

Thailand: Taksin's recent speech too much of a wish list

No concrete policies to deal with dictatorship

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The recent speech by Taksin was designed to outline policies for Peua Thai Party for the upcoming election. However, there were great weaknesses in this speech.

Taksin is at his best when proposing useful mega-projects to develop the country and create jobs and incomes. He was on form when he talked about the need to build new cities with genuine town planning, new investment in electrified and rapid train systems, wind power for electricity, irrigation systems and other transport networks. These proposals show how backward and conservative the Democrats, the Royalists and the Military really are.

But Taksin talked as though we can just wind the clock back to before the 2006 coup and merely implement such policies. The fact is that the Military and the conservatives are doing their utmost to cheat in the election and to prevent any Peua Thai government from being able to put any policies into practice. What Taksin did not talk about was HOW to dismantle the web of dictatorship which has throttled Democracy. He also ignored the Red Shirts who are the only real force which can challenge this dictatorship outside parliament. This is not surprising, since Taksin had no role in creating the Red Shirt movement.

Taksin talked too much about himself, but worse still, he kept insisting that he was a loyal subject of the Monarchy. The fact of the matter is that the Military and their friends have won a monopoly on being loyal royalists. Most Red Shirts and probably the majority of the population have turned against the Monarchy in this deep political crisis. Taksin refused to campaign for the scrapping of Lèse Majesté.

On issues that really lie in the hearts of most Red Shirts: the need for root and branch changes in the Military and Judiciary, the need to bring the uniformed murderers to account and the need to release all political prisoners and drop charges, Taksin was silent. This was a huge mistake on his part.

On poverty alleviation, also an important issue for Red Shirts, Taksin just repeated old policies... village funds, debt moratoria, improving health care. But Thailand is crying out for a welfare state and progressive taxation of the rich in order to reduce inequality. The minimum wage should also be raised to 400 baht per day. Three hundred baht is not enough. We also need more trade union rights and the right to protest. But of course a businessman like Taksin would not support such measures.

On the drugs war, Taksin showed that he has learnt nothing, repeating the need for the failed and violent tactics of the past.

On the South he did make some concessions that he had made mistakes, but the proof will be in what real concrete policies are put forward to show respect for the Malay Muslim population.

At best, Taksin's speech was a utopian wish list. It showed the weakness of his party that he had to

make the policy speech. The Red Shirt movement must continue to develop its political understanding and campaigning which goes beyond Taksin and Peua Thai. We may have to grit our teeth and vote for Peua Thai, but the struggle will have to continue, whether or not the conservatives and the Military manage to fix the elections.

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