

Economic and Social Crisis in Thailand, Political Regime in Disarray

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Thailand: Regime's Desperation is Tangible

Elections, court decisions, and the people themselves have encircled the embattled regime of Thaksin Shinawatra, leaving it both desperate and dangerous.

Deposed autocrat, accused mass murderer, convicted criminal and fugitive, billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra continues to cling to power through his nepotist-appointed proxy regime led by his own sister, Yingluck Shinawatra. Despite the recent February 2, 2014 election being boycotted by over half of Thailand's voting population, and with many who did vote

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defacing their ballots or checking "no vote" in protest, the regime has clung to power - ignoring mounting court decisions against its serial acts of corruption and criminal conduct and ever expanding protests that have not only dwarfed its once formidable street presence, but in fact, stripped from it many of its own once stalwart supporters.

Among these supporters turned protesters are [Thailand's rice farmers](#) who have gone unpaid for over half a year after an ill-conceived rice subsidy program proposed by Thaksin Shinawatra collapsed in a whirlwind of corruption, scandal, and outright theft. Farmers have blocked roads upcountry, once considered the Shinawatra's stronghold, in protest of the regime. Others have traveled to Bangkok to join the protesters on stage and to barricade various government buildings in search for their missing payments.

Courts and Independent Agencies Moving In On Regime

And while Thailand's anti-regime protest continues to attract more people from across Thai society, Thailand's courts continue to move in on the regime for a wide spectrum of outright abuses. It began when the courts ruled decisively against the regime's proposed amnesty bill that would have whitewashed criminal cases stretching back years, and potentially pave the way for Thaksin Shinawatra himself, currently facing a two-year prison sentence and an extensive list of pending court cases, to return to power.

The [courts would also rule against a proposed amendment](#) that would have allowed the prime minister to sign treaties without parliamentary approval – another attempted power grab by the regime designed to further skew the nation’s checks and balances in its favor.

More recently, [the courts found a 2 trillion baht spending bill put forth by the regime unconstitutional](#) – based on both voter fraud that occurred during its proposal, as well as fears of unprecedented corruption in the wake of the scandalous, failed multi-billion baht rice subsidy program.

Next, the courts will decide on the validity of the failed February 2, 2014 elections – rife with irregularities and with the ruling regime itself overtly ineligible to hold office in the first place, let alone contest it in yet another election (the ruling party is admittedly run by a convicted criminal hiding abroad – Thaksin Shinawatra). In addition to the courts, Bangkok Post reports that the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) will then rule on whether the 308 MPs and senators who supported another charter amendment shot down by the courts, violated the law. If found guilty, they face impeachment.

Astonishingly, instead of heeding the obvious turn of fortune against the regime with caution, it has decided to boldly dismiss both the results of the election as well as the various rulings of the court, leaving it without any semblance of a democratic mandate, nor any legal ground to continue holding office.

Shrinking Support, Growing Desperation

The regime’s strong-arm – its militant “red shirt” enforcers, have declared their intention across the pages of TIME Magazine to violently defend the regime. In TIME’s article, [“Bangkok Shutdown: Yingluck Supporters Prepare to Fight for Democracy,”](#) it stated that:

As Thailand’s anti-government protests enter their fourth day, observers say prospects for violent confrontation are increasing, with reports of government supporters stockpiling weapons in case of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra’s ouster.

According to the Bangkok Post, radical members of the Red Shirts — diehard champions of Yingluck and her notorious brother Thaksin Shinawatra — are readying a cache of arms in case the 46-year-old premier is forced from office by either military or judicial intervention.

The paper quoted a Red Shirt source as saying “There are strong anti-coup and anti-court sentiments among the red-shirt mavericks who are familiar and experienced with weapon use.”

And a terrorist campaign is all the regime’s supporters are capable of carrying out – [with fears of a “civil war” all but laid to rest](#) by the visibly diminished ranks of the regime’s “red shirt” movement on full display during recent rallies including one [in Ayutthaya province that failed to attract more than 1,000-2,000 followers drawn from all across Thailand](#).

"...while the regime teeters ever more precariously, leaders, protesters, and other activists must remain more vigilant than ever - because as the end approaches, many among the regime may decide to flee, but others may decide to dig in for a desperate and deadly fight, however futile it may ultimately be."

Indeed, [a campaign of terror was carried out, in fact the day after the TIME Magazine article was published in January](#), but deadly as it has been, it has had a negligible effect on curbing the growing protests in the streets or halting the decline of the regime's power, influence, legitimacy, and ability to administer the country.

As the regime's impunity diminishes day-to-day, threats and violence used by it to intimidate its opponents will increasingly be used by Thailand's independent institutions to further move against it. Thailand's military has warned the regime and its supporters [against pursuing its campaign of violence any further](#) in a sign of exhausted patience and growing confidence that the regime is finally ready to crumble and be swept permanently from the pages of Thai history.

And while the regime teeters ever more precariously, leaders, protesters, and other activists must remain more vigilant than ever - because as the end approaches, many among the regime may decide to flee, but others may decide to dig in for a desperate and deadly fight, however futile it may ultimately be.

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