal mechanisms
-

FIGURE 0. Process-Tracing: The Checklist



A background image of Thaksin Shinawatra, a Thai politician, smiling and gesturing with his hands. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a patterned tie.

Process Tracing: An Example (Ricks and Liu)

- Before 2001, politics in Thailand was a story of weak parties and short-lived governments
- In 2001, the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party led by Thaksin Shinawatra won almost a full majority in parliament and Thaksin became the first prime minister to serve a full term
- What accounts for the rise of the TRT?
- Two theories
 - Individual: Wealth and influence of Thaksin
 - Institutional: 1997 constitution constrained party-switching and forced parties to field candidates for at least 25-50% of seats

Figure 2.1. Timeline of Party Politics in Thailand

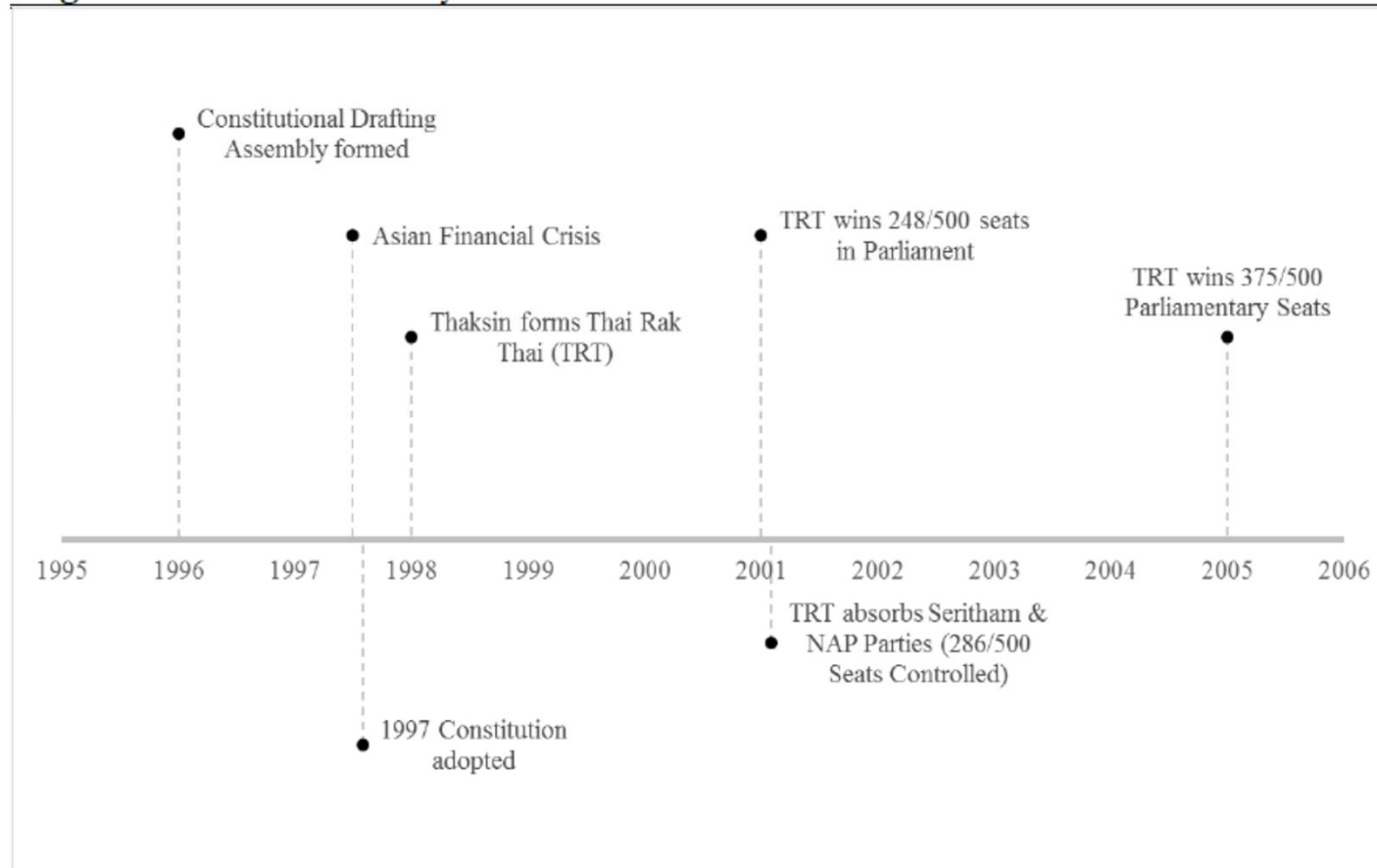
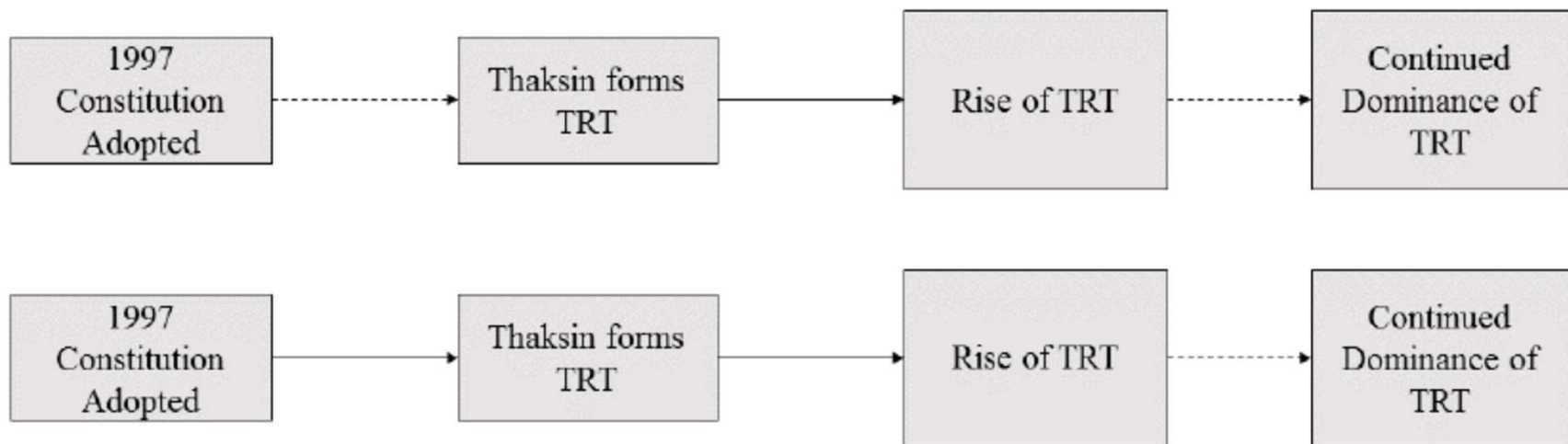


Figure 2.2. Causal Graphs of Party Politics in Thailand





CONSTITUTION
OF
THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND,
B.E. 2540 (1997)

Alternative
Choices/Events

1. Exclusion of the electoral rule changes and institutions by the constitution drafters in 1997
2. Choice by Thaksin not to create TRT



Counterfactual Outcomes

If the 1997 constitution did not include electoral reforms, there would have been more party-switching (including leaving TRT) and thus more coalition governments

If Thaksin had not set up TRT, small parties still would have shrunk as per Duverger's Law in the new single member constituencies

Table 2. Evidence Needed for Party Politics in Thailand

Research Question: What explains Thai Rak Thai's (TRT) dominance?

	Primary Hypothesis Thaksin's personal assets and leadership led to TRT's dominance.	Rival Hypothesis The 1997 Constitution changed the electoral landscape, thereby ending multiparty coalition parties.
Straw-in-the Wind	Personalities can influence Thai politics.	Constitutions affect electoral institutions in Thailand.
Hoops	Thaksin had wealth and leadership talent prior to TRT's rise.	The 1997 Constitution changed electoral institutions and it preceded Thaksin's rise.
Smoking Gun	Thaksin used his wealth and leadership ability to force politicians to join his party.	The reforms created incentives for politicians to consolidate in one large party.
Doubly-Decisive	(A) Thaksin's wealth/leadership linked to his rise. (B) Politicians did not respond to incentives of 1997 Constitution.	(A) Reforms linked to party consolidation. (B) Thaksin's prior weakness in leadership – even with wealth.

Conclusion

- Single case studies can be a very powerful tool to investigate causal processes
- But we need to be very careful when thinking about
 - connecting theory and evidence
 - generalisability
- Single cases are not studied in a vacuum