

“PM STANDS ON HIS CRIPPLED LEGITINACY“

Wandah Waenawea

CONCEPTS

Political legitimacy:¹

The foundation of such governmental power as is exercised both with a consciousness on the government’s part that it has a right to govern and with some recognition by the governed of that right.

Political power:²

Is a type of power held by a group in a society which allows administration of some or all of public resources, including labor, and wealth. There are many ways to obtain possession of such power.

Demonstration:³

Is a form of nonviolent action by groups of people in favor of a political or other cause, normally consisting of walking in a march and a meeting (rally) to hear speakers. Actions such as blockades and sit-ins may also be referred to as demonstrations.

A political rally or protest

Red shirt:

The terminology and the symbol of protester (The government of Abhisit Wejjajiva).

¹ Sternberger, Dolf “Legitimacy” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (ed. D.L. Sills) Vol. 9 (p. 244) New York: Macmillan, 1968

² I.C. MacMillan (1978) *Strategy Formulation: political concepts*, St Paul, MN, West Publishing;

³ Oxford English Dictionary

Yellow shirt:

The terminology and the symbol of protester (The government of Thaksin Shinawat).

Political crisis:⁴

Is any unstable and dangerous social situation regarding economic, military, personal, **political**, or societal affairs, especially one involving an impending abrupt change. More loosely, it is a term meaning ‘a testing time’ or ‘emergency event.’

CHAPTER I

A. Background

Since 2008, there has been an ongoing political crisis in Thailand in form of a conflict between the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the People’s Power Party (PPP) governments of Prime Ministers Samak Sundaravej and Somchai Wongsawat, respectively, and later between the Democrat Party government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and the National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD). It is a continuation of the 2005–2006 political crisis, wherein the PAD protested against the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The PAD’s followers usually dress in yellow, called ‘the yellow shirts’, the royal color of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The UDD’s followers dress in red, widely called ‘the red shirts’, known as the supporters of the deposed prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

In early 2010 a series of events occurred in which the situation escalated. On 26 February, assets worth 46 billion Thai baht were seized from former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. On the evening of the 27 of February, M67 grenades were thrown from a motorcycle outside three branches of Bangkok Bank. In early March 2010, “red shirt” protesters converged on Bangkok to press demands for Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva to call new elections. The movement, led by the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship, consists mainly of supporters of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted in a military coup in 2006. Although relatively peaceful in nature, human blood donated by some of the protesters was poured outside Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva’s home.

The situation escalated further on the weekend of 10 April 2010. First, protesters took control of a TV broadcasting station causing Prime Minister

⁴ Seeger, M. W., Sellnow, T. L., & Ulmer, R. R. (1998). Communication, organization, and crisis. *Communication Yearbook*, 21, 231-275.

Abhisit Vejjajiva to vow to restore Thailand to normalcy. By 11 April, clashes between protesters and the military had resulted in 18 or 19 people (both civilian and military) being killed and over 800 injured. By 15 April, the death toll had risen to 24.

Tensions continued to grow, as pro-government rallies started to appear alongside the anti-government ones. On 22 April, a series of explosions in Bangkok killed at least one person and injured more than 85 others, including four foreigners. At least some of the explosions were caused by grenades, which the government claimed were fired from the Red Shirt encampment.

On May 3, the Thai Prime Minister announced he was willing to hold elections on November 14 should the opposition *red shirts* accept the offer. The following day *red shirt* leaders accepted the proposal to leave the occupied parts of Bangkok in return for the new election on the scheduled date.

On May 14, police and troops attempted to surround and cut off the main protest camp, which resulted in clashes with the red shirts and the deaths of ten people, with a further 125 wounded, including some journalists as well as renegade general Khattiya Sawasdipol who took a sniper's bullet during an interview with foreign press.

As of May 16, the number of people killed in the street battles as a result of the political unrest had risen to 35. Only one of these 35 was from the military. A State of Emergency was declared in five more provinces to prevent more protesters entering Bangkok.

As we all know that the situation in Thailand now is not stable since the Yellow shirt protested the Taksin's government because they want to kick Taksin out from Prime minister position due to some reasons about political issues. After that the red shirt is appeared since the formal Prime Minister Taksin Shinawatt was kicked out from Thailand. Therefore situation is still continued until today. So that the Red shirt wants the government dissolves the parliament. This is because the Red shirt claimed that this government did not elected by people, thus they want the government dissolves the parliament. Nevertheless, the situation is not going to be good at all because the government does not want to dissolves the parliament as they requested. At first the Red shirt will protest by nonviolence that is no violence at all but because of the government does not want to dissolves the parliament. So the Red shirt do the violence so which means that they break down their promises. After that the Red shirt is going on with violence as on 10 April 2010 that it happened at 'Rachaprasong Road' so the Red shirt from other provinces gathered at this road and forced the government by going to the NBT- the

government station. Then the Red shirt tried to enter into the station but they could not enter because of the army as well as the police are protected the Red shirt in entering to station. So that the Red shirt threw the bomb and also shot the gun to the army and police, then chaotically between The Red shirts and polices, thus this situation led many people are injured all together 118 persons. Nevertheless, this situation led many thing are being destroyed. Besides, the only small problem can create big problem as a result of nonviolence as Red shirt claimed.If this case still happen, no doubt Thailand would come civil war.

B. Thesis Question

Why Thailand become a legitimacy crisis on PM Abhisit's leadership?

C. Theoretical Framework

Some of the factors that drive Thailand become a legitimacy crisis on PM Abhisit's leadership:

1. Many an obstacle and pressure group has disturbed his administration.
2. Protest over the Abhisit's became the prime minister of Thailand.
3. The old power (Thaksin) wants to manage the government and want to be a prime minister of Thailand a gain.
4. Because of stronger power of old power (Thaksin), making Abhisit to be considerate and cannot enforce the law utmost.
5. External interference.

D. Hypotesis

Legitimacy crisis over PM Abhisit are sourced from:

1. His bad political policy and economic policy creating tourism industry becomes lifeless or sluggish.
2. The government rejects peace talk, defends deadly crackdown.

CHAPTER II

Political and economy policy creating economic and tourism industry becomes lifeless or sluggish.

As the crisis is ongoing and fluid, the final economic consequences of the crisis are as yet unclear. After a state of emergency was declared on Febury

2010, the SET Index reached its lowest point since January 2007 at 655.62; it had fallen 24.7% since the beginning of the red shirt demonstrations in February 2008. The baht hit a one-year low of 34.52 per US dollar, prompting the Bank of Thailand to intervene.

The red shirt seizure of Rachaprasong Road is estimated to have cost the Thai economy at least three billion Baht (approximately US\$100 million) a day in lost shipment value and opportunities. As of 1 May 2010, the number of stranded passengers was estimated at anywhere from over 100,000 to 350,000. Unrest was reported to have caused nearly 10 million Baht (approximately 300,000 USD) in property damages to the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, including 31 damaged and burned buses.

The long term political consequences of the crisis are as yet unclear. The crisis, and particularly the siege of Rachaprasong, saw a rise in international press coverage on Thailand, with numerous high-profile articles breaking Thai taboos about public discussion of the role of the monarchy in the crisis as well as the succession. There was a decline in the popularity of the Red shirt among the Bangkok elite as the crisis escalated and increasingly affected the economy. The crisis saw increasing polarization in Thai political thinking, with David Streckfuss of the Council on International Educational Exchange noting that it “shattered the myth of unity that has been papered over the many social and political cleavages in Thailand.” The judiciary was increasingly seen as a tool of the elite, having flagged the government for even the tiniest infractions while refusing to rein in the growing violence of the Red shirt.

The Abhisit government censored several Internet sites linked to the UDD as well as a satellite television station that carried live broadcasts of the protests. By contrast ASTV, a satellite station run by the PAD, was never shut down. The protests also saw two distinct camps emerge within the UDD: one camp which openly supports Thaksin and one camp whose primary focus is upon protesting against the Abhisit government and the bureaucratic polity that is perceived to be supporting it.

CHAPTER III

The government rejects peace talk, defends deadly crackdown.

Leaders of the protesters, who have dubbed themselves Red Shirts, said they wanted talks mediated by the United Nations, provided the government agreed to an immediate cease-fire and pulled its troops back.

Government spokesman Panitan Wattanayagorn, however, said a pause

was unnecessary since troops were “not using weapons to crack down on civilians.” The government maintains it is targeting only armed “terrorists” among the demonstrators.

Authorities insisted they would continue the crackdown aimed at choking off the Red Shirts, who have occupied a 1-square-mile (3-square-kilometer) protest zone - barricaded by tires and bamboo spikes - in one of Bangkok’s ritziest areas since early April. The protesters are demanding that Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva resign immediately, dissolve Parliament and call new elections.

The political conflict is Thailand’s deadliest and most prolonged in decades, and each passing day of violence deepens divides in this nation of 65 million - Southeast Asia’s second-largest economy.

Soldiers have encircled the core protest site and cut off utilities to the area, which was largely free of violence most of Sunday. Protest leaders told women and children with them to move to a Buddhist temple compound within the zone.

The areas between the site and the military’s perimeter have become a no-man’s land where gunshots and blasts can regularly be heard. But some of the worst clashes Sunday were behind the military cordon - an indication the unrest was not contained within the protest area and was spreading.

In one working-class neighborhood, several hundred demonstrators gathered under an expressway overpass and in small side streets, where they sheltered between clashes with nearby soldiers.

There were also reports of scattered unrest outside the capital. A military bus was burned in the northern city of Chiang Mai and protesters demonstrated in the northeastern towns of Nongkhai and Udon Thani to defy the government’s state of emergency, which bans gatherings of more than five people.

The decree, which gives the army broad powers to restore order, was extended Sunday to 22 of Thailand’s 75 provinces, up from 17.

According to government figures, 59 people have died and more than 1,600 have been wounded since the Red Shirts began their protests in March. The toll includes 30 civilians killed and 232 injured since Thursday in fighting that has turned parts of central Bangkok into a battle ground.

About 5,000 people are believed camped in the protest area, down from about 10,000 before fighting started Thursday. The violence ignited after the army started forming a cordon around the protesters’ encampment and a sniper shot and seriously wounded a Red Shirt leader, a former army general

who was their military strategist.

After night fell Sunday, heavy gunfire and sporadic explosions echoed for more than three hours near a park that abuts the Red Shirts' encampment. It was not clear who was doing the shooting, but the sound appeared to be that of automatic rifles being fired rapidly, apparently in retaliation to intermittent gunfire by the Red Shirts.

The Red Shirts, many who hail from the impoverished north and northeast, say Abhisit's coalition government came to power through manipulation of the courts and the backing of the powerful military, and that it symbolizes a national elite indifferent to their plight.

Nattawut Saikua, one of the protest leaders, told reporters and supporters on Sunday that the Red Shirts were willing to negotiate immediately with the government.

"What's urgent is to stop the deaths of people. Political demands can wait," he said.

Nattawut said the UN must serve as a mediator in the talks because, "we don't see any (other) neutral and just organizations."

Panitan, the government spokesman, said there is no need for the UN to get involved in the internal matters of a sovereign nation. He said all groups using weapons to threaten security forces must "stop their actions immediately."

CHAPTER IV

Conclusion

What is happening now?

The latest violence follows a government pledge to hold an election in November in an attempt to halt the protests. However, amid ongoing anger over a crackdown by security forces last month and a refusal by the protesters to comply with a deadline to vacate the district of Bangkok they have been occupying for weeks, authorities say the election date is now under threat.

Prime Minister Abhisit declared a state of emergency April 7, hours after anti-government demonstrators (known as "Red Shirts" for the clothes they wear) stormed the country's parliament.

Three days later, the deadliest clash in more than a decade between protesters (in this case the Red Shirts) and the military erupted, leading to the deaths of more than two dozen demonstrators and military forces.

Violence erupted again last week when protesters once again ignored an

ultimatum to end their occupation in downtown Bangkok by Wednesday. Seh Daeng's subsequent shooting by an unknown assailant raised tensions further and at least 35 people have been killed and 240 wounded in the latest wave of unrest. The government has imposed a state of emergency in 22 provinces and metropolitan Bangkok.

What happens next?

Authorities have urged protesters to evacuate the protest area by Monday afternoon or face up to two years in prison for violating the order. But around 5,000 protesters remained on the streets in defiance of the authorities.

On Sunday protest leaders offered to resume talks with the government in U.N.-mediated negotiations if security forces were withdrawn from the streets. But the government has not accepted the offer. A senior official told CNN that authorities were under pressure to be more decisive in taking action to end the protests and claimed the government had been showing patience and restraint.

Media and analysts in Thailand say civil war may be looming, between the Red Shirts and the so-called "multi-colored shirts" (who support Abhisit). They are displeased with the disruption caused by the protests. They are generally middle-class city dwellers. They are not pro- or anti-government, they simply want the government to shut down the Reds to end the violence and interruptions to daily life. The red and multi-colored shirts have clashed in Silom Road, Bangkok's business and financial district.