

Thailand and the Coup for the Rich

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The constitutional courts, as expected, disband a democratically elected party

Contents

- [What is the root cause of \(...\)](#)
- [What is the solution?](#)
- [The economic crisis](#)

Thailand's Constitutional Courts dissolved the country's democratically elected governing party for the second time Tuesday, forcing the government to resign. This follows the refusal of the Armed Forces and the Police to follow government instructions to clear the two international airports blocked by armed People's Alliance for Democracy fascists.

The royalist alliance against the government is made up of the fascist PAD, the military, the police, the judiciary, the mainstream media, the "Democrat Party," most middle class academics and The Queen. They are all behind this judicial coup. A leading Democrat Party MP is one of the leaders of the illegal blockade of Bangkok's two airports.

The Yellow-shirted PAD have armed guards which have repeatedly shot at opponents. They constantly use violence and now demand "joint patrols" with the police. The PAD has constantly broken the law, and yet they are untouchable. On the rare occasion when PAD leaders are forced to attend court, they are given bail and allowed to go back and commit the same crimes over and over again.

The majority of the Thai population, who are poor, face a double whammy. First, the elite royalists are doing everything possible to take away their basic democratic rights. Secondly, mass job losses are occurring among workers in the tourist industry as a result of the airport blockade. Jobs in agriculture and electronics are also affected and of course we are faced with the serious world economic crisis. The elites do not care if the Thai economy is trashed and Thailand returns to a poor third world nation. In such nations the elites continue to live the same lives as the rich in the developed world. The PAD protestors are middle-class extremists who do not have to go to work, hence their prolonged protests.

We are constantly told by the conservatives that the poor are too stupid to deserve the right to vote. The army staged a coup in 2006 and rewrote the constitution in order to reduce the democratic space and also to absolve themselves of any wrongdoing. The electorate have repeatedly voted in overwhelming numbers for the government party, whether it be Thai Rak Thai, which brought the former Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, or its successor, Peoples Power Party. Now People's Power politicians are moving to the new Pua Thai Party. Will a fair election be held? Or will the elites engineer a "fix" to make sure that their people win?

What is the root cause of this crisis?

The root cause of this crisis is not the corruption of the Thaksin government in the past. It isn't about vote-buying, good governance, civil rights or the rule of law. Politicians of all parties, including the Democrats, are known to buy votes. The elites, whether politicians, civil servants or the military, have a history of gross corruption. Even when they don't break the law, they have become rich on the backs of Thai workers and small farmers. The Democrat Party is stuffed with such millionaires.

Ironically, the Thai Rak Thai party was helping to reduce the importance of vote-buying because it was the first party in decades to have real policies which were beneficial to the poor. They introduced a universal health care scheme and Keynesian village funds. People voted on the basis of such policies. The Democrats and the conservative elites hate the alliance between Thaksin's business party and the poor. They hate the idea that a government was using public funds to improve the lives of the poor. This is why the anti-government alliance is against democracy. The PAD have suggested reducing the number of elected MPs and a recipe to do away with the principle of "one person one vote". So the root cause of the problem is the conservative elite's contempt for the poor and their contempt for democracy. They are prepared to break the law when it suits them.

What is the solution?

Business leaders and the royalist elites are demanding an un-elected national government. The Democrat Party leader has "volunteered" to provide the Prime Minister! Such a national government would complete the judicial coup for the rich. It would be a victory for the PAD and a defeat for the electorate.

The Red Shirts, who are organized by government politicians, are the only hope for Thai democracy. They have now become a genuine pro-democracy mass movement of the poor. This is what is meant by "civil society", not the PAD fascists. Thai academia fails to grasp this basic fact. But the Red Shirts are not a pure force. Many have illusions about ex-Prime Minister Thaksin. They overlook his gross abuse of human rights in the south and the war on drugs, in which hundreds of people were shot as drug dealers without arrest, trial or proof. But these human rights issues are also totally ignored by the PAD and their friends.

Throughout this three-year crisis, the majority of the Thai NGO movement (especially the NGO-Coordinating Committee) has failed to support democracy. Many welcomed the 2006 military coup. Many supported the military constitution. Now they are either silent or are echoing the demands of the army chief, who said last week that the government should resign.

At no point have they attempted to build a pro-democracy social movement. Many believe that the poor are "uneducated and lack enough information to vote". The honorable examples are the Midnight University in Chiang-Mai, some sections of the labour movement, groups of new generation NGO activists and Turn Left.

The economic crisis

Millions of jobs are being destroyed by the world economic crisis and the unrest in Thai society. People are being driven back into poverty. Yet the Democrat Party, the military, the conservative elites and the mainstream NGO movement do not have a clue or do not care one jot about the

necessary policies to defend the living standards of the poor. They chant about the King's Sufficiency Economy and the need for fiscal discipline. In other words, the poor must trim their spending and learn to live with their poverty while the rich continue to live in luxury.

We desperately need massive government spending on infrastructure, job protection and a serious expansion of welfare. The value-added tax should be reduced or abolished and higher direct taxes should be levied on all the rich elites without exception. The bloated military budget should be cut. Wages should be raised among workers. Poor farmers should be protected. This will only happen in a climate of genuine democracy. This is why we must oppose this second "coup for the rich".

P.S.

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