

# End the Proxy War: Focu's Statement on the Situation in Thailand

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In seizing Suvarnabhumi Airport, the People's Alliance for Democracy has escalated its mass protest to new heights. No one would question PAD's democratic right to employ the method of direct participation in the politics of the country. Unfortunately, its single-minded goal of ridding the country of any elected government that is known to be in support of ex- Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra is ultimately impossible to achieve, simply because an equally large—if not larger—part of the Thai population strongly holds the exact opposite view. More importantly, the PAD's goal amounts to the denial of the same rights of political participation, not just of the opposing groups but of all citizens of Thailand.

The PAD accuses the government of being simply a proxy for Thaksin. It is ironic that while many of its partisans are honest in their opposition, PAD is behaving in a way that opens itself up to the same accusation: that of being a proxy, in its case, of conservative elite interests that wish to maintain the social status quo. Indeed, that PAD has been able to maintain its occupation for these many days testifies to the fact that it has strong allies among the most powerful groups in the country. Moreover, the anti-poor, anti-rural sentiments being voiced by PAD partisans are shocking in their frank embrace of elitism and class superiority. Equally disconcerting is the way some PAD leaders seem to be intent in provoking a military coup to oust the government.

The current government of Thailand has shown itself to be inept at handling the conflict, while incapable of discharging its minimum functions as a government. In this situation, the government should seriously consider returning the power to the people by dissolving the parliament and calling for new elections. Whichever party emerges victorious in these elections must cease to be a proxy of either Thaksin or the anti-Thaksin factions of the elite and truly function as an independent government serving the national interest or it will lose legitimacy and the country's spiral into armed civil war will continue.

But the bottom line for those of us who support truly participatory democracy, is that the essence of democracy, majority rule, no matter how imperfect, must be defended. Otherwise there are no rules to the political process, and the situation will inevitably degenerate into one where might makes right. We in Focus on the Global South call on PAD and the government to enter into peaceful negotiations and find constitutional means to end the conflict as soon as possible. Further, we categorically oppose any attempt to instigate or mount a military coup to resolve this crisis.