Frame Resonance and Failure in the Thai Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts Movements

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This dissertation is dedicated to my loving wife Panintorn Prakij, and to my parents John Volpe and Jacqueline Smollar.

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ABSTRACT

FRAME RESONANCE AND FAILURE IN THE THAI RED SHIRTS AND
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Thailand has recently experienced a period of unprecedented political instability. The
Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts social movements and their allies have contributed to
this instability by promoting collective action frames that motivate street protests and
influence peoples' ideas and beliefs about power and democracy. Some Red and
Yellow Shirts frames have succeeded in increasing recruitment and mobilization, and
helped to achieved movement goals, while others have failed. Drawing upon the
literature on collective action framing, and using a mixed methods approach, this
study explored the impact of collective action frames, frame strategies, and Thailand's
political, cultural and historical dynamics, on movement outcomes. This study found
that frames that succeeded aligned with the political and cultural opportunity
structures (POS and COS) were consistent with the cultural stock, and had broad
focus and appeal, while those that failed were narrow in focus and appeal, and carried
messages inconsistent with the COS and POS. Furthermore, Red Shirt Frames tended
to appeal across class lines, whereas Yellow Shirt and allied frames struggled to unite

their traditional support base and failed to resonate across class lines. These findings help to better understand a turbulent period in Thai politics and contribute to the literature by providing a new Southeast Asian test case for frame resonance and failure and by further illuminating the critical roles of class dynamics and history in frame resonance.

CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores frame resonance and frame failure in the United Front for

Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) or Red Shirts movement, as well as the

People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) or Yellow Shirts from 2006 through 2011,

two major competing social movements in Thailand that have reshaped the political

and social landscape.[1] Thailand has recently experienced a period of unprecedented

political instability. This instability is caused by major social, economic and cultural

fault lines in Thai society. The Red Shirts represent one of these fault lines—

Thailand's poor and middle-income farmers and laborers from the north and

northeast, led by rural elites, who support a widening of democracy.[2] The movement

has sought to mobilize their core constituencies and influence various local and

international audiences by constructing collective action frames that highlight themes

of democracy, dictatorship, injustice, and inequality with the goal of controlling the

reins of government. Red Shirt collective action frames influence peoples' ideas and

beliefs about power, democracy, and the role of traditional institutions, and encourage

them to take action.

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[1] The movements and related terms are defined and operationalized in Section 3.1.

[2] This is an admitted over-simplification of Red Shift demographics but is instructive for discussing the class and geographical fault lines in Thai politics. Please see Section 3.1 for a more thorough discussion.

The Red Shirts movement was initially heavily financed by controversial former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who continues to be an influential figure within, and symbol of, the movement. However, in recent years, the Red Shirts movement has expanded significantly to become a mass democratic movement. The Red Shirts' main platform is to see a deepening of democracy in Thailand. The movement has come into conflict with another major social movement in Thailand—the Yellow Shirts, who argue that Thailand has experienced significant moral decay and an intolerably high level of corruption under the Thaksin regime and that the country requires an injection of moral and ethical leadership.[3] The Yellow Shirts advocate a solution to weaken representative government to ensure that the country's leadership is controlled by elites closely aligned with the military, monarchy, and other groups and institutions representing Thailand's traditional elite.

Some Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt collective action frames have led to significant changes in public opinion, expansion in movement membership, as well as mass mobilization, while others failed to garner widespread support or influence people's attitudes or values. While these movements are sometimes treated as static, monolithic categorizations, they in fact represent a broad and shifting coalition of elites in both institutional and non-institutional settings and with sometimes conflicting ideologies.

The concept of "Frame" was first introduced by Irving Goffman, who defined it as a mental construct that allows people to identify (and navigate) a given social situation

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[3] More recently the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) has taken on the role of the PAD as an anti-Thaksin, pro-establishment movement.

by reading cues and understanding the context.[4] Benford and Snow later borrowed

Goffman's concept of frame, developing a new perspective on social movements

called collective action framing.[5] Benford and Snow described collective action

framing as a way of assembling different discourses, symbols, and events into a

specific, coherent picture in order to influence meaning about, and mobilize support

for, a specific cause. They argued that movements need some linking mechanism to

translate structural conditions, resources, and opportunities into action. According to

their perspective, movement entrepreneurs develop collective action frames to

simplify and express the movement's message, and encourage different groups to

identify with that message and take action.

The main intent of the Red Shirts movement in using collective action frames was to

mobilize support for their vision of the Thai political culture and the desired direction

of Thai politics. The Red Shirts had to consider a number of factors in promoting their

frames, including competing movements, hostile institutions, political factions, and

Thailand's changing social and cultural climate. This dissertation identifies and

describes Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt frames used during this period of heightened

political conflict and explores how both movements used frames, sometimes

successfully, other times unsuccessfully, to attract diverse groups to their cause,

counteract the messages of their adversaries, and ultimately achieve their political

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[4]Goffman, Erving. (1974). Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience. London: Harper and Row.
[5] Snow, David A., R. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford. (1986). Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation. *American Sociological Review*, 51: 464-481. For more on framing see: Benford, Robert D, & Snow, David A. (2000). Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol. 26: 611–39.

objectives. It will also look at what factors led to Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts frame success (frame resonance) or frame failure.

Research Questions
There are four main research questions addressed in this study. First, what collective action frames emerged and evolved within the Red Shirts movement? What was the content of these frames? How did these frames interact with the broader political and cultural environment? And finally, what frames and framing strategies were associated with public acceptance, higher recruitment, protest participation, and what frames failed in these goals, and why? Because Red Shirt frames were often influenced by, and at odds with, competing frames of the Yellow Shirts movement, this study also explores the resonance or failure of Yellow Shirt frames.

The outcomes (or goals, from both moment's perspective) of interest in this study include protest participation, frame mentions in the media, support among rank and file Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt members, attitude and value change, survey results, election polling figures, and scholarly analysis. These indicators of frame resonance were explored as part of this study. The goal is to understand how frame characteristics, frame strategies and dynamics in the broader environment impact upon these outcome variables of interest. We would expect that frames that resonate will result in more frequent mention in the press, greater recruitment, mobilization, and value and attitude change.

Previous studies of social movements have argued effectively that it is impossible to attribute real movement outcomes to frames alone. Frame success or failure is often attributable to events and developments in the wider environment in which the

movement operates. This wider environment is often referred to as the Political

Opportunity Structure (POS) and Cultural Opportunity Structure (COS). Furthermore,

multiple studies have pointed out that political and cultural opportunities do not exist

independent of the way they are framed by movements. That is, an opportunity for a

movement to succeed cannot be said to exist objectively. Opportunities are framed by

movement entrepreneurs and are thus subjectively selected, and with mixed success.

Movement outcomes are influenced by the interaction between the POS and COS, and

movement leaders, frame content and framing strategies, as well as feedback and

input from movement rank and file membership, the movement's institutional and

non-institutional allies, and from the general public. For this reason, we will look at

the broader political and cultural context in which the Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts

movements operate and how this context contributed to the emergence and success or

failure of specific Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt frames.

To understand the Red Shirts movement, it is important to understand the history of

the PAD. The PAD was started by Sondhi Limthongkul in 2005 in opposition to the

Thaksin regime. It called for Thaksin to step down, and proposed a new direction for

Thai politics.[6] Supported by royalists, the Democrat Party, and the Thai military, the

movement grew significantly over the next 12 months, drawing additional support

from Thailand's NGO, media, and academic communities, as well as the Bangkok

middle class. The movement objected to what it saw as the degradation of morality

and ethics, as well as the rampant corruption under the Thaksin regime. Many

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[6] Sondhi is the founded Manager Daily, a popular business newspaper as well as satellite broadcaster
ASTV. Sondhi was a close friend and supporter of Thaksin Shinawatra during the early years of the
latter's tenure as prime minister. He later became one of the first and fiercest anti-Thaksin critics and
driving force in the PAD movement to oust Thaksin.

academics argue that the movement's main fear was that Thaksin's electoral power had weakened the political position of the Bangkok elite. The PAD's mission was thus to reestablish the old status quo inequality between Bangkok and the rest of the country, which had existed before Thaksin. The PAD movement demobilized when, on September 19, 2006, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was removed in a military coup. In the aftermath of the 2006 coup, a group of Thaksin supporters and left-leaning anti-coup groups formed the Red Shirts movement.

From 2005 until the present period, there have been several rounds of Red Shirts and Yellow Shirt protest mobilization and demobilization. This has contributed to a highly unstable political environment and unprecedented protest events, such as the Yellow Shirts occupation of the Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang international airports in 2008, and the Red Shirts protests in central Bangkok, which led to bloody government crackdown in April 2010.

This study tracks the period from 2005 until 2011 that witnessed Thaksin's growing electoral dominance, the evolution of the anti-Thaksin Yellow Shirts movement, which formed in 2005, and the emergence and growth of the Red Shirts movement following Thaksin's ouster.

Contribution

This study contributes to the academic body of work regarding contemporary Thai politics by spotlighting and seeking to better understand this important period in Thai political history. Thaksin's rise as a political force and the military coup of 2006 that ousted him changed Thai politics by ushering in a period of heightened conflict between Bangkok's traditional elite, and its supporters, on the one hand, and rural and

urban, poor and middle income Thais with connections to Thailand's long-neglected north and northeastern regions, on the other.

This paper's contribution to the academic literature on collective action framing is threefold. The first entails mapping the evolution of frames over time by identifying their presence in the press, tracking their trajectories, and charting them in relation to competing frames. To the author's knowledge, this approach to studying frames has not been undertaken in the literature. The second contribution is in the study's focus on measuring frame resonance not only by comparing the frame with an ideal type, but by also exploring the extent to which these frames contributed to real changes in the political landscape. This includes studying the outcomes of opinion polls, election results, major events, and the opinions of Thais during the time when the frame was widely promulgated to attempt to connect each frame to evidence of connect frame resonance or failure. One area of particular importance to this study of framing is the historical context, as both Red and Yellow Shirt frames and the way there are interpreted are influenced by more than a century of social, cultural and geographic cleavages. Finally, this research looks at collective action framing in an Asian context, which is a region that is underrepresented in the framing literature. As we will see in the review of the literature, there are several gaps in the body of work on collective action framing that require further exploration.

CHAPTER 2   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMING

Historically, the study of social conflict focused on the structural elements that gave

rise to social movements. Important early works linked features of the political and

social environment to movement emergence and outcomes. Later scholars, however,

were unconvinced that structure alone told the entire story of variation in movement

emergence and outcomes. They found that similar structural factors could exist in two

cases, but in only one case would a movement emerge.[7] The realization that structural

factors in the wider environment could not fully explain movement emergence led

scholars to look within the movement itself at its resources and organizational

structure to attempt to explain movement emergence and outcomes. These scholars

argued that movement emergence and success was a function of movement resources

and internal structural characteristics. But such studies were criticized for being too

inward looking and ignoring events and developments in the wider movement

environment. Events across the West during the 1960s and 1970s would soon lead

some social movement scholars towards a new theory to explain why movements

emerge and what factors contributed to their success or failure.

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[7] One of the most well-known examples of this was in the study of communist movements. The factors of worsening poverty, inequality, economic crisis, and unresponsive or repressive government did not alone predict that a country would witness a communist revolution. Other factors were clearly important. These other factors were later identified as mobilizing structures, collective action frames, and ideologies.

During the 1960s, an explosion of movements occurred mainly in the West around single issues, such as gay rights, the environment, nuclear power, and abortion. Scholars identified many similarities across these movements in term of their messages. These movements tended to offer a simplified view of the world out there, packaged and communicating the problems or challenges they faced, and advocating action needed to bring about a desired solution. In studying these movements, scholars began to look at the content of movement messages and the different types of communications that movements used to reach out to their target audience as possible factors in movement emergence and success. This new subfield of study on social movements was called collective action framing.[8]

Collective action framing is a way of building meaning that packages different discourses, symbols and events into a coherent picture that encourages certain interpretations and guides action.[9] The concept of the frame was borrowed from Irving Goffman (1974). His notion of frame was as a way of identifying and navigating a social situation. He pointed out that, "Frames have boundaries, actors and actions, and delimit the debate by labeling what is acceptable and unacceptable and setting the vocabulary and metaphors through which participants can comprehend and discuss an issue."[10] The importance of collective action frames to social

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[8] Snow, David A., R. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford. (1986). Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation. *American Sociological Review*, 51: 464-481.

[9] Snow, David A., R. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford. (1986). Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation. *American Sociological Review*, 51: 464-481. For more on framing see: Benford, Robert D, & Snow, David A. (2000). Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol. 26: 611–39.

[10] Goffman, Erving (1974) *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard University Press.

movements is that they, "Mediate between opportunity and action, and deal with the meanings people attach to their situations."[11]

The collective action framing perspective has two main components. The first is the content of the frame, including its characteristics and the way it is interpreted by different publics. The second component is framing strategies, which addresses the goals of framing and the interaction between framing strategies and environmental factors. Benford and Snow identified three types of frames.[12] Diagnostic frames are frames that seek to build a shared understanding of a problem or condition that movement leaders believe must change, and define who or what is to blame. Prognostic frames seek to frame the possible solutions to the problem. Finally, motivational frames are simply "calls to action".[13] They also identify six types of framing strategies: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, frame transformation, frame alignment and frame resonance. Frame bridging is the process of comparing one frame (typically created by the movement) to another frame (typically outside of the movement). Benford and Snow define it as, "the linking of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem." For example, the Thai Government framed national security by drawing on frames of the Thai Monarchy, religion and Thainess.[14] By

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[11] McAdams, Doug. (1999). Conceptual Origins, Current Problems and Future Directions. In Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*. Cambridge University Press.

[12] Snow, David A., R. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford. (1986). Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation. *American Sociological Review*, 51: 464-481.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] Winichakul, Thongchai. (1994). Siam Mapped: *A History of the Geo-body of a Nation*. Silkworm Books, Pages 164-174.

employing frame bridging, groups can alter the meaning of their frame by blending

perceptions and beliefs associated with other frames. Della Porta says that, in the case

of bridging, interpretations may have been seen as separate but for the conscious

efforts of movements to reach out to other groups.[15] She uses the example of the anti-

globalization movement, which bridged their movement with those groups worried

about the lack of regulation and oversight brought about by globalization.

Frame amplification deals with how movements employ certain framing techniques,

including language and a new vantage point, to reinvigorate existing values or beliefs.

Frame extension is the process by which frames are extended in scope and associated

with larger issues in order to broaden the base of support for the movement. One

example of this involved the framing of genetic mutation by geneticists as part of a

larger problem of environmental pollution.[16] Della Porta describes frame extension as

linking narrow goals with broader societal goals. For example, the Yellow Shirts

Movement expanded from a frame of ousting Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra that

!had only limited pockets of support, to a frame of clean politics, which had existed

for some time, and which drew on traditional, hierarchical forms of leadership over

electoral forms.[17]

Frame transformation occurs when different frames that have lost resonance with

people are transformed beyond their primary interest to make them more consistent

with current lifestyles or rituals. Benford and Snow refer to frame transformation as,

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[15] Della Porta, Donatella, Diani, Mario. (2000). Social Movements: An Introduction. Blackwell.

[16] Frickel, Scott. (2004). "Building an Interdiscipline: Collective Action Framing and the Rise of
Genetic Toxicology." *Social Problems*.

[17] Winichakul, Thongchai. (2008) "Toppling Democracy." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. Vol. 38,
No. 1, February 2008, Page 25.

"changing old understandings and meanings and/or generating new ones."[18] Another type of framing strategy is frame alignment, which Della Porta defines as, "The convergence of models of interpretation of reality adopted by movement activists and those of the population which they intend to mobilize."[19]

Alignment is a core activity of social movements. As they attempt to attract participants, movements must develop frames that align with the values, norms and perceptions of participants. Movements are constrained by the history and culture of the country in how they interpret the world and the form of action they promote. One example from Thailand is the failure of the PAD's "New Politics" frame in 2008, which drew on popular notions of traditional sources of authority and leadership to justify royally sponsored elites as stewards of the country. The prognostic frame clashed with widely held values regarding the importance of elections and democracy. As we will see later in this study, the frame had greater success in 2013 and 2014.

2.2   FRAME RESONANCE

The final concept of strategic framing is frame resonance, which is the core focus of this study. Benford and Snow explain that, "A collective action frame is said to be resonant if potential constituents find its interpretation and expression of grievances compelling."[20] They posit that frame resonance occurs at two levels: the level of the frame and framer, and the level of the individual, who is the target of the frame (or impact of the frame on the individual). At the frame and framer level, they argue that

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[18] Benford, Robert D and David A. Snow. (2000). "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." Annual Review of Sociology.

[19] Della Porta, Donatella, Diani, Mario. (2000). *Social Movements: An Introduction*. Blackwell.

[20] Benford, Robert D and David A. Snow. (2000). "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." Annual Review of Sociology.

resonance is a function of frame consistency, (link between beliefs, claims and actions of the movement); empirical credibility (the fit between the frame and what is going on in the world); and the credibility of the frame articulators/claimsmaker (status and knowledge about the issue). At the level of the individual, Benford and Snow identify three elements that affect frame resonance: Centrality (how important are the claims in the frame to the everyday lives of people); experiential commensurability (how congruent or resonant are the frames with the everyday lives of people); and cultural resonance (to what extent do the messages in the frames resonate with the culture of the people). This can be summarized simply as: are they important, do they apply to people's everyday lives, and are they compatible with the culture. To conclude, Benford and Snow argue that it is the frame content, the framer and the individual receiver of the frame, that are the focal points to explaining frame resonance and failure.

Johnston and Noakes built upon Benford and Snow's criteria for assessing frame resonance by providing further specificity. They argue that resonance should be studied from three angles: Framing entrepreneurs, the receivers of a frame (target audience) and the frame qualities (cultural compatibility, consistency and relevance).[21] They suggest that it is important to know whom the person is that is promoting the frame, whether they are respected, and how they are perceived. They argue that in order for a frame to resonate, the frame promoter must have credibility, charisma, and cynicism. According to Johnston and Noakes, frame receivers will be more likely to embrace the frame if it draws on the beliefs and values that comprise

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[21] Johnston, Hank. Noakes, John. (2005). *Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective.* Rowman and Littlefield.

the receiver's cultural toolkit. In addition to the frame promoters and receivers, in order for a frame to resonate, Johnston and Noakes point out that the frame itself must be consistent and compatible with the cultural stock. Hertel's study of framing in the international labor movement provides an example of where frames fail to resonate because of incompatibility of the international frame with the local cultural stock.[22] International labor rights groups pressured local activists in Bangladesh to advocate a total ban on all forms of child labor. Local activists resisted this framing of child rights as too extreme given that many families depend on the wages earned by young workers for general survival.

Several recent studies have identified additional factors that contribute to frame resonance. For ease of discussion, I have grouped these studies into five main headings.

The Media and Agenda of the Target Group

Clifford Bob argues that frame resonance first requires frames to be noticed. Movements build awareness by courting the media and appealing to the media's agenda.[23] In addition to building awareness, Bob argues that resonant frames appeal to the agendas, values and causes of international donors. He states that movement framers need to link the values of the movement with the values of the target audience. Bob demonstrates the importance of these factors in a case study of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogani People (MSOP) in Nigeria. MSOP was successful in gaining support for their movement because they switched from a frame

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[22] Hertel, S. (2006). Unexpected Power: *Conflict and Change among Transnational Activists*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

[23] Bob, Clifford. (2005). *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

of ethnic conflict to one of environmental pollution that was more appealing to international donors. In terms of media awareness, the heavy-handed tactics of the Nigerian government in suppressing the MSOP, which was largely peaceful, caused the international media to take notice and donors to become more receptive to the movement's appeals for support. The Red Shirts' use of the frame of Thailand is a MENA Dictatorship appealed to pro-democracy Western audiences.

McCarthy, Smith and Zald also discuss the importance of media attention to frame resonance.[24] They describe various agendas that movements must appeal to and operate within, arguing that frames that resonate are newsworthy and appeal to the media. Movements that are successful in resonating with the target audience take into account the interests and aims of gatekeepers. The framers of resonant frames understand the constraints and pressures of news media and reporters and promote their frames in easy to digest packages. They also understand the goals of politicians. For groups that are poor in resources, the authors argue that frames are usually followed by outrageous behavior that allows the movement to get attention. The relationship between the movement and media is important to this study as much of the framing occurs in the mainstream Thai press, and the Red Shirts in particular incorporated events in the international environment into their framing efforts.

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[24] McAdam, Doug; McCarthy, John D; and Mayer N. Zald. (1999). Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes—Toward a Synthesis. In Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. Cambridge University Press.

Global-Local Alignment

Shareen Hertel argues that frame resonance occurs when there is alignment between global frame and local values and customs.[25] She focuses on the importance of movement framing and the challenges of frame misalignment at the global and local levels. In her case study of the international child rights/child labor movement, Hertel identifies several factors that enhance frame resonance. She finds that frames at the global level tend to resonate when they align with local values, customs and realities. While Hertel is talking about the "global" as a Western concept of child rights/labor, and "local" as the interpretation of local activists in Bangladesh, a similar global/local challenge occurs in national movements that seek to appeal to specific provinces away from the center, this is evident in the Yellow Shirts' movement frame of New Politics, which while enjoying extensive support in Bangkok and southern Thailand, did not resonate in large parts of the country outside of Bangkok.

Frames that Already Exist

Tarrow argues that frames that resonate combine frames that already exist in the public but communicate them in new and innovative ways.[26] Several studies have identified that frames that resonate tend to be familiar in the sense that the frame itself is not entirely new. That is, it has been used before in a different context. The idea of using familiar content in frames helps to avoid repression or more readily gain acceptance in the public. But the danger that several studies have found is that if the frame is too familiar it will not be appealing enough to attract media attention or the

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[25] Hertel, S. (2006). Unexpected Power: Conflict and Change among Transnational Activists. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

[26] Tarrow, Sidney. (1999). States and Opportunities: The Political Structuring of Social Movements. In Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. Cambridge University Press.

support of the target group. In their study of the suffrage movement in the United States, Hewitt and McCammon (2005) looked at several frames and their ability to increase recruitment. They found that that the one frame that had the greatest impact on recruitment had a balance between culturally resonance and cultural opposition. It was familiar but it also pushed the boundaries and was a new way to look at things.

For example, during the second round of anti-Thaksin mobilization in 2008, The New Politics Frame surfaced to describe a new approach to politics that entailed partial elite selection of members of parliament representatives rather than a fully elected parliament.[27] Its message had limited appeal at the time because it was seen as undemocratic. More recently the frame enjoyed greater resonance because of the response to Thaksin's electoral dominance, which weakened support for democracy among the elite and middle class. The New Politics Frame draws some material from the Clean Politics Frame that surfaced during the mid-1980s to describe the solution to what elites viewed as pervasive political corruption ushered in by the rise of provincial politicians. Drawing on her research, Myra Marx Ferree might argue that the failure of the New Politics Frame to resonate might have been the conscious decision of framers to select a more radical frame because of subjective considerations or institutional barriers to a more mainstream frame. She points out that framers don't always select the frame with the greatest resonance potential as

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[27] Nelson, Michael. (2010) "Thailand's People's Alliance for Democracy: From 'New Politics' to a 'Real' Political Party?" In *Legitimacy Crisis in Thailand.* Askew, Mark, Eds. Silkworm Publishing, 2010. Pages 124-125.

they have specific audiences they wish to influence or pressure or more resonate

framing pathways were overlooked.[28]

Stephen Valocchi also found that familiarity and uniqueness are important factors in

frame resonance in his study of the Gay Rights movement. He argues that resonate

frames borrow from past movements in some way because to do so offers an

appealing identity internally to energize, or refocus. Doing this also has the ability to

resonate with external audiences.[29] He concludes that the Gay Rights movement

gained significant attention and reenergized its ranks when it borrowed the Black

Power Frame and refashioned it into Gay Power. Valocchi concludes that for a frame

to resonate, it should be novel in the sense that it is applied in a new context or issue,

but not entirely new. The idea is that past movements have used the frame and so it

has become a socially acceptable way of thinking and acting.

Ideology

The literature outlines two main ways in which ideology in movement frames can

influence frame resonance. First, Westby argues that in order for frames to resonate,

they need to strike a balance between ideology and strategy. If there is a major

imbalance of ideology and strategy, then the movement message tends to fall flat. Too

much ideology, and too little strategic considerations can lead to narrow, exclusive

movement frames that fail to garner widespread support. Too much strategy and too

little ideology can lead to broad appeals but lack of commitment among the

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[28] Ferree, Myra Marx. Resonance and Radicalism: Feminist Framing in the Abortion Debates of the United States and Germany. American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 109, No. 2 (September 2003), pp. 304-344.

[29] Valocchi, Stephen. (2005). Collective Action Frames in the Gay Liberation Movement, 1969-1973. In Frames of Protest Social Movements and the Framing Perspective: Hank Johnston and John Noakes. Rowman and Littlefield.

movement rank and file.[30] Westby also points out that movements appropriate

hegemonic ideologies to avoid repression and gain acceptance and support. Anti-Iraq

war protests in the United States drew on the ideology of motherhood as sacrosanct as

a way to gain broader acceptance among the population.

Consistency in Framing

Johnston and Noakes argue that in order for frames to resonate, they need to be

consistent.[31] Different frames of the movement need to work together; they need to

complement each other, and movement actions must link logically and symbolically

with the movement frames. However, when there is significant frame contestation

within the movement, this can lead to inconsistency in frames and actions. Noy argues

in his study of homeless policy in San Francisco that frames that resonate not only

appeal symbolically, but groups within the movement must also agree with the

prognostic elements of the frame (strategies and tactics).[32] In order to have a resonate

frame, you must cohesion within the movement. Furthermore, frames that resonate

need to be backed up with actions that are consistent with the message in the frame.

McAdam discusses this in terms of the frame strategy of Dr. Martin Luther King, who

framed the battle for civil rights as a struggle between good and evil. In order to be

credible, he had to take action in a way that was consistent with the frame.[33]

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[30] Westby, David L. (2005). Strategic Imperative, Ideology, and Frames. In Frames of Protest Social Movements and the Framing Perspective: Hank Johnston and John Noakes. Rowman and Littlefield.

[31] Johnston, Hank. Noakes, John. (2005). Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective. Rowman and Littlefield.

[32] Noy, Darren. (2009). When Framing Fails: Ideas, Influence, and Resources in San Francisco's Homeless Policy Field." Social Problems, Vol. 56. pp. 223–242.

[33] McAdam, Doug. (1999). The Framing Function of Movement Tactics: Strategic Dramaturgy in the American Civil Rights Movement. In Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. Cambridge University Press.

Several additional factors have been identified as enhancing frame resonance. These

include the source of the frame (whether it is a movement or a government agency;

the latter is more effective because of an advantage in material and symbolic

resources); the extent to which the frame resonates with the grassroots; those that take

advantage of the cultural opportunity structure; those that pursue a reformist agenda

rather than an agenda of displacement; those that rebutted or neutralized the major

arguments of their opponents; and those that take advantage of the Political

Opportunity Structure.[34]

2.3   FRAME FAILURE

There have been several recent studies that have explored frame failure. Bob argues

that frames fail because they cannot appeal to the agendas or values of their target

audiences, they are not new or unique, and there is misalignment or inconsistency

between their message and the tactics they use.[35] Another factor that has been

identified regularly in frame failure is counter-framing. In his exploration of the

failure of transnational human rights mobilization in the Middle East and North

Africa, Westby concludes that human rights groups in several countries failed to get

support from the global community because of the wide appeal of the War-on-Terror

counter-frame promoted by MENA governments as a rationale for repression. He

points out that movements fail when there is effective counter-framing by

governments or other forces in the movement's field. Noy also talks about the power

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[34] For more on government framing, see Noakes (2005); for grassroots framing see Hull (2001); for framing and cultural opportunities, see Gamson and Meyer (1999); for framing and agendas, see Frey, Dietz, & Kalof (1997); and for those movements using frames to take advantage of political opportunities, see Bob (2009).

[35] Bob, Clifford. (2005).The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

of counter-framing to change the views on an issue and even policy outcomes, particularly when the counter-framers have advantages in resources and the main framers' coalitions are fragmented. Voss also addresses the concept of counter-framing in her exploration of the reasons behind the collapse of the Knights of Labor (KOL) movement. She found that the employers' organization had much more resources and better organization than the KOL. This enabled them to disrupt the KOL frame with counter-frames that propagated the notion of the KOL as radicals.[36]

In their study of the suffragette movement, Hewitt and McCammon found that frames that were too radical in their propositions and content, not unique or different, not compelling, or did not address the frames of opponents were more likely to fail.[37] Misalignment in values and customs was also found to be associated with frame failure.[38] Noakes argues that frames failed when the entity or promoters lost credibility and when the claims ran against the experiential commensurability of everyday people. Johnston and Noakes cite anti-abolitionists killings of abolitionists as one of the main reasons for the loss of support of the anti-abolitionist movement in Ohio because such actions contradicted the anti-abolitionist frame of peace and preservation of a way of life, causing the group to lose credibility.

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[36] Voss, Kim (1993). The Making of American Exceptionalism: The Knights of Labor and Class Formation in the Nineteenth Century. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

[37] Hewitt, Lyndi; McCammon, Holly J. (2005). Explaining Suffrage Mobilization: Balancing, Neutralization, and Range in Collective Action Frames: In Frames of Protest Social Movements and the Framing Perspective: Hank Johnston and John Noakes eds. Rowman and Littlefield.

[38] Hertel, S. (2006). Unexpected Power: Conflict and Change among Transnational Activists. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Also see: Johnston, Hank. Noakes, John. (2005). Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective. Rowman and Littlefield.

Westby also points out that frames can fail if they have a major imbalance of ideology and strategy. Too much ideology and too little strategy can lead to narrow, exclusive movement frames that fail to garner widespread support. Conversely, a movement frame that includes too much strategy and too little ideology can lead to broad appeals but lack of commitment from members.[39] Studying the Same Sex Marriage movement in Hawaii, Hull found that the "Rights" frame failed because it did not resonate with grassroots activists.[40] Hull also cites effective oppositional framing as a factor in frame failure. Gamson and Meyer find that frames fail when there is an imbalance between threats and possibilities, because the movement is labeled as deviant by counter-framing efforts, or ignored.[41] McCarthy, Smith, and Zald argue that frames fail when they cannot get on the agenda because they are not interesting enough and not in line with candidate goals/platform for reelection.[42]

2.4   CULTURAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

A full understand of the factors that lead to frame resonance and failure cannot be achieved without also studying the cultural and political opportunity structures that interact with, and influence, frame content and ultimately movement outcomes. During the 1960s, scholars began to look more closely at the role of culture in social movements. Out of this avenue of research a perspective came that combined the structural perspective with culture in movements. Movement frames are constrained

[39] Westby, David L. (2005). Strategic Imperative, Ideology, and Frames. In Frames of Protest Social Movements and the Framing Perspective: Hank Johnston and John Noakes. Rowman and Littlefield.
[40] Hull, Kathleen E. (2001). "The Political Limits of the Rights Frame: The Case of Same-Sex Marriage in Hawaii." Sociological Perspectives, Vol. 44, No. 2, pp. 207-232.
[41] Gamson, William A.; Meyer, David S. (1999). Framing Political Opportunity. In Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. Cambridge University Press.
[42] D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. Cambridge University Press.

by culture, and also enabled by it. Cultural opportunities have a significant impact on frame resonance. Mark Steinberg states that, "Practices of cultural domination are never so monolithic that they foreclose all creativity and resistance." [43] He argues that while cultural discourses are often dominated by powerful groups, the weak can turn those discourses against the powerful. Using the example of the Spitalfield silk weavers in Great Britain, Steinberg argues that the weavers drew upon and sought to transform several discourses in their struggle with big business, which was intent on removing protectionist laws that had insulated the silk weavers from cheap imports. In their struggle with big business and other advocates of free trade, the weavers confronted hegemonic discourses of Christian Piety, nationalism, citizenship and political economy. They used particular terms within these hegemonic discourses, such as stressing their patriotism to preserve capitalism, and their individual sacrifice in fighting Napoleon. Zald added another cultural influence on frame resonance and failure. He argues that frames only work because they invoke cultural discourses that exist in society in ways that seem consistent with cultural practices.[44] In Chile under Pinochet, the pro-democracy movement used the frame of motherhood to avoid repression since motherhood was a cultural value that was widely respected and seen as above politics. This frame was a rallying point and created a structure and support base for the movement to leverage later when the opportunity emerged to become more politically confrontational with the state.

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[43] Steinberg, Mark. (2002). Towards a more Dialogic Analysis of social movements. In Mayer, David S; Whittier, Nancy and Belinda Robnett. Social Movements: Identity, Culture and the State. Oxford University Press.

[44] Zald, Mayer N. (1999). Culture, Ideology and Strategic Framing. In Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. (1999). Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. Cambridge University Press.

2.5   POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

Political opportunity structure (POS) explores how the initial spark and evolution of social movements and revolutions is shaped by the political system. This system reflects the perceived opportunities and threats that exist and their interpretation by protesters and protest leaders. The objective of studying movements in this way is to understand what conditions and characteristics of political systems are likely to lead to collective action and what forms that collective action takes. Tarrow defines POS as, "consistent—but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national—signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements."[45]

McAdam, McCarthy and Zald present four types of POS that influence movement emergence and success: "Relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system, the stability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity, the presence of elite allies, and the state's capacity and propensity for repression." Movements are thought to emerge when the political system opens up, when fractures within the elite provide the opportunity to secure elite allies, and when the regime, which was previously repressive, for one reason or another becomes less so.[46]

In Bob's study of the MSOP people, the political opportunity that created awareness and resonance for the movement's frames was the Nigerian government's violent

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[45] Tarrow, Sidney. In States and Opportunities. D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. (1996). Cambridge University Press. Page 54.

[46] D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. Cambridge University Press.

repression of the MSOP minority group.[47] In his study of the No-Base movement,

Yeo argues that, while the movement had only limited success in the 1980s and

1990s, it experienced a significant boost in the resonance of its message when the Iraq

War and the Afghanistan War began to take shape. Those opposed to the war became

an important constituent base for the No-Base movement. "The U.S. war in Iraq

presented anti-base activists the global frames necessary to accelerate the pace of

diffusion, scale-shift, and brokerage, and hence, the consolidation of a transnational

anti-base network."[48]

2.6   COMBINING THE POS AND FRAMING PERSPECTIVES

Recent studies of framing and frame resonance have combined the POS and framing

perspectives. The strength of combining these perspectives is that, by drawing on two

or more theories of social movements, scholars can understand the collective impact

of different internal and external, symbolic and material, structural and agency

dimensions on social movement emergence and evolution. Social movement scholars

have increasingly recognized that movements cannot be explained in structural terms

alone, nor can their emergence and trajectory be explained solely as responses to

messages promoted by movement entrepreneurs. The growing consensus is that both

structural and symbolic factors inside and outside of the movement contribute to

movement outcomes such as recruitment, protest size, value change and policy

change. As McCarthy, Smith, and Zald (1996) note, "framing efforts are embedded in

broader political and social contexts, and these contexts expand, limit, and shape the

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[47] Bob, Clifford. (2005). The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
[48] Yeo, Andrew. Not in Anyone's Backyard: The Emergence and Identity of a Transnational Anti-Base Network. International Studies Quarterly. Volume 53, Issue 3, pages 571–594, September 2009.

opportunities for movement activists to gain attention to the issues that most concern them."

Oberschall looks at POS and framing in a study of pro-democracy social movements in four Eastern European countries during 1989 that resulted in the fall of communism.[49] He reasons that in the decade preceding the 1989 movements, some form of protest against the communist regimes had already emerged in each country. Yet, the regimes still held all the power, there were no major fissures in elite alliances, and opposition groups had few elite allies. Posing the question of how then the movements were successful in overthrowing the regimes, Oberschall concludes that the international context was critical in providing the framing opportunities for pro-democracy movements. Cracks in some regimes, such as elections in Poland, led to demands for democracy and elections in other regimes and the lack of outside support resulted in rapid communist regime dissolution. The relevance of this study to the study of frame resonance is that frame resonance and movement outcomes depend in part on political opportunities occurring outside of a country's borders. We see this in the 2011 election cycle in Thailand, as Red Shirt leaders sought to mobilize people by drawing comparisons between the pro-democracy movement in Thailand, and similar movements occurring in the Middle East and North Africa.

Elena Zdravomyslova explored symbolic framing in two democratic movements—the Leningrad People's Front and the Democratic Union in Russia during the Glasnost

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[49] Oberschall, Anthony. (1999). Opportunities and Framing in the Eastern European Revolts of 1989. In Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. Cambridge University Press.

reforms of 1985-1991.[50] She posits that frames change depending on the stage of the movement and the reaction or potential reaction of the state. During the ascendency phase of a protest cycle, pro-democracy social movements urgently needed to construct an alternative to the symbolism and values of the communist ideology. She found that symbolic framing was important early on, since direct attacks on the regime were still not possible. Movements had to create an identity that took advantage of the growing opportunity but did not openly confront the regime. During this first phase, the radical Democratic Union had trouble mobilizing adherents because it directly confronted the regime and communist ideology, including protesting illegally. In the second phase of widening political opportunities, new movements such as the moderate Leningrad People's Front emerged with a less radical message and legal protests. Zdravomyslova believes that the second phase ushered in moderates because of changes in the institutional structure in the form of planned elections.

2.7   GAPS AND ISSUES IN THE LITERATURE

An extensive body of literature applies collective action framing to the understanding of social movements (Snow & Byrd, 2007; Linders, 1998; Goldstone, 2003; McAdam, et al., 1999; Valocchi, 2000; Noakes, 2005). This literature argues that social movement success is partly a function of the construction and maintenance of meaning within the movement environment through collective action framing. While the literature is well developed, there are still theoretical questions and issues

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[50] Zdravomyslova, Elena. (1999). Opportunities and framing in the transition to democracy: The case of Russia. In Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. Cambridge University Press.

requiring further exploration. One of these issues is the tendency within the field to only study frames that were effective and to ignore those frames that failed. Several scholars have recently argued that future research should look at frames that fail to resonate with certain groups and explore why that is the case (Hewitt & McCammon, 2005; Noy, 2009; Bob, 2005). Another persistent issue in the frame resonance literature regards how to measure frame resonance. The vast majority of framing studies tend to measure frame resonance by comparison with ideal types rather than looking at the impact on real protest outcomes, frame mentions, and the broader context of political and social opportunities.[51]

Finally, there are a limited number of studies of frame resonance outside of the West. Most studies of frame resonance deal with movements based in the West. There have not been many studies of frame resonance in non-Western contexts, particularly when exploring framing in pro-democracy movements. Most of the work in this area comes out of Eastern Europe following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thailand poses an attractive case for the study of pro-democracy movements and framing in a non-European context. It has many elements that are not present in the European-centric literature, such as elements of class conflict, regional conflict, and the influence of powerful, extra-constitutional institutions.

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[51] Noy, Darren. (2009). When Framing Fails: Ideas, Influence, and Resources in San Francisco's Homeless Policy Field." Social Problems, Vol. 56. pp. 223–242.

CHAPTER 3   METHODOLOGY

3.1 H<small>YPOTHESIS</small>

The hypotheses explored in this study deal with the reasons behind frame resonance and frame failure. The current research on framing suggests that resonance occurs when the frame content is consistent with the existing cultural stock but innovate in the way symbols and ideas are packaged; when it is promoted by a credible framer; when the actions of the movement are consistent with the frame's content; and when the frame is relevant to the everyday lives of ordinary people. In addition to the frame content and strategy, several researchers have posited that frame resonance depends as much on structural issues as it does on the material of the frame itself. That is, even when the framers and frame content appear to resonate positively with the target audience, there may still be a lack of impact due to structure issues in society, such as power relations and class dynamics. Cultural and social issues may also provide favorable or unfavorable contexts for frame resonance.

H1: Frame Resonance. If these criteria are present in a Red Shirts or Yellow Shirts movement frames, then we would expect to see introduction of that frame coincide with outcomes such as, higher recruitment and mobilization, more frequent mentions in the press, and value and attitudinal changes among the target groups.

Frame failure is said to occur when the actions of the movement are inconsistent with the message of the movement (Bob, 2006; Johnston & Noakes, 2005); when there is effective counter-framing by oppositional movements (Hull, 2001) or government institutions (Wiest, 2008; Noy, 2009); when there is misalignment of values, attitudes and customs between the national level and local level (Hertel, 2006); when there is an imbalance between ideology and strategy (Westby, 2005); when there is significant disagreement and contestation within the movement (Noy, 2009; Valocchi, 2000); significant, negative interaction between the frame and the movement's organizational field (Noy, 2009); when the frame never gains credibility with the movement rank and file (Hull, 2001); and when the frame is not interesting enough to the media or helpful to the election prospects of elected representatives (McCarthy, Smith, & Zald, 1996). While these are hypothesized conditions for frame failure, there have been few, if any, studies that tested these factors in a movement to see if these conditions occurred, and, if so, which ones are most salient in frame failure.

H2: Frame Failure. If these criteria are present in a frame's content, frame strategy or movement field, we would expect the frame to lead to demobilization, drops in recruitment, lack of positive mention in the press, an increase in resonance of competing frames, and value or attitude inertia or movement in a way contrary to the movement's goals.

3.2   DEFINITIONS AND OPERATIONALIZATION

Before proceeding with a thorough exploration of frame resonance and failure in the Red and Yellow Shirts movements, it is important to define and operationalize some of the key terms and groupings essential to this study.

The Red Shirt movement is a large, somewhat amorphous group that includes many demographics. Some academics have talked about the Red Shirts as a rural, peasant movement, while others point out that the movement counts significant numbers of middle income Thais as supporters and those who live in urban places, such as Bangkok. Many Red Shirts straddle the boundaries between urban and rural locations, and between farming and non-farming activities.[52] The Red Shirts movement is both rural and urban. It is also a movement that cannot be classified solely based along a rural-urban divide. "The borders between the urban and rural spaces are becoming increasingly blurred, which has prompted a new critical examination of the analytical use of these two concepts."[53] Additionally, there are significant rural populations of Thailand in which the Red Shirts have made only minor inroads, such as in southern Thailand. Some have also classified the Red Shirts as a poor people's movement. That is also an oversimplification as many Red Shirts are working class people.

It is a movement that was centralized and narrow in focus in the early period under Thaksin Shinawatra, and then in a later phase became ideologically pro-democratic and populist and included a much more loosely knit number of subgroups, including academics, Marxists, farmers, laborers, urban workers, musicians, poets, and some NGOs and professionals, who didn't always agree with, and in some cases openly challenged, the movement's leadership. This widening of the movement and its widespread support had much to do with structural changes, as we will outline in later chapters, but it was also a story of human agency. This is where geography comes in

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[52] Andrew Walker
[53] Drahmoune, Fabian (2013), Agrarian Transitions, Rural Resistance and Peasant Politics in Southeast Asia, in: *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*. 32, 1, 111–139.

and why the movement had such a strong base of support in these areas which had been historically exploited and neglected and where people had split allegiances and identities between Thailand and neighboring countries and ethnicities and histories.

In his discussion of changing social and economic landscapes in Northeast and Northern Thailand, Andrew Walker defined the supporters of the Red Shirts as "Middle Income Peasants."[54] His definition is useful in that it doesn't focus solely on structure, geography or income but also incorporates the identities and everyday lives of rural people, their relationship with power structures and their political and social aspirations.

The Red Shirts movement is defined here as comprising rural poor and middle income peasants, urban working class Thais, and a small number of rural and urban elites, with its concentration of support coming from people either currently living in or coming from the North and Northeast of Thailand, and who are committed to seeing a stronger, permanent place for democracy in Thailand. Some argue that the Red Shirts are Thailand's first truly mass movement.

The Yellow Shirts began as an anti-Thaksin movement in 2005 under the name of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD). The PAD adopted the color yellow in their protest rallies to signify their support and perceived alignment with the monarchy. They were later referred to in publications as the Yellow Shirts. Throughout this research project, anti-Thaksin, establishment and royalist forces are generally referred to as comprising the Yellow Shirts movement but it is acknowledged that at different

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[54] Andrew Walker. (2012) Thailand's Political Peasants: Power in *The Modern Rural Economy*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

times the Yellow Shirts or PAD compromised a variety of different groups and institutions. For example, in Chapter 5 we talk of Yellow Shirt frames as Official Frames of the interim government and CNS. The Yellow Shirts also count as supporters a large number of middle class Thais as well as poor and middle class southern Thais who align closely with the monarchy and the Democrat Party, its political ally. The contours of these groups are illustrated in Figure 3.2-1.

Political Party: Democrat Party

Social Movement: Yellow Shirts/Royalists

Demographics: Urban elite; urban middle class; some rural elite and middle class; entire population of southern Thailand; nationalists; conservatives

% of Population: 35%

Institutional backers: Monarchy; military; judiciary

What they want: Royal democracy; strong monarchy; status quo with regards to wealth redistribution

Political Party: Puea Thai

Social Movement: Red Shirts

Demographics: farmers, urban poor, middle income peasants, and rural elites; socialists; some academics, NGOs

% of Population: 65%

Institutional backers: none

What they want: Mass democracy; weakened Bangkok institutional and business elite

Bangkok

100 miles

Figure 3.2-1. Two Camps in the Recent Social and Political Conflict.[55]

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[55] This map is a simplification of the geographic distribution of the Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts movement and real and potential supporters. Parts of Northern Thailand do not have a heavy Red Shirts presence, and also where there are limited pockets of Yellow Shirt supporters. Likewise, there are parts of Bangkok and Southern Thailand that do not have heavy numbers of Yellow Shirt supporters, and where there are limited pockets of Red Shirt sympathizers or active members.

3.3   UNDERSTANDING THE ROLES OF STRUCTURE AND AGENCY IN RED AND

YELLOW SHIRT MOVEMENT EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION

Thai History is an essential component to understanding the Red and Yellow Shirts

movements and their collective action frames. A historical analysis was undertaken in

Chapter 4 to describe the events and developments that led to the emergence of both

the Red and Yellow Shirts movements. Part of this analysis looks at the growth and

economic diversification of rural Thailand against the backdrop of geographic

cleavages, democratic emergence, and growing integration in the national and global

economies. The other part of the analysis looks at the growth of the Bangkok-based

middle class, expansion of the elite into new categories, and the changing and

overlapping relationships and interactions between rural and urban, poor and rich, and

different regions.[56] The time period covered in this analysis begins with the dictatorial

rulers of the 1950s and 1960s, the Vietnam War and its impact, and the periods of

dramatic economic growth from the 1960s through the 1990s and early 2000s. It also

covers the democratic uprisings of the 1970s and 1990s, ending September 17, 2006,

when the supreme military commander Sonthi removed Thaksin Shinawatra in a

coup. This analysis was undertaken as a way to understand the roots of conflict that

animated Red and Yellow Shirt contestation as well as to identify collective action

frames or content and topics that would appear later in movement frames. Frames

identified in later periods and analyses were also explored within a historical context

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[56] In *Peasants and Politics*, Andrew Walker concludes that, "The national-level conflict that has convulsed Thailand over the past decade owes much to the emergence of rural Thailand's new political society."

to understand the meaning and importance of concepts and events identified within the frames.

In Chapter 6, a second historical analysis is undertaken that picks up following the December 2007 election in which Samak Sundaravej was elected prime minister. The election was followed by a period of significant turbulent that lasted from 2008 through 2010, in which there was frequent, and sometimes violent protest mobilization and confrontation by the Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts and their institutional allies. Entitled The Flow of Events, and relying on secondary sources, the chapter tracks the shifts in the political and cultural landscape that culminated in the Rachaprasong crackdown of May 19, 2010, in which the Thai military invaded a Red Shirt protest encampment in Bangkok's shopping district, resulting in the deaths of 92 protestors. It is from this analysis that new collective action frames are identified, and those identified earlier are tracked over the period to explore their evolution.

3.4   FRAME IDENTIFICATION, COMMUNICATION AND TRENDS

In Chapter 5, a mixed methods analysis was undertaken of the period beginning with the coup against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on September 19, 2006, until the first post-coup election on December 23, 2007. For a period of more than 15 months, numerous groups engaged in a bitter contest to shape public opinion about the coup, to define the friends and foes of democracy, describe and attribute motives to the main political actors, and draw a convincing picture of what they believed was the best future course for Thailand. One key arena of this contest was the national print media. To better understand this frame contest, more than 360 articles from two major

daily newspapers, the Bangkok Post (English language publication) and Khaosod (Thai language publication), were selected and analyzed in depth over the period.

From that data, a qualitative analysis was undertaken to identify and deconstruct numerous Red Shirt frames and official coup government frames. This analysis revealed many frames and discourses of the Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts movements over the study period, highlighted which frames were covered most frequently by the media, and what institutional actors were responsible for the frame messages.

Source Selection and Coding
The selection of these sources was made based on their political leaning and status as mainstream newspapers. The Bangkok Post, Thailand's oldest English language daily paper, has a history of pro-royalist (anti-Thaksin) views. The other major English daily newspaper is The Nation. The Bangkok Post is seen as the moderate of the two in their pro-royalist views. Articles and viewpoints against the coup and interim government were more likely to appear in the Bangkok Post than in the The Nation. The other newspaper chosen, Khaosod, a Thai language daily, has the distinction of being one of the only major daily newspapers that is decidedly sympathetic to the Red Shirts' movement. It is also fairly balanced, including a mixture of royalist and pro-Red Shirts viewpoints.[57]

A frame and content analysis was undertaken of articles from the Bangkok Post over the study period from September 20, 2006 until December 22, 2007, the day before

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[57] For more on media bias in Thailand, please see: "The soldiers might have acted just out of an emotional impulse" *Axis Asia*. June 08, 2010. (http://arnodubus.blogspot.com/2010/06/soldiers-might-have-acted-just-out-of.html). In an interview with Michael Nelson, a sociologist and expert on Thai politics and the media, Dr. Nelson talks about the bias of several major newspapers. He argues that the Bangkok Post is largely anti-Red Shirt and anti-Thaksin and that Khaosod is more balanced and even at times sympathetic to the Red Shirts.

the first post-coup general election. A systematic, random sample was taken from the newspaper during this period. Daily issues were analyzed each third day beginning from the day following the coup. Articles found to be relevant to Thai politics were selected and categorized. From this smaller sample, each article was then analyzed in depth to discern whether collective action frames and political discourses were present. A form was used to code information in the article.[58] The code sheet was structured to capture the following information:

- Evidence of problem definition and proposed solutions by pro-government/pro-coup or pro-democracy/pro-Thaksin factions[59]
- The communicator and his or her organization
- The political discourses mentioned in the article
- The labels used for groups, individuals or situations

During the study period, 154 issues of Bangkok Post were coded and 207 articles containing relevant collective action frames and political discourses were documented.

The data collection process employed for the Khaosod publication was somewhat different from that used to analyze the Bangkok Post, and progressed in two stages. In the first stage, a systematic, random sample was taken for each third day beginning from the day following the coup. The daily sample was analyzed, coded and stored in an identical fashion as that used in the Bangkok Post. From this initial sampling, 154 daily issues of the newspapers were selected. The second component of coding of Khaosod was a non-random further sample of the 154 daily issues. Due to time

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[58] The Code Sheet can be found in Appendix A.
[59] At other times these groupings might have been referred to by different names.

constraints, not all 154 daily Khaosod issues could be coded. Instead, a sample was

taken from this group. First, 18 significant events were identified over the study

period. This list of significant events is included in Appendix B. For each event,

newspaper issues were analyzed in the period immediately before the event to the

period immediately following the event. Out of 154 daily issues over the study period,

54 issues and 202 articles were analyzed. The rationale behind selecting major events

around which to conduct further coding was that the analysis of the Bangkok Post

revealed that frame contestation reached a peak during these periods.

Mixed Methods Data Analysis Approach

Qualitative methods were used to identify, construct and explain the cognitive

structures of collective action frames. This entailed systematic analysis of daily

newspapers and movement publications in which different movement and official

sources discussed an issue or event. Attention was given to understanding the frame

components, the discourses that were referenced, the frame communicators and their

positions, and the counter-framing of opposing groups. The analysis also explored the

role of language through the use of labels assigned to different events and groups, as

well as how communicators used the public memory through evocation of historical

events in an attempt to influence people.

Quantitative methods were used to identify which frames were employed most

frequently and to track the trajectories of frame mentions over the study period.

Quantitative methods were also used to understand the resonance of some frames over

the period. This included looking at indicators such as popularity of the interim

government, protest turnout, among other measures, and the extent to which these

aligned with patterns of frame frequency and type over the study period.

3.5 FRAMING AND MOBILIZATION IN THE RED SHIRTS MOVEMENT

Chapter 7 provides a content and frame analysis of the Red Shirts publication

Mahaprachachon during the 2011 election cycle. The study picks up the Red Shirt

movement in its darkest hour—shortly after Rachaprasong. The content analysis

begins just as the Red Shirts are starting to regroup from the devastating crackdown.

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of several Red Shirts frames that helped to

lead the movement and its political arm the Pheua Thai Party out of this dark period

of uncertainty all the way to a convincing victory in the 2011 general election.

The approach used in this research entails a frame analysis of a number of issues of

Mahaprachachon (มหาประชาชน) or "Great People", a weekly, Thai language Red Shirt

publication and one of the most successful and enduring within the movement.[60]

Mahaprahchacon is a mainstream movement publication with a wide circulation, and

the president of the publication, Veeragan Musikapong, is one of the most

recognizable leaders of the Red Shirt movement. Many of the writers and subjects of

articles were also movement leaders. This publication was selected because it

presented the framing efforts of the Red Shirt movement leadership. It also featured a

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[60] The editor of the newspaper is Prasak Musikapong (พระศักดิ์ มุสิกพงศ์). He is the brother of Veeragan

Musikapong (วีระกานต์ มุสิกพงศ์), one of the Red Shirts' most recognizable leaders. Mr. Veeragan served
as president of the newspaper until he was imprisoned following the May 2010 crackdown. When
Veeragan was released on bail, he gave up the position of president of the newspaper and took on the
official title of consultant, probably forced to do so by the stringent terms of his bail
(*Mahaprachachon*, February 18-24, 2011: p. 6-7).

Letters to the Editor section, which allowed for the incorporation of grassroots frames in the analysis.

Sales of *Mahaprachachon* were steady through the study period (first half of 2011) with circulation of about 120,000 copies per issue (interview with the editor, 2011)[61]. Official newspaper estimates are that there are three to five readers for every copy of the newspaper sold, putting total readership at between 360,000 and 580,000 people.[62] Since its re-launch, *Mahaprachachon* has released 67 issues.[63]

Mahaprachachon is one of three major publications affiliated with the Red Shirts movement. The other publications are the Suu Suea Dang (สื่อเสื้อแดง) or *Red News,* and the *Voice of Thaksin* (Title printed in English). The Red News is still in circulation. The *Voice of Thaksin* ceased publication after being shut down following the May 2010 government crackdown. It reopened under the name of *Red Power* shortly afterwards with the same editor Somyos Pruksakasemsuk.[64]

The newspaper's stated mission is to bring people together from all sides and views within the movement to fight for democracy, and against double standard and injustice (interview with the editor, 2011). The editor described the newspaper's

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[61] The author was unable to obtain an independent figure on circulation of *Mahaprachachon*.

[62] Interview with the editor Prasak Musikapong.

[63] Mahaprachachon used to be called *Kwam Jing Wan Nee* (ความจริงวันนี้) or "The Truth Today." It was shut down by the government after the Rachaprasong crackdown in 2010 and re-launched a short time later under the name *Mahaprachachon*.

[64] "Does state of emergency justify censorship of Red Shirt media?" *Reports without Borders*. Published on Thursday 29 July 2010. http://en.rsf.org/thailand-does-state-of-emergency-justify-29-07-2010,38055.html

approach as moderate or adopting a "middle way," aiming first for Red Shirts but also hoping to appeal to people who are undecided or uninformed about the movement.

Data collection included an analysis of six issues of *Mahaprachachon*, selected at regular intervals of one per month, from January through June, 2011. The third issue of each month was selected for analysis. This allowed for adequate spacing out of issues, ensuring that major issues and events occurring each month would be captured in the analysis. It also ensured that the June issue would be the last issue released before the election. The selection of one issue per month provides a broad sample of the topics and messages in the newspaper during the lead-up to the election and allows for sufficient material with which to identify and describe the major frames and track the progression of frames over the study period.

The approach used in this research entails a frame analysis of a number of issues of *Mahaprachachon* (มหาประชาชน) or "Great People", a weekly, Thai language Red Shirt publication and one of the most successful and enduring within the movement.[65] Mahaprahchacon is a mainstream movement publication with a wide circulation, and the president of the publication, Veeragan Musikapong, is one of the most recognizable leaders of the Red Shirt movement. Many of the writers and subjects of articles were also movement leaders. This publication was selected because it

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[65] The editor of the newspaper is Prasak Musikapong (พระศักดิ์ มุสิกพงศ์). He is the brother of Veeragan Musikapong (วีระกานต์ มุสิกพงศ์), one of the Red Shirts' most recognizable leaders. Mr. Veeragan served as president of the newspaper until he was imprisoned following the May 2010 crackdown. When Veeragan was released on bail, he gave up the position of president of the newspaper and took on the official title of consultant, probably forced to do so by the stringent terms of his bail (*Mahaprachachon*, February 18-24, 2011: p. 6-7).

presented the framing efforts of the Red Shirt movement leadership. It also featured a Letters to the Editor section, which allowed for the incorporation of grassroots frames in the analysis.

Sales of *Mahaprachachon* were steady through the study period (first half of 2011) with circulation of about 120,000 copies per issue (interview with the editor, 2011)[66]. Official newspaper estimates are that there are three to five readers for every copy of the newspaper sold, putting total readership at between 360,000 and 580,000 people.[67] Since its re-launch, *Mahaprachachon* has released 67 issues.[68]

Mahaprachachon is one of three major publications affiliated with the Red Shirts movement. The other publications are the Suu Suea Dang (สื่อเสื้อแดง) or *Red News,* and the *Voice of Thaksin* (Title printed in English). The Red News is still in circulation. The *Voice of Thaksin,* however, never reopened after being shut down following the May 2010 government crackdown.

The newspaper's stated mission is to bring people together from all sides and views within the movement to fight for democracy, and against double standard and injustice (interview with the editor, 2011). The editor described the newspaper's approach as moderate or adopting a "middle way," aiming first for Red Shirts but also hoping to appeal to people who are undecided or uninformed about the movement.

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[66] This author was unable to obtain an independent figure on circulation of *Mahaprachachon*.

[67] Interview with the editor Prasak Musikapong.

[68] Mahaprachachon used to be called *Kwam Jing Wan Nee* (ความจริงวันนี้) or "The Truth Today." It was shut down by the government after the Rachaprasong crackdown in 2010 and re-launched a short time later under the name *Mahaprachachon*.

Data collection included an analysis of six issues of *Mahaprachachon*, selected at regular interviews of one per month, from January through June, 2011. The third issue of each month was selected for analysis. This allowed for adequate spacing out of issues, ensuring that major issues and events occurring each month would be captured in the analysis. It also ensured that the June issue would be the last issue released before the election. The selection of one issue per month provides a broad sample of the topics and messages in the newspaper during the lead-up to the election and allows for sufficient material with which to identify and describe the major frames and track the progression of frames over the study period.

3.6   TRIANGULATING FRAME RESONANCE AND FAILURE

In Chapter 8, several Red and Yellow Shirt frames identified and traced over the study period are explored more deeply to identify and understand their resonance. Using data and historical analysis, along with counter-factual analysis, this chapter seeks an explanation of why and how some frames developed by both the Red Shirts and the Yellow Shirts during the study period where successful, while other frames were not. Multiple interviews with movement leaders and organizers of the Red Shirts movement, rank and file members of both the Red Shirts and the Yellow Shirts movements, politicians, activists, and academics were conducted as part of this research effort.

CHAPTER 4   CONTEMPORARY THAI POLITICS AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

Since the end of absolute monarchy, Thailand has experienced a struggle between traditional sources of power in the form of the monarchy, military, and bureaucracy, and emergent, constitutional sources of power in the form of the parliament, political parties, and elections.[69] Before the end of absolute rule, the Thai monarchy had complete control and its directives were carried out by the bureaucracy. The end of absolute rule came in the form of a coup in 1932 against then King Prajadhipok carried out by military officers. Following the coup, the monarchy was emasculated, and the military and civilian leadership shared power for a short time. This arrangement soon crumbled, and the military took control of the country.

In the decades that followed, the monarchy's influence in Thai politics declined. Conversely, constitutional sources of power grew in importance, supported by rising income and education levels, and Western influence. The monarchy saw a resurgence in their influence during the 1950s under the Sarit regime.[70] The growing influence of the monarchy and electoral institutions converged during the early 1970s, corresponding with a weakening of the military. From that point onwards, the key

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[69] Samudavanija, Chai-anan (1982). *The Thai Young Turks*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Singapore. Page 82.

[70] Connors, Michael Kelly. (2007). *Democracy and National Identity in Thailand*. NIAS Press. Page 48.

power struggle in Thai politics would be between these three influential, and very different, institutions, against the backdrop of rapid economic growth, industrialization, globalization and internal migration. This power struggle has become more pronounced in recent years as constitutional sources of power have become more firmly entrenched in Thai society. The other important piece of this story has been the "people". The ascendency of the middle and peasant classes have led to new self-identities, aspirations, and demands on the state. These institutional, demographic and economic developments created the conditions for the emergence of Thaksin as a political force, and for the emergence of the Red and Yellow Shirt movements. Moreover, they provided opportunities for political and movement entrepreneurs to mobilize support for different visions of Thai politics.

This chapter briefly follows the evolution of Thai politics from the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932, up until the coup of 2006. It traces the origins of these power struggles and class dynamics and shows how they contributed to Thaksin's rise and subsequent ouster, and the contentious politics and deepening societal divisions that followed. This chapter entails a historical analysis of the literature on Thai politics, drawing from the works of both Thai and Western scholars, as well as from newspaper articles, and interviews.

4.1   THAILAND'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT (PRE-THAKSIN)

The modern era of Thai politics began in 1932 with the coup that ended absolute monarchy. The coup leaders were junior officer Piboon Songkram and lawyer and radical Pridi Panomyong. As the children of elites, they were schooled in France, where they were influenced by communist ideology and a desire to see the end of the

absolute monarchy. While in France, they formed a small group to lay the groundwork for achieving that end. Upon returning to Thailand, they continued to build support, due partly to King Prajadhipok's slashing of the military budget in favor of his own special guard The Flying Tigers.[71] The group eventually led a successful coup against King Prajadipok, bringing Thailand into an era of constitutional monarchy. Instead of throwing out the monarchy, the coup leaders retained the institution within the newly formed constitutional political system. Thak Chaloemtiarana argues that this was done purposely because the coup group saw constitutionalism as lacking legitimacy because it was foreign to most Thais at the time. They maintained the prestige of the monarchy as they believed that this additional legitimacy was necessary.[72]

Over the next several decades, the Thai bureaucracy, led by the military, was the dominant power on the Thai political landscape. Writing in the 1960s, Fred Riggs coined the term Bureaucratic Polity to describe a system in which the bureaucratic setting was the exclusive domain of politics and policy, and that other forces, such as business sector, NGOs, and the media were barred from meaningful participation in the political system.[73] Thailand's government was controlled by successive autocrats drawn from a pool of senior military leaders who increasingly aligned with cliques stretching across the bureaucracy and the monarchy. Many more coups would take place during this period as a result of competing military-civilian power cliques

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[71] Mead, Kullada Kesboonchoo. (2004). *The Rise and Decline of Absolutism*. Routledge. Page 144-147.

[72] Chaloemtiarana, Thak (2007). *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism*. Cornell Southeast Asian Program Publications. Pages 3-5.

[73] Riggs, Fred. (1966) *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity*. Honolulu: East-West Center Press.

comprising professional civilian and military bureaucrats. Thongchai characterized

the post-monarchy period of 1932 through the 1992 democratic uprising as a struggle

between the role and power of the military as opposed to the parliamentary system.[74]

This transformation in governance in Thailand from absolute monarchy to

bureaucratic polity changed the role of the Thai people from one of subjects of a

King, to citizens with rights and privileges, opening the door to greater participation.

In 1973, Thailand's bureaucratic polity began to change, when a student uprising and

growing middle class discontent pushed military dictator Thanom Kittikachorn out of

office. King Bhumibol Adulyadej appointed a new civilian-led administration and

elections were held for the first time, strengthening the power of the people and non-

governmental organizations. The 1973 uprising was the first time that civil society

groups played an important role in Thai politics.[75] Thailand's political system opened

up during the period from 1973 until 1976, before a military coup reinstalled

autocratic rule. This brief window called "The Democratic Period" would serve as a

point of reference in Red Shirt framing efforts during the post-Thaksin era. Growing

public participation, and efforts to mobilize and educate rural peasants would

eventually lead to a rural political awakening and strong support for democracy in

later decades.

New Voices in Thai Politics: People Power and Right-wing Mobilization (1973-1976)
By the early 1970s, several factors had contributed to a greater role for citizens and

NGOs in Thai politics. The number of students in universities in Thailand rose tenfold

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[74] Winichakul, Thongchai. (2008) "Toppling Democracy." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. Vol. 38, No. 1, February 2008, pp. 11–37.

[75] Thabchumpon, Naruemon. (1998). "Grassroots NGOs and Political Reform in Thailand: Democracy behind Civil Society." *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, Page: 42.

during the period of the 1950s to the early 1970s, and more students were going abroad to study in the United States. Moreover, the number of U.S. soldiers in Thailand was 50,000 during the early 1970s. Incomes also rose in the region during the 1970s, even though the pace of the rise was much less than in other regions of Thailand. These developments, Ukrist Pathmanand, argues, increased the spread of democratic and participatory ideas.[76] There was also a rapid rise in the number of NGOs. Together these trends and developments led to pressure for greater public participation in Thai politics. The country's royally appointed administration in 1973 was left-leaning, and socialist parties won majorities in many provincial elections across Thailand's poor regions in the North and Northeast. It was a period of increasing pluralism in Thai politics.[77] A surge of socialism in Thailand that had begun during the 1960s as a result of the spread of communism across Southeast Asia, allowed communist ideology to establish a strong foothold in the Northeastern region of Thailand (Isan), where the GDP per capita was one-third of the national average and where there was a history of conflict with the Thai central government.[78]

As left leaning parties gained strength in multiple provinces, labor unions and NGOs pushed social justice agendas, the most contested of which was land reform. During

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[76] Pathmanand, Ukrist. Globalization and Democratic Development in Thailand: The New Path of the Military, Private Sector, and Civil Society. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*. Vol. 23, No. 1 (April 2001), Pages: 32-34. For background on the growth of provincial civil society groups and their role in the development of democracy in Thailand, See: Chaloemtiarana, Thak (2007). *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism*. Cornell Southeast Asian Program Publications. Pages 3-5.

[77] Zimmerman, Robert F. Thailand 1975. *Asia Survey*, Vol. 16, No. 2. (Feb., 1976), pp. 159-172.

[78] Luther, Hans U. Peasants and State in Contemporary Thailand. *International Journal of Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 4, (Winter 1978-79), pp. 1-120. Also see: Harald Uhlih. (1995). The Problem-Region: In Regions and National Integration in Thailand, 1892-1992. In Regions and National Integration in Thailand, 1892-1992. Volker Grabowsky eds. Page 141. Drawing in data on GDP per capita in the 1980s, Harald states that the GDP per capita of the Isan region was 1/3 of the national average for 1987 and 1/6 of the Bangkok region

the 1970s, land ownership in Thailand was highly concentrated among a small

number of wealthy rural and Bangkok elites. Landless farmers, supported by

university students and NGOs, began a movement to pressure the government to

redistribute the land more equitably and put in place laws that protected peasants from

landowners, establishing organizations such as, the Farmer's Federation of Thailand.

Landowners reacted violently to calls for land reform, hiring armed gunman to

assassinate and intimidate student activists and farmers.[79]

Undeterred by these assaults, land reform advocates increased their protests.

Landowners responded with their own protests, joined by institutional supporters,

such as the police. The result was that the fragile democratic coalition government

was beset on all sides by violence and protests. Conservative forces exaggerated state

of the political climate in the country as chaotic and dangerous as a pretext to

encourage the military to take control. The climatic event took place on October 6,

1976 when student activists, who had shut down Thammast University in Bangkok to

protest the return from exile of former dictator Thanom Kittikachorn, were massacred

by right-wing paramilitaries trained and equipped by elements of the Thai military.

Unofficial accounts say that the death toll surpassed 100, the vast majority of who

were students.[80] Those who were not killed fled to Isan, where they joined the

growing communist movement. The student activists were hunted across Thailand as

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[79] Haberkorn, Tyrell. (2011) *Revolution Interrupted: Farmers, Students, Law, and Violence in Northern Thailand.* The University of Wisconsin Press. Page 155.

[80] Ungpakorn, Puey. "Violence and the Military Coup in Thailand" Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, vol. 9, no. 3 (July–September, 1977), Page: 8.

part of the new military regime's war on communism. Following the massacre, the military orchestrated a coup.

While brief, this period of widening public participation lived on in the public's memory and was called upon in the framing efforts of Red Shirt leaders, many of whom were student activists during this period and had spent many years in the jungles of Isan fighting the Thai military as an armed insurgency.[81]

Haberkorn called this period a "revolution interrupted" to signify that Thailand was progressing towards a more inclusive system and significant role and voice for rural poor, but that elite violent repression reversed this progress.[82] Thongchai said of this period that it was the beginning of true democracy in Thailand.[83] While they failed to achieve everything they had envisioned, student and farmer activists had succeeded in opening the political space. It would be another 16 years before a new challenge by the people led to a major democratic breakthrough.

The growing Bangkok middle class played an important role in both the uprising in 1973 and subsequent 1976 crackdown. The middle class, favoring a new constitution and greater liberties, supported the students in the 1973 protests against the Thanom regime.[84] The new administration that replaced Thanom was pressured by farmers and student activists to enact socialist reforms. The rural and urban elite rebelled violently

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[81] This list includes UDD core member Weng Tojirakarn and his wife, UDD Chairwoman Tida Tawornseth.

[82] Haberkorn, Tyrell. (2011) *Revolution Interrupted: Farmers, Students, Law, and Violence in Northern Thailand.* The University of Wisconsin Press. Page 158.

[83] Winichakul, Thongchai. (2008) "Toppling Democracy." *Journal of Contemporary Asia.* Vol. 38, No. 1, February 2008, pp. 11–37.

[84] Anderson, Ben (1977). "Withdraw Symptoms: Social and Cultural Aspects of the October 1976 Coup." *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 9, 3. Page 15.

against these reforms, alarming the middle class, which began to turn against the government and protestors. Structural issues played a role in the withdrawing of support. During this period, the Thai economy performed poorly due to decreases in foreign investment resulting from the US government's post-Vietnam War drawdown. A global recession and rising oil prices made social reforms less palatable to the middle class. Right-wing forces also appealed to middle class anxiety of political and economy instability by frequently highlighting the threat of communism and the chaotic state of the country, conveniently leaving out that the latter was actually caused by right-wing killings of farmers and student activists.[85] By the time the 1976 coup happened, the Middle Class strongly opposed the government.

From 1973 onward the influence of civil society groups, elected politicans and business interests rose significantly. Power was no longer the exclusive domain of the military, royalists and buearucrats. Thongchai, who was himself a student activist during the period, argued that the 1976 coup was a turning point in Thai contemporary history as it signaled the ascendency of parliamentary politics and a retreat by the military.[86] The major struggle after this period would be to determine the shape of electoral politics. Another major development that came out of this period was that the monarchy had gained more political influence by installing a new government, and also by successfully cultivating the image that the King had bestowed democracy on the people.

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[85] Haberkorn, Tyrell. (2011) *Revolution Interrupted: Farmers, Students, Law, and Violence in Northern Thailand.* The University of Wisconsin Press. Page 158.
[86] Winichakul, Thongchai. (2008) "Toppling Democracy." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. Vol. 38, No. 1, February 2008, Page 17.

Over the next 15 years, Thailand's middle class grew significantly, industrialization

continued at a strong pace, and export-led economic policies created new

opportunities for trade and development. Education levels also rose rapidly. During

the 1980s and 1990s, Thailand's economy was one of the fastest growing in the

world.[87] This growth led to the expanded size and influence of the business sector.

While Bangkok and its suburbs developed at a dramatic pace during this period, even

those living in poverty in rural areas of Thailand saw some improvement in their lives

during this period.[88]

People Power Returns (1992)

The year 1992 would be one of the most significant in Thailand's contemporary

history. During this year, pro-democracy street protests by a constellation of civil

society, student activist, and media groups, as well as the urban middle class,

pressured ruling General Suchinda Kraprayoon to call elections.[89] The conflict of

1973-1976 had been between the rural poor and student activists, empowered by

socialist philosophy and organization, and the rural and urban elite, nervous about

losing wealth and power to a rising underclass. The backdrop was middle class

dissatisfaction with military rule, which then turned to alarm in the face of a

worsening economic and political climate.

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[87] http://www.tradingeconomics.com/thailand/gdp. Thailand's GDP nearly doubled between 1988 (USD 50.53 Billion) and 1992 (98.23 Billion). There were several years from 1988 through 1991 in which Thailand's GDP grew by more than 10% per year. See Hewison.

[88] Hutaserani, Suganya (1990) "The Trends of Income Inequality and Poverty and a Profile of the Urban Poor in Thailand." *TDRI Quarterly Review*. Vol. 5 No. 4 December 1990, pp. 14-19.

[89] LoGerfo, Jim; King, Daniel. (1996). *Toward Democratic Stability*. Volume 7, Number 1. pp. 102-117.

The political conflict of 1992 was different from the period of 1973 to 1976. It was a struggle between the growing and assertive middle class that called for clean politics and an end to political corruption, and the military and royalist elite, against the backdrop of rapid economic growth and growth of the middle class.[90] In 1992 students also served as the vanguard but large street protests were comprised mostly of middle class protestors, who took to the streets in early May of 1992 following an election in which the military backed parties lost to a collection of pro-democracy parties. General Suchinda, a military strongman, had previously agreed to step down if his party lost the election.

When Suchinda lost and refused to step down, protesters demanded democratic government and free and fair elections. Protests were held in more than 30 provinces across the country.[91] This mobilization of the middle class was called the May Uprising. On May 17-19, the military responded in a bloody crackdown on protestors. More than 100 died or disappeared, and several protest leaders, including General Chamlong Sirimung, leader of one of the pro-democracy parties, were arrested. Following this, in a now famous event, the leader of the ant-dictator movement, General Chamlong, and General Suchinda were summoned by His Majesty Thailand's King Bumibol Adulidaej. The two leaders sat at his feet as King Bumibol criticized Suchinda for his actions and intimated that he should step down. Major street protests by the middle class and the King's personal intervention were credited

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[90] Anek Laothamatas. 1993. "Sleeping Giant Awakens? The Middle Class in Thai Politics." *Asian Review*. No. 7: 78-125.

[91] LoGerfo, James P. "Beyond Bangkok: The Provincial Middle Class in the 1992 protests." In Ruth McVey (ed.) *Money and Power in Provincial Thailand*, Copehangen: NIAS, 2000. Most of the protestors in the provincial protests were middle class Thais.

with bringing to an end the period of dictatorship in Thailand, which had existed

nearly unbroken for more than 50 years. Thailand was moving into a new democratic

era. Suchit Bunbongkarn argues that the May uprising in 1992 created a further

division between the urban and rural people because the urban middle class for the

first time had articulated a common vision for Thai politics that emphasized clean

politics and liberty, which put them further apart politically from the rural people,

who were still focused on economic survival.[92] In the following decades the

development of a unified class identity among the middle class and rural poor would

continue as politicians and the media would play on these differences and as these

groups began respond in a more unified way to events and developments in the

broader society.

Thailand's Democratic Transition

During the 1990s Thailand's polity had evolved into a parliamentary democracy

managed by an alliance between the bureaucracy and an ascendant political class of

elected parliamentarians and political bosses.[93] From 1992 until 2006, several

democratically elected governments led Thailand. During this time there were

numerous allegations of political corruption. Some administrations, such as that of

provincial leader Chatichai Choonhavan, of the Chart Thai Party, were widely

accused of vote buying, corruption, and cronyism to the point that Chatichai's

administration was called the "Buffet Cabinet".

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[92] Bunbongkarn, Suchit. (1992) "Thailand in 1992: In Search of a Democratic Order." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 2, A Survey of Asia in 1992: Part II (Feb., 1993), pp. 218-223. Page 221.
[93] Painter, Martin. Thaksinocracy or Managerialization?. Reforming the Thai bureaucracy. Working Paper Series. No. 76. May 2005. *Southeast Asian Research Centre*.

The trend of provincial politicians rising to power was concerning to royalists and the military, who viewed them as a threat to their continued political domination. In response, they introduced the discourse of Clean Politics, which highlighted the importance of moral and ethical leadership against the moral decay of corruption and vote-buying.[94] The introduction of this discourse, Anek argues, advanced the interests of the monarchy and military by deemphasizing the legitimacy of electoral institutions. This enhanced the position of traditional institutions as an equivalent or greater source of legitimacy.[95] He casts doubt on the elite and royalist discourse by pointing out that Chatichai's government was not as corrupt as some might have suggested but that the military was able to use corruption as a pretext to mobilize middle class support against Chatichai and eventually stage a coup with the claim of saving democracy.

In 1997, a new constitution was passed, lauded by the West for its progressiveness. It was initiated by royalists, who Tongchai argues, sought to strengthen other institutions as checks on the corruption of elected leaders.[96] It included, among other elements, a major role for NGOs, extensive safeguards against abuses of executive power, and the formation of an independent anti-corruption agency. It also increased

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[94] Since the early 1990s, vote buying was rampant and the costs of elections increased significantly. It was said that the cost of buying an MP's support during the late 1990s and early 2000s was 90 million baht. Phatharathananunth, Somchai. (2008). "The Thai Rak Thai Party and Elections in Northeastern Thailand." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. Vol. 38, No. 1, February.

[95] Laothamatas, Anek eds (1997). *Democratization in Southeast Asia*. St. Martin's Press.

[96] Winichakul, Thongchai. (2008) "Toppling Democracy." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. Vol. 38, No. 1, February 2008, pp. 11–37.

the scope of the Thai judiciary. For these reasons, it was heralded as the most democratic constitution Thailand had ever produced.[97]

Moreover, the 1997 Constitution significantly strengthened the power of the executive by introducing a Party List into the election process. The Party List allowed the party to exert control over a portion of Members of Parliament (MPs) and also choose from within the party list MPs to become ministers. In governments before 1997, the prime minister had been weak and beholden to ministers who, if sacked, became opponents in the parliament. Under the 1997 constitution, once a minister was sacked, they would not be able to assume their posts as MPs. The constitution strengthened the prime minister by making the cabinet more beholden and thus streamlining the implementation of policy.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, while the elite in Bangkok still held power in Thailand's political system, they were sharing it increasingly with an assertive middle class. Political parties had a minimal role in the first decade of democracy in Thailand, MPs shifting loyalties based on which party offered the highest financial rewards. The Democrat Party, Thailand's oldest, was much more cohesive and organized, and used this to their advantage to form coalition governments twice during the 1990s. One upstart party during the 1990s was the Phalang Dharma Party, led by charismatic former general and anti-government protest leader Chamlong Srimuang, who ran on a platform of morality and religious values that earned him early electoral success as the governor of Bangkok. Following his term, the party's

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[97] Phongpaichit, Pasuk; Piriyarangsan, Sungsidh. (1994). Corruption & Democracy in Thailand. Silkworm Books.

fortunes began to wane.[98] Looking for new blood and an infusion of funds, Chamlong

took political neophyte and immensely successful businessman Thaksin Shinawatra

under his wing. This move would usher in a new period in Thai politics. Thaksin's

political strategy of winning votes through the development of social programs would

change the nature of the social contract between Thai citizens and the central

government, and engender heightened tensions between socioeconomic groups and

elite factions. Soon after entering politics Thaksin established his own party called

Thai Rak Thai (Thais love Thais) and prepared to compete in the upcoming election.

Setting the Stage

There were several factors that set the stage for the emergence of Thaksin Shinawatra

and the Red Shirts as major political forces in Thailand. One of these factors was the

1997 Asian Financial Crisis, which decimated Thailand's economy. In the two years

between 1997 and 1999, Thailand's GDP fell from USD 181 billion to USD 111

billion, a drop of almost 39%.[99] While Thailand would rebound within five years, the

poor suffered disproportionately from the Asian Financial Crisis and the public's

confidence in Thailand's political leadership was badly shaken.

In the ten-year period from 1992 until 2001, the Thai economy had undergone a

period of significant growth, followed by catastrophic collapse, as outlined in Figure

4.1-1. Thailand's political leaders struggled to pull the country out of recession and

were widely perceived as inept economic administrators. Coinciding with Thaksin's

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[98] McCargo, Duncan. (1997) *Chamlong Srimuang and the New Thai Politics*. New York, St. Martin's Press.

[99] To put that in perspective, the US economy contracted by a smaller amount (27%) during the Great Depression.

entry into politics, there were calls for new leadership with strong economic
credentials. As one of the richest man in Thailand, and head of an extremely
successful telecom conglomerate, Thaksin had instant credibility when he spoke of
being able to rescue the Thai economy.[100]
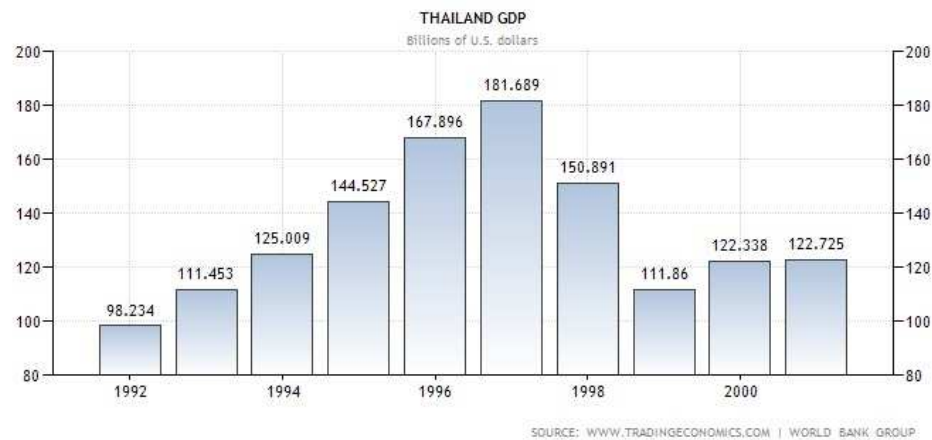
Figure 4.1-1. Thailand's GDP from 1992 until 2001.[101]

In addition to shattering the confidence of the public in the country's leadership, the
Asian Financial Crisis (and the major economic boom that immediately preceded it)
exposed significant corruption that had allowed many businesses with connections to
government officials to borrow billions of baht from the Thai government. When they
defaulted on the loans following the Crisis, the government was forced to take
responsibility for repayment. During this period there was significant public attention
to cases of corruption.[102] Later analyses suggested that overly cozy relationships

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[100] Montesano, Michael. Thailand in 2001: Learning to Live with Thaksin? *Asian Survey*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January/February 2002), pp. 90-99
[101] http://www.tradingeconomics.com/thailand/gdp-growth
[102] Phongpaichit, Pasuk and Sungsidh Piriyarangsan. (1994). *Corruption and Democracy in Thailand*. Bangkok: The Political Economy Centre, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University. Interestingly, in the first edition of this book, Pasuk and Sungsidh state that corruption in Thailand is

between business and government worsened the impact of the Crisis.[103] The

Democrat Party presided over a sluggish economy following the Asian Financial

Crisis. The poor perception of the Democrat's economic stewardship during this

period, and the disproportionate impact of the Crisis on the poor, were said to be the

two major factors in the impressive showing by the Thai Rak Thai Party in the 2001

election.[104]

But there were several other factors behind Thaksin's successful rise to power.

Thaksin was able to frame himself as a Thailand success story. He had grown up

outside of the political power center of Bangkok, and cultivated the image of a self-

made man who came from humble beginnings to become one of the richest men in

Thailand.[105] He won the support of Thais who were looking for an able administrator

of the country's economy. Before Thaksin's political ascendency, Thailand's rural

poor in Isan had not expected much from politicians beyond buying their votes for

several hundred baht each election cycle. Pasuk said of vote buying and campaigning

that more was spent on the 1996 election cycle in Thailand than was spent in the

United States on the same election cycle.[106] When Thaksin campaigned on a platform

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generally accepted by the public as it has its roots in the traditional Sakdina system under the absolute
monarchy. In the second edition, which came out a mere two years later, the authors reflected on the
enormous wave of media attention and public interest in corruption scandals.

[103] Ottens, Nick. "Reflections on the Asian Financial Crisis." *Atlantic Sentinel*. July 11, 2010. In this
article, Ottens reviews several books and articles written on the causes of the Asian Financial Crisis
and he points the finger partly at the moral hazard created when banks had unclear lending practices
that included lending to politically connected businesses. When the businesses could not pay back the
loans, the result was a loss of confidence in lending institutions.

[104] Change and Continuity in the Thai Political System. Ockley, James. *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 4.
(Jul-Aug, 2003), pp. 663-680.

[105] Phongpaichit, Pasuk; Baker, Chris. (2004) *Thaksin: The Business of Politics in Thailand*. Silkworm
Books.

[106] Phongpaichit, Pasuk. Thailand's Illegal Economy and Public Policy. Seminar paper delivered at the
Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, November 1999.
http://www.google.co.th/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CBwQFjAA&url=htt

of introducing new social programs, there was significant interest among Thailand's poor but it did not translate into strong rural support for the TRT as it would in later elections after Thaksin delivered on his election promises. Vote-buying was still necessary and due in large part to the efforts of Thaksin and the TRT, vote buying reached unprecedented levels during the 2001 election cycle.[107]

The other development during the 1990s that set the stage for Thaksin's emergence was persistent poverty in large sections of the country. Poverty rates had declined steeply throughout the 1990s but the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis halted that reduction. In the years immediately following the crisis, poverty rates began to climb, rising by 1% in 1998 and 3% in 1999.[108] Some Thai academics writing shortly after the Crisis lamented that the poor would have to bear most of the economic costs of the Crisis in the way of higher unemployment, lower incomes, and higher costs of living.[109]

The final development that set the stage for Thaksin's emergence began during the early 1980s with the growing influence of large Bangkok-based businesses in Thai politics. During the early period of political party development, parties had been largely patronage based. Politicians were charismatic individuals with resources, who

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p%3A%2F%2Fpioneer.netserv.chula.ac.th%2F~ppasuk%2Fillegaleconomy.doc&ei=F180VdqfA4ajug
TypIGoAQ&usg=AFQjCNHKxOmfvI1dX6KEPkFbI1H7Sk-DTA&bvm=bv.91071109,d.c2E

[107] Phongpaichit, Pasuk. *Thailand's Illegal Economy and Public Policy*. Presentation at the Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, November 1999. Page 6. Also See: Phatharathananunth, Somchai. (2006). *Civil Society and Democratization: Social Movements in Northeast Thailand*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS). Somchai Phatharathananunth. 2001. "Civil Society in Northeast Thailand: The Struggle of the Small Scale Farmers' Assembly of Isan." Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds.

[108] http://www.tradingeconomics.com/thailand/gdp-growth

[109] Thailand in 1999: A Royal Jubilee, Economic Recovery, and Political Reform. Bowornwathana, Bidhya. Asian Survey, Vol. 40, No. 1 A Survey of Asia in 1999. (Jan. – Feb., 2000), pp. 87-97)

helped less well-off clients in return for their loyalty. Multiple political parties were formed to attempt to win control of the government machinery, which would then be used to enrich the winning party or coalition.

Most parties during this period lacked grassroots support among the people.[110] Party allegiance was weak and significant finances were required to maintain party cohesiveness and attract local notables to campaign under a party's banner. Party bosses needed to court and win over MPs, which required giving them large sums of money. Party leaders began approaching wealthy businesspeople to invest in their parties. Money was also needed to purchase votes from the people and vote buying become extremely expensive. This further reinforced the need for parties to have the involvement of wealthy businesspeople. Concurrently, during the 1980s, business executives began taking a more active interest in politics because of the growing impact and opportunities from government policies towards trade and investment.[111] These developments caused the cost of financing elections to sky-rocket. Maisrikrod and McCargo estimated that during the 1990s an MP election cost between 10 million and 20 million baht.[112]

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[110] Siripan Nogsuan Sawasdee. (2006). *Thai Political Parties in the Age of Reform*. Institute of Public Policy Studies.

[111] Chang Noi. "Billionairism and the Middle Class Beast*." The Nation*. September 3, 2001. Chang Noi, the pseudonym of a well-informed contributor to The Nation, a large English language daily newspaper based in Bangkok, said that influential business people saw that they could have an impact on government policy and guide it in a direction that they wanted.

[112] Maisrikord, Surin; McCargo, Duncan. (1997) Electoral Politics: Commericalisation and Exclusion". In *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation*. Kevin Hewison eds. The authors estimate that MP candidates would have to spend between 10-25 million baht to finance their campaign, with roughly 1/3 of that going to vote buying.

Siripan Sawasdee described these developments as a critical stage in the evolution of

political parties in Thailand in which new capitalist groups were taking over

parties.[113] During this period, businesspeople rose to key positions in their parties as

the influence of money on election outcomes increased. While business and politics

had previously been dominated by Bangkok business interests, during the 1980s and

early 1990s, provincial business interests started to make inroads. This provided a

counterpoint to the old Bangkok business elite, which had previously been supportive

of military-led governments.[114]

Political Development in the Northeast and North

To fully understand the development and framing of the Red Shirts movement, it is

important to explore the political and economic history of the Isan region of Thailand.

This region provided the political and cultural opportunity structures that led to the

emergence of Thaksin as a potent political force. It also contributed greatly to the

ideology and framing of the Red Shirt movement. Charles Keyes said of the link

between the history of Isan and the recent Red Shirts movement, "The confrontation

between the Red Shirts and the government in March – May of 2010 was the most

recent in a long history of confrontation between rural northeasterners and the Thai

state."[115] Thailand's Northeast region is called Isan and is the most populous region of

Thailand. It is home to approximately one-third of the population, and is also the

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[113] Siripan Nogsuan Sawasdee. (2006). *Thai Political Parties in the Age of Reform*. Institute of Public Policy Studies. Siripan's argument that business groups currently dominate the political party was a clear critique of Thaksin's growing political power.

[114] Thai Democracy, 2001: Out of Equlibrium. Case, William F. *Asia Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 3. (May – Jun,, 2001), pp. 525-547. Also see: Or Siripan Nogsuan Sawasdee. 2006. *Thai Political Parties in the Age of Reform*. Bangkok, Thailand: Institute of Public Policy Studies.

[115] Keyes, Charles. (2014) *Finding Their Voice: Northeastern Villagers and the Thai State*. Silkworm Books. Page 89.

poorest region of the country, with an annual per capita GDP of USD 1,500.[116]

Figure 4.1-2 outlines the average GDP per capita of the different regions of Thailand from 1995 through 2013. [117]

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Siamese empire underwent a period of territorial expansion, taking over much of what is today Isan and administering a Siamese government over what were predominately ethnic Lao and Khmer people. These people had previously enjoyed long periods of autonomy, during which they had established their own kingdom in Nakon Rachasima. Over the next several centuries, under Siamese control, Isan experienced

Average real GDP per capita by region, 1995–2011

Figure 4.1-2. GDP in North and Northeast Thailand. The average GDP of the Northeast and Northern Thailand was a small fraction of the GDP in Bangkok.

many peasant uprisings against corrupt and exploitative royal governments, who

extracted resources to support a rapidly expanding and modernizing bureaucracy.[118]

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[116] In the 2005 election, the Isan region was responsible for more than one-third of all of the MP seats in Thailand (136 out of 400). Of the 136 MP seats from this region, the TRT Party won 126 of those seats. For discussion of GDP by region, see: http://www.tradingeconomics.com/thailand/gdp-per-capita.

[117] CEIC Data www.ceicdata.com

[118] Keyes, Charles. (1967). *Isan: regionalism in northeastern Thailand.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University. Page 19.

The confrontation between the northeast region and Bangkok government gradually led to the development of a unique Isan regional identity.[119]

During the late 1940s, having removed Pridi Panomyoung from power in a coup d'etat, his former ally Piboon sought to consolidate power by imprisoning and assassinating Pridi supporters, many of whom came from the Northeast, using as justification the claim that they were planning a communist uprising. The impact of this crackdown on Pridi supporters from the northeast led to belief that the central Thai government was discriminating against them.[120] During the 1950s, under the Sarit military regime, Isan became an important area of concern for Bangkok because of the spread of communism across Southeast Asia.

In order to strengthen its hold on the Northeast, the Thai government undertook a campaign of indoctrination and pacification of the Isan region. They sought to create a shared notion of Thai identity stemming from three pillars (The Nation, Religion, and the Monarchy), promoting the Thai monarchy as a buttress against communism, and investing in agricultural and infrastructure development.[121] The frontlines for this campaign was in the school system, where early efforts mandated at least four years of public education for peasants in the Northeast and North. The curriculum was a Bangkok-centric interpretation of Thai history, geography and culture, and significant education about the role and importance of the monarchy.[122] Educational initiatives

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[119] Keyes, Charles. (2014) *Finding Their Voice: Northeastern Villagers and the Thai State*. Silkworm Books. Page 48.
[120] *Ibid.* Page 75.
[121] Connors, Michael Kelly. (2007). *Democracy and National Identity in Thailand*. NIAS Press.
[122] Keyes, Charles. (1967). *Isan: regionalism in northeastern Thailand.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University. Page 19.

regarding the King were successful in building a bond between the people and King

Bumibol, and infrastructure development made it easier for the central government to

administer the region, and also led to modest development, however, ethnographic

studies of people in the region in the late 1970s showed that Isan people still felt

pulled between two cultural and ethnic worlds. Writing in 1979 about the people of

Isan, Hans U. Luther stated that the Isan people think of themselves partly as Lao and

share many cultural and historical similarities and affinities with the Lao people.

> *"They say: "We are Laotian people but Thai citizens!" (pen phu lao*
> *tae sat thai!). They still claim that Laos is the home country of their*
> *ancestors and that the Mekong River has never been a real "border"*
> *to separate them from their relatives on the other side. These people*
> *have a specific regional identity that is neither Lao nor Thai but*
> *genuinely "Northeastern" (khon pakh iIsan)… [123]*

While the economic boom helped improve lives in the northeast, Keyes (2014) argues

that the boom resulted in central-government overuse of many natural resources in the

region. Isan people had very little access to resources. Local movements sprung up

across the Northeast to claim the resources of the region for the local people.[124] While

leftist parties made considerable progress in local and provincial elections during this

period, Luther believes that opposition to Bangkok, and not socialist credentials, were

the most important factors in voting decisions, and that candidate winning potential

was predicated on the intensity of their opposition to Bangkok.[125]

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[123] Luther, Hans U. (1978) "Peasants and State in Contemporary Thailand." *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 1-120.

[124] Keyes, Charles. (2014) *Finding Their Voice: Northeastern Villagers and the Thai State*. Silkworm Books. Page 48.

[125] From Luther, Hans U. (1967). *Isan: regionalism in northeastern Tha*iland. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University. Page 19. This is from Page 47

The economic boom in Bangkok led to an influx of northeastern people into Bangkok to find seasonal work, where they were treated as inferior by urban Thais. In one village in Northeastern Thailand, a survey of local people conducted in 1963 revealed that nearly 70% of men and women in their 30s had previously worked in Bangkok. Keyes concludes that of those who worked in Bangkok, they brought back with them to the villages feeling of cultural and economic disparity and discrimination. This led to further development of a regional identity.

Following the coup in 1976, the people of Isan were once again left out of politics. According to Harald Uhlig from 1960 until 1986, the Bangkok and central section of the country received roughly 80% of all infrastructure investment from the central government, showing how little investment was earmarked for the heavily populated Northeast region.[126] Despite neglect at the hands of the central government, with the transition to electoral democracy, the north and northeast Thailand, with their large population bases, became much more important politically. The politics of rural Thailand was still largely patronage based, and national political parties rushed to buy MP allegiances and votes in those regions. To win control of the country, political parties knew that they must carry the north and northeast. Doing this required parties to sponsor local politicians to run as knowledge of the candidate was one of the most important voter decision factors. This led to the emergence of provincial parties and politicians as potent political forces.

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[126] Harald Uhlih. (1995). "The Problem-Region: In Regions and National Integration in Thailand, 1892-1992." Pages 140-142. In *Regions and National Integration in Thailand*, 1892-1992. Volker Grabowsky eds.

The Bangkok elite and middle class resisted this rising competitor to their political hegemony created by the spread of democracy to the lower classes. Their resistance to this new phase of Thai democracy widened the schism between urban and rural culture and interests. The common belief within the establishment blamed the rural poor's selfishness and limited understanding of democracy as the cause of rampant vote buying and the election of unqualified leaders to run the country.[127] Some academics disagreed with this view, claiming that Isan peoples' willingness to sell their votes was an attempt to acquire symbolic benefits in a region that was historically ignored and underdeveloped.[128]

Somchai claims that structural factors of socioeconomic development and democratization provided much material for the development of rural Isan identity and the emergence of the Red Shirts. He argues that the emergence of the Red Shirts was due to two important structural factors: rural socio-economic development and

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[127] Nelson, Michael H. (2012). "Some Observations on Democracy in Thailand." Hong Kong: Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong. (Working Paper Series No. 125) 71 pp. http://www.cityu.edu.hk/search. Michael Nelson had this to say regarding the Bangkok elite's perception of rural citizens. "The great majority of the Thai people, especially the great majority of rural and small-town dwellers, have long been seen by the Bangkok-based aphichon as being uneducated, politically uninterested, and easily bought by election candidates. However, the socio-economic development of the last few decades—especially the political events and struggles since 2001—has been accompanied by a tremendous process of politicization. The aphichon, notably their academic segment, often overlook, deny, or play down these processes. Rather, they tend to stick with their outdated model of the Thai people, according to which the people's poverty and ignorance makes them sell their votes to their up-country patrons working for corrupt politicians."

[128] This perspective on the rural people's vote-buying strategies and thinking is prevalent among academics studying Thai culture. For this prevailing view see Somchai Phatharathananunth (2006). In addressing this topic Somchai said, "…Vote buying gives Isan villagers one of the things that they have long sought - recognition. Indeed it is basically the lack of this recognition that contributed to opposition consciousness in the past." For more on this, also see: Andrew Walker. (2012) *Thailand's Political Peasants: Power in the Modern Rural Economy*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press; Sangkhamanee, Jakkrit (2013). "Democracy of the Desired: Everyday Politics and Political Aspiration in the Contemporary Thai Countryside." *Asian Democracy Review*. Vol. 2: 5-37.

democratization.[129] While this is true to a point, Klausner and others point to culture and conflict as the key ingredients in bringing about Red Shirt mobilization. They did not mobilize solely because of the spread of democracy and rising incomes and education levels. These might have created ripe conditions, but the catalyst was movement and political entrepreneurs who made politically salient the notion of a shared identity and animated long-felt grievances.

To understand the role of the middle class in Thailand, it is important to discuss their emergence as an economic class. During the 1960s and 1970s, the middle class in Thailand grew significantly, due in part to rapid economic growth from the Thai government's strategy of export-orientated industrialization.[130] Thailand's importance as a US ally in Southeast Asia to blunt the spread of communism resulted in billions of dollars in foreign aid, which also contributed to the country's rapid growth and growth of the middle class. While US forces left the region following the Vietnam War, leading to a dramatic fall in foreign aid, the early positive impact of economic strategies and foreign aid led to an unprecedented period of growth of the middle class during the 1980s and 1990s. During the seven year period from 1985 to 1992, the white collar workforce grew from 500,000 to 4.2 million.[131] Decades of close connections to the West among this growing class also facilitated the flow of ideas and values, particularly concerning liberty, bureaucracy, protests, and the role of civil

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[129] Somchai Phatharathananunth. (2011). "Rural Transformations, Democratization and Popular Resistance: The Emergence of the Rural Red Shirts in Northeast Thailand" Paper presentation at PSA Conference, 2011.
http://www.dusanpavlovic.in.rs/mypage/Resume_files/PSA%20Conference%202011.pdf

[130] Hussey, Antonia. (1993) "Rapid Industrialization in Thailand 1986—1991." Geographical Review. Vol. 83, No. 1. pp. 14-28.

[131] Brown, Andrew. (2004). *Labor, Politics and the State in Industrializing Thailand*. Routledge Curzon.

society. The growing strength of the middle class as a collective voice was clearly demonstrated by their mobilization during the 1992 May uprising.[132]

Noted academic and political commentator Anek Laothamas remarked that a schism had formed between the urban middle class and rural people, creating a country in which two democracies operated side-by-side.[133] Calling Thailand, "A Tale of Two Democracies, Anek pointed out that the rural Thai democracy was traditional, patronage-based, and anachronistic, whereas urban democracy closely resembled that existing in the West. This theory was later supported in a study of voting practices by Bureekul and Albrittion.[134] Thaksin did not create the feeling of disaffectedness nor did he raise their political awareness. According to Jakkarit, this already existed and the people were already politically aware. Villager aspirations, self-worth and desires to access information, knowledge and resources, and partially dictating and managing political relationships both at the grassroots and at the national level predated Thaksin's emergence on the political scene.[135] Jakkrit was important in pointing out that structure alone did not explain the awakening of the peasant class. Local aspiration and pursuit of political recognition also played key roles.

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[132] Hussey, Antonia. (1993) "Rapid Industrialization in Thailand 1986—1991." *Geographical Review*. Vol. 83, No. 1. pp. 14-28.

[133] Laothamatas, Anek. (1996) "A Tale of Two Democracies: Conflicting Perceptions of Elections and Democracy in Thailand," in R.H. Taylor, eds. The Politics of Elections in Southeast Asia. New York: Cambridge University Press, 201-23.

[134] Albritton, Robert, and Thawilwadee Bureekul. (2007). "Public Opinion and Political Power in Thailand." Asian Barometer. Working Paper, 2007.

[135] Sangkhamanee, Jakkrit (2013). "Democracy of the Desired: Everyday Politics and Political Aspiration in the Contemporary Thai Countryside." *Asian Democracy Review*. Vol. 2: 5-37.

4.2   THE THAKSIN ERA

The 2001 Election

In 2001, the TRT's convincing victory at the polls elevated Thaksin to the post of

prime minister. Academics heralded the 2001 election as bringing about major gains

in democracy in Thailand.[136] Some claimed that vote buying had been less of a

problem in 2001 than in previous elections due in part to Thaksin's policy platform

and direct link to the people.[137]

Thaksin's rapid ascent was predicated on three important strategies. The first was the

use of significant financial resources. Thaksin used his financial position as one of

Thailand's wealthiest businessman to convince many MPs from different parts of the

country and particularly the Isan region, to switch to his TRT Party by making cash

payments called Transfer Fees.[138] His influence on the 2001 election made it the most

expensive in the country's history.

The second strategy he used was to differentiate his party from others and strengthen

the MPs standing for election under his party banner by offering a range of social

policies directly to voters. These policies included a revolving fund of one million

baht for every village and community in the country, and the immensely popular 30

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[136] Case, William F. (2001). "Thai Democracy, 2001: Out of Equlibrium." *Asia Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 3. (May – Jun,, 2001), pp. 525-547.
[137] Phatharathananunth, Somchai.(2008). The Thai Rak Thai Party and Elections in Northeastern Thailand.. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. Vol. 38, No. 1, February.
[138] *Ibid.*

baht health care program.[139] Writing about the connection Thaksin forged with the

rural poor, Andrew Walker remarked that, "Thaksin's unprecedented political success

owes much to the fact that he shaped his policies around rural aspirations for

productive connections with sources of power."[140] Pasuk and Baker agreed, saying

that Thaksin's populist policies came more from demand for those policies from the

people rather than any concern for the masses on the part of Thaksin.[141] These

policies made his party's MPs and Thaksin himself popular with people across

Thailand's north and Isan regions, but not enough so that he won all the seats in these

regions. Other regional parties with strong bases in the Northeast won a significant

number of seats in the 2001 election. In some provinces, the TRT won a small number

of the available seats, but overall the party's showing was significant.[142] This is

particularly true with respect to the Party List. For the first time in the 2001election,

voters not only voted for the candidate but also for the party. The TRT won

11,634,495 or 40.45% of the Party List votes, more than 2.5 million votes more than

the Democrat Party, which came in second in the national election.[143] Thaksin also

[139] Nelson, Michael. (2001) eds. Thailand's House Elections of 6 January 2001: Thaksin's Landslide Victory and Subsequent Narrow Escape. *Thailand's New Politics: KPI Yearbook 2001*. Wh Lotus. Page 23.
Contrary to popular belief, Thaksin was not the first leader to provide tangible benefits directly to the people. Chuan Leekpai of the Democrat Party had during the late 1990s introduced several policies such as a health care and debt relief schemes for the rural poor. Thaksin's breakthrough was that he dramatically increased the scale of these policies.
[140] Walker, Andrew. (2012). *Thailand's Political Peasants: Power in the Modern Rural Economy.* The University of Wisconsin Press. Page 221.
[141] Phongpaichit, Pasuk (2007). "Thai politics beyond the 2006 coup." Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. *Asian Insights. Thailand and the 2006 Coup*. 3/2007.
[142] For more on this see "The Thai Rak Thai Party and Elections in Northeastern Thailand." Somchai Phatharathananunth. Journal of Contemporary Asia - Vol. 38, No. 1, February 2008. Also see "Thailand in 2001: Learning to Live with Thaksin?" Michael J. Montesano. *Asian Survey*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January/February 2002), pp. 90-99.
[143] Nelson, Michael. (2001) eds. Thailand's House Elections of 6 January 2001: Thaksin's Landslide Victory and Subsequent Narrow Escape. *Thailand's New Politics: KPI Yearbook 2001*. King Prajadhipok's Institute and White Lotus Press. Page 99.

hired westerners and Thais with significant western experience to help design a

populist-style party platform and then developed policies with firm promises to help

woo the rural electorate. He also spent heavily on public advertising on TV and radio

to promote those policies.[144]

The third strategy Thaksin used won him significant support in Bangkok among the

elite and middle class. He promised a platform of helping protect Thai companies

from international competition and publically spurning interference from international

organizations such as the IMF.[145]

Thaksin's 2001 election victory was not solely due to new social policies. As we have

seen, he was not the first to introduce such policies. However, he expanded them and

packaged them more attractively. While there were other components of his campaign

that were instrumental to propelling him to victory, taken collectively, they did not

result in total victory. Thaksin was helped by the fact that the TRT's main competitor,

the Democrat Party, was led by Chuan Leekpai, who was respected for his honestly,

but was widely believed to be slow, uncommunicative and lacking in leadership

qualities.[146]

Thaksin's 2001 electoral victory was marred by a constitutional court case that could

have potentially disqualified him from the position of prime minister. Prosecutors

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[144] Nelson, Michael. (2001) eds. Thailand's House Elections of 6 January 2001: Thaksin's Landslide Victory and Subsequent Narrow Escape. *Thailand's New Politics: KPI Yearbook 2001*. King Prajadhipok's Institute and White Lotus Press. Pages 283-441.

[145] Democrats had been criticized following the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis for being too submissive to international organizations such as the IMF, who pressured the then-Democrat led government to implement fiscal austerity measures and open up various sectors to foreign competition and investment, which upset the business community.

[146] *Ibid.*

accused Thaksin of avoiding proper disclosure of his assets as a member of the

government during the Chavalit administration, by trying to circumvent tax laws

through ownership transfer to his house staff rather than to his family.[147] Thaksin

fought the charges, framing the situation with the constitutional court as a conflict

between old and new. On one side was the bureaucratic office of the National Counter

Corruption Community, which he framed as part of the feudal order, run by

"Khunnang", or royal officials, and on the other side was Thaksin's modern,

professional administration.[148] According to Thaksin, he was a fresh face in Thai

politics; a departure from the old politics system.[149] He was later acquitted in an 8-7

ruling by the Constitutional Court. There were accusations that Thaksin influenced

and intimidated the judges, but no hard evidence was found.[150]

Thaksin Leadership Approach and Growing Criticism

At the time of Thaksin's political ascendency, there was optimism that with the 2001

election, Thailand had taken a major step towards becoming a consolidated

democracy.[151] However, after Thaksin's first year in office, many observers of Thai

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[147] *Ibid.*

[148] Phongpaichit, Pasuk; Baker, Chris. (2004) Thaksin: The Business of Politics in Thailand. Silkworm Books.

[149] Thailand in 1999: A Royal Jubilee, Economic Recovery, and Political Reform. Bowornwathana, Bidhya. *Asian Survey*, Vol.. 40, No. 1 A Survey of Asia in 1999. (Jan. – Feb., 2000), pp. 87-97). In this paper, Budhya claims that Thaksin's frame of new professional administration that was a departure from the old politics system was a myth rather than the reality.

[150] Nelson, Michael. (2001) eds. Thailand's House Elections of 6 January 2001: Thaksin's Landslide Victory and Subsequent Narrow Escape. *Thailand's New Politics: KPI Yearbook 2001*. King Prajadhipok's Institute and White Lotus Press. Page 90.

[151] Nelson, Michael (2012). "Some Observation on Democracy in Thailand." The Southeast Asia Research Centre (SEARC) of the City University of Hong Kong publishes SEARC Working Papers Series. Michael Nelson identified two different currents of thought about the direction of Thai democracy at the time that Thaksin assumed the prime minister's post. One is that the election showed that political groups were playing by the defined "rules of the game" and accepting electoral outcomes. Furthermore, researchers surveying Thai citizens concluded that the Thai electorate understood and valued the democratic process. Nelson also highlights other more pessimistic voices who found that the tendency towards authoritarianism had still not been stamped out of the Thai system and could return.

politics argued that Thailand was not more democratic, but that a new and peculiar form of democratic authoritarianism was taking hold in the country.[152] During the first year of his administration, Thaksin became agitated and aggressive in response to public criticism. Critics would often lose their positions or be intimidated or smeared, to the point at which few were brave enough to criticize Thaksin openly for fear that they would be ostracized or attacked. The NGO community and Thaksin's opponents lamented that the space for public speech under Thaksin was narrowing. A climate of fear was beginning to take hold in Thai politics.

Thaksin approach to administration was to quickly centralize power within the cabinet, taking it away from the provinces and parliament.[153] He took personal control of more than 20% of the overall budget and used it to build and maintain relationships with local leaders and regular citizens, weakening the power of local MPs.[154] In his first term in office, critics argued that Thaksin acted unilaterally—without engaging stakeholders—in his planning and implementation of policy.

In February 2003, Thaksin declared a War on Drugs that empowered police to act outside of the law to identify and arrest suspected drug dealers. The War claimed some 2,000 lives and grabbed national and global headlines. There were numerous accusations of excessive use of force by the police. Some speculated that those who were killed were political enemies of politicians with close ties to Thaksin. The NGO

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[152] Pongsudhirak, Thitinan. (2003) "Thailand: Democratic Authoritarianism." *Southeast Asian Affairs*, pp. 277-290.
Published by: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)
[153] Painter, Martin. (2005). "Thaksinocracy or Managerialization?. Reforming the Thai Bureaucracy." Working Paper Series. No. 76: May. *Southeast Asian Research Centre*.
[154] "The facts about vote-buying and the patronage system." Chang Noi. *The Nation*. September 1, 2008.

sector and international community denounced the War and excessive use of force by the police. Thaksin largely ignored the growing criticism.[155] The War was popular with Thaksin's base and the Monarchy, but further alienated him from the NGO and international community.[156]

Another policy area in which Thaksin was criticized was his response to issues and needs related to Muslim minorities in Thailand's southern region.[157] Duncan McCargo argues that the conflict between the Thai government and southern provinces was not so much due to historical circumstances, but more to the aggressive stance Thaksin took towards Southern Muslims. This policy was partly due Thailand's close relationship with the United States and their support of the US-led War on Terror, but also to the resurgence of the monarchy, which strongly objected to concessions with Muslim separatists and pressured Thaksin to take a hard line stance. In one critical incident in 2003, more than 1,000 Muslims gathered in front of a police station in Tak Bai demanding the release of a Muslim man being held on accusations of providing weapons to separatists. The Thai military arrested many protestors and forced them into packed police vehicles, where more than 60 Muslim men died suffocated in the mid-day heat. The event was a catalyst in a surge in violent conflict

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[155] "Not Enough Graves: The War on Drugs, HIV/AIDS, and Violations of Human Rights." *Human Rights Watch*. June 2004, Vol. 16, No. 8 (C).

[156] Connors, Michael K. 2009. "Ambivalent about Rights: 'Accidental' Killing Machines, Democracy and Coups D'etat." Hong Kong: Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong. (SEARC Working Paper Series, No. 102). Responding to criticism of his anti-drug policy and plans by the United Nations to send independent observers to, Thaksin famously remarked, "The UN is not my father." These words were the perfect media sound bit and were plastered across Thai and international newspapers. Thaksin was framed as arrogant and dictatorial. He quickly attempted to lessen the impact of his words but his international reputation was damaged.

[157] Muslim Thais are one of the largest religious minority groups in Thailand, and a large percentage live in the three southern provinces bordering Malaysia.

in the South between separatist forces and the Thai government.[158] While the military

was the main perpetrator of the incident, Thaksin's firm support of their actions and

unapologetic tone was criticized by NGOs and the international community.[159]

The War on Drugs, the deaths of dozens of Muslims in the south and Thaksin's

unapologetic and defensive response to these highly criticized policies escalating the

opposition to Thaksin within important circles both in Bangkok and internationally.

NGOs, academics and the international community became increasingly critical of

Thaksin. However, these events were popular with Thaksin's base in the North and

Northeast, and with key elite allies among royalists and conservatives. While criticism

grew in certain pockets of the population, within the general population, Thaksin's

popularity continued to rise, putting him in an even stronger position in the lead-up to

the 2005 general election.

2005 Election

The TRT's 2005 election campaign culminated in the biggest landslide win in the

country's democratic history. Thaksin's TRT Party won an unprecedented 377 out of

500 seats in the parliament, increasing its total by 129 seats over the 2001 election.

This massive win was secured both by merging with other smaller political parties,

but more importantly, by the immense success of Thaksin's social and political

programs and initiatives. The largest increase in MPs came in Isan, where the TRT

nearly doubled their numbers, going from 76 MPs in 2001 to 126 in 2005. Thakin's

TRT now dominated Isan, winning more than 90% of the parliament seats in the

[158] "Trouble in Thailand's Muslim South: Separatism, not Global Terrorism." Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies Volume 3 - Number 10, December 2004.
[159] McCargo, Duncan. 2006. "Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South: Network Monarchy Strikes Back?" *Critical Asian Studies* 38 (1):39-71.

region. Somchai argues that during the 2005 election, Thaksin's landslide was not due to more effective vote buying, but to the forging of a stronger bond of loyalty among beneficiaries of Thaksin's social policies.[160] The 2005 election showed that Thaksin had very strong support among the elite in Bangkok and that he had effectively unified urban and rural voters.[161] It also showed that the Democrats were the only viable competitors to the TRT and that they had weakened considerably over the previous two elections.

4.3   RECIPE FOR A COUP

The Emergence of the People's Alliance for Democracy

Following his landslide victory in 2005, Thaksin began a covert campaign to silence his media critics through buying some media outlets and intimidating others. There were numerous reports of journalists being fired and others having their shows cancelled for criticizing Thaksin. Many journalists were sued by the government.[162] Human Rights Watch strongly rebuked Thaksin for what it stated was as a "series of attacks" on the Thai Media.[163] During this period, Thaksin had a falling out with a

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[160] "The Thai Rak Thai Party and Elections in Northeastern Thailand." Somchai Phatharathananunth. Journal of Contemporary Asia - Vol. 38, No. 1, February 2008. Somchai claimed that the best way to see this is by looking at the ties between NGOs and farmers. Typically, in Thailand's past, NGOs in the development area had significant influence over the farmers that they supported. If the NGOs supported a candidate or policy, it was likely that the farmers would follow suit. But in the case of Thaksin, when NGOs started to turn against him, the farmers continued to support him vigorously, showing that he had a direct bond with the rural poor.

[161] Nelson, Michael. "Thaksin's 2005 Electoral Triumph: Looking Back From the Election in 2007." *Working Paper Series No. 98*, February 2008. City University of Hong Kong. Page 17-26.

[162] "Thai Press Frees Itself From Intimidation." *AP Online*, 03/27/2006. Also see: Nualnoi Treerat. 2009. "Thaksin Shinawatra and Mass Media." In *Populism in Asia*, eds. Kosuke Mizuno and Pasuk Phongpaichit, pp. 112-126. Singapore: NUS Press, in association with Kyoto University Press, Japan.

[163] "Thailand: P.M. Suits Dropped, But Media Still Under Threat." Human Rights Watch. December 9, 2005. http://www.hrw.org/news/2005/12/07/thailand-pm-suits-dropped-media-still-under-threat

previously close supporter and local Thai media mogul, Sondhi Limthongkul. Sondhi had a weekly TV show, which he used as a platform to criticize Thaksin. Responding to pressure from Thaksin, regulators removed the TV show from the air using as an excuse that Sondhi had involved the monarchy in his attacks against Thaksin. In response, Sondhi moved his TV show to Lumpini Park in central Bangkok, were crowds showed up to see what all the controversy was about. What began as a TV show eventually took on all of the visual trappings of a street protest movement, with Sondhi Limthongkul as its leader. It adopted the name of The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and it took aim at Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, demanding his immediate resignation because of allegations of corruption and dictatorial administration.[164]

Several components of the PAD message were used to influence meaning and action, including language (corruption, democracy, morality and loyalty), symbols (The King, pro-democracy protest crackdowns in 1973 and 1992, yellow "royal" colors) and public performances (rallies, marches, sit-ins, academic panels). Sondhi's PAD movement and the frames and discourses it promoted, evolved—through interactions with, and support from, certain political institutions; positive and negative public feedback; and catalyzing events—to insist that the authoritative Thai political culture reflect the three pillars of nation, religion, and monarchy. During this period the PAD began to lay the groundwork for a new vision for Thai politics. While the frame New

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[164] Pongsudhirak, Thitinan. "Thaksin's Political Zenith and Nadir." *Southeast Asian Affairs*, (2006), pp. 285-302. In this article Thitinan put the specific case against Thaksin as follows, "He had abused power by usurping constitutional mechanisms, marginalized the parliamentary opposition, mishandled the violence in Muslim dominated southern Thailand, intimidated civil society groups, turned state-owned electronic media into agencies for government propaganda for rural consumption, and converted power into profit for his family-owned business empire."

Politics would not be used publically until the following year, the key components of the frame emerged during this period.

The New Politics Frame advocated the appointment of political leaders by a panel made up of appointees from various organizations and institutions, including the monarchy. The PAD argued that democracy was desirable to a point but provided that the people could be trusted to fulfill their duties as citizens and elect qualified, moral leaders. They believed that the excesses and abuses of the Thaksin administration were so blatant, that the people should have held him accountable, and their failure to do so meant that they did not understand or fulfill their role as citizens. The alternative PAD proposal of an appointed parliament is based on the idea that there are self-interested people who can be selected for office and who can make decisions for the benefit of the whole country. The fact that the King is believed to be such a person, and that everything he does is for the public good, suggests that it is possible to be detached and unselfish, and that there is a true public interest.

The PAD saw sovereignty as not emanating from the people, but from the bureaucracy under the King. The parliament was viewed by the PAD and their supporters as not the sole or even the most important source of power in Thai society. Other institutions and groups, such as the monarchy and military, also wielded significant power that existed independent of the parliament, and possessed sovereignty over it. Chai-anan Samudavanija, one of the early leaders of the PAD said of the New Politics Frame that it was important for Thailand to return to semi-democracy in which power would be shared between several institutions, none of

which needed to be popularly elected.[165] The PAD used the slogan "*thawai khuen phraratchaamnat*" ("return the royal power"), which Michael Nelson argues sent the message that if the King granted the people sovereignty, they could temporarily return it to him so that he could use it to appoint a new prime minister to the PAD's liking."[166]

The New Politics Frame argued that a new political system was needed to counter corruption in the political system. This view of corruption was mainly one held by the middle class, who viewed rural politics as corrupt. Winichikul called this an Urban Bias. He argues that populism in politics, or politicians campaigning on promises of benefits for the rural people and then delivering on it is viewed by the middle class as corrupt and given labels like, "policy corruption" or "populist deception", while the same group views programs for urban populations like rail and roads and tax breaks as proper.[167] Chaing Noi discounted conservative groups' insistence that vote buying was corrupting democracy, saying that, "In truth, the problem is not that upcountry voters don't know how to use their vote, and that the result is distorted by patronage and vote-buying. The problem is that they have learnt to use the vote only too well. Over four national polls, they have chosen very consistently and very rationally."[168]

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[165] Nelson, Michael. (2010). "Thailand's People's Alliance for Democracy: From 'New Politics' to a 'Real' Political Party?" In *Legitimacy Crisis and Political Conflict in Thailand*, ed. by Marc Askew, pp. 119-159. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books. Pages 130-135.
[166] Some Observations on Democracy in Thailand Michael H. Nelson. *German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance* (SEARC), Faculty of Law, Thammasat University. *Unpublished.*
[167] Winichakul, Thongchai. (2008) "Toppling Democracy." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* Vol. 38, No. 1, February. pp. 11–37. Page 12.
[168] "The facts about vote-buying and the patronage system." Chaing Noi. *The Nation*. September 1, 2008.

New Politics was an alternative, both symbolically and structurally, to the democratic system.

Weakening of the Old Political Guard and Anti-Thaksin Response
The rise of the PAD coincided with the decay of Thailand's traditional elite. Before 2001, Thai politics was dominated by a tripartite power arrangement that included the civil bureaucracy, the military, and the monarchy. Business interests only later gained an important foothold. Thaksin's rise represented a turning point in the balance of political power, as Thailand's new elite challenged the old guard, bolstered by a rural population with an emerging awareness of their political power in the country's nascent democratic system.

Following the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932, the Thai military and civilian bureaucracy became the dominant forces in Thai politics. Successive military dictators used the monarchy to legitimize their rule. The monarchy was initially sidelined but would later gain significant influence in Thai politics with the help of close ties with the Thai and US militaries and a successful royal propaganda machine. In 1992, democratic government was reestablished this time by an assertive middle class, which had grown significantly since the 1970s. In the decade before Thaksin's 2001 rise to the premiership, Thailand's traditional political order was beginning to crack. Electoral democracy enabled an increasing number of provincial leaders to attain powerful positions in the government, with one—Banharn Silipacha—even rising to the position of prime minister.

This new group of leaders, raised in the provinces, from families not as well connected to the elite Bangkok establishment as the Democrat Party leadership, was

checked by an elite power group that possessed the informal, extra-constitutional power to remove them if they posed a threat to establishment interests. Thaksin's enormous wealth, business credentials, and charisma enabled him to win the blessing of the elite power group and ultimately attain the position of prime minister.

As prime minister, Thaksin's social programs strengthen his electoral position with rural poor and middle income people. He was one of the first Thai politicians to understand and use populist policies to win the support of voters. While these programs were immensely popular, they created unintended consequences for the elite power group. More money was flowing out of Bangkok to aid development in the provinces, reversing a decades-long trend that saw Bangkok and the suburbs develop rapidly at the expense of the rest of the country. In his study of political values of Thais in the north and northeast, Andrew Walker noted that, "Bangkok's power brokers were deeply concerned that new political alignments had emerged characterized by direct transactions between political agents of the state and their rural beneficiaries."[169] Thaksin was looking increasingly like a threat to the establishment.[170]

Thaksin did little to assuage the growing apprehension of the traditional power group, nor did he maintain allies in the urban middle class. While many agreed that Thaksin

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[169] Andrew Walker. (2012) Thailand's Political Peasants: Power in *The Modern Rural Economy*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. Also see: Phongpaichit, Pasuk (2007). "Thai politics beyond the 2006 coup." Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. Asian Insights. Thailand and the 2006 Coup. 3/2007. Page 23.

[170] Phongpaichit, Pasuk. "Thai politics beyond the 2006 coup." *Asia Insights*. NIAS – Nordic Institute of Asian Studies. 3/2007. In this paper Pasuk says of elite fears of Thaksin, "His populist trend had frightened the ruling elites, the military and a large segment of the middle class. These three elements joined hands in the coup of September 2006. The army provided the force. The ruling elites provided traditional legitimation. The middle class gave support in public space."

was one of the most effective administrators Thailand had ever produced, he was

heavy handed in his approach to policy implementation, rarely allowing for

stakeholder participation in the policy process. He proudly referred to this

management approach as "CEO Government". Thaksin's CEO Government

approach, with its centralization of power in the executive and cutting out the normal

bureaucratic and local lines of administration, clearly found opposition within the

middle class because it was perceived to have led to corruption, nepotism and other

abuses.[171]

Former members of his government and his opponents alike argued that Thaksin

suffered from egotism and hubris.[172] He was widely said to underestimate the

capabilities of his opponents and berate his followers. His administrative approach

and leadership style led him into conflict with many civil society groups. Thaksin also

clearly engaged in crony capitalism, enriching those around him through corruption

on government programs, and manipulating loopholes in the law to avoid paying

taxes. The most high-profile of these manipulations was Thaksin's sale of Shin

Corporation to Singaporean-based government corporation Tamesak Holdings.

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[171] Nelson, Michael. (2001) eds. Thailand's House Elections of 6 January 2001: Thaksin's Landslide Victory and Subsequent Narrow Escape. *Thailand's New Politics: KPI Yearbook 2001*. King Prajadhipok's Institute and White Lotus Press. Michael Nelson says that: "From the beginning of his government, Thaksin has done his best to project the image—true to his "CEO" approach to governance—of a hands-on manager (very much different from Chuan's "aloof" approach) who is personally responsible for almost everything, commands everybody, and will take over or interfere in tasks himself if others fail…the "CEOs" are envisaged to be separated from their previous line of command in the Interior Ministry and put directly under the supervision of the prime minister, i.e. under the Prime Minister's Office. In other words, the PM would have direct access to the provinces, bypassing all the ministries, thereby further weakening the ministers of his cabinet, and enabling him to access personally the entire Thai territory." Also See: ""The Downfall of Thaksin Shinawatra's CEO-state", APSNet Policy Forum, November 09, 2006, http://nautilus.org/apsnet/0634a-rowley-html/
[172] Phongpaichit, Pasuk; Baker, Chris. (2004). Thaksin: *The Business of Politics in Thailand*. Silkworm Books, 2004. Chaisaeng, Chaturon. (2009). Thai Democracy in Crisis: 27 Truths. *Bangkok: The Institute of Democratization Studies.*

After growing street protests by the PAD and the announcement that veteran

politician and former Thaksin mentor Chamlong Simuang would joined forces with

the PAD, Thaksin dissolved parliament and called new elections as a way to diffuse

the momentum of the movement.[173] The Democrat Party boycotted the elections

arguing that the TRT Party was corrupt and would use vote buying and election fraud

to such an extent that the outcome would be undemocratic. They also believed that by

boycotting the election, they could nullify any results.[174] The election of April 2006

was a resounding win for the TRT, however, the win was marred by accusation of

election fraud. An inquiry was opened into accusations that the TRT hired lesser

parties to contest the election so that they could meet the Election Campaign

Commission's minimum requirements for opposition parties in the election.

Following the election, the King spoke to the courts of his dissatisfaction, intimating

that the courts should nullify the election. Kevin Hewison argues that this was a

seminal event in the anti-Thaksin protests and that from that point forward, the

movement was guided personally by the palace.[175] He cites as evidence that in

numerous speeches in which Privy Council President Prem Tinsoluda was very vocal

in his opposition to Thaksin and the government. [176]

There is some disagreement in the literature as to the driving force behind the coup.

Some argue that the military initiated the coup because Thaksin attempted to weaken

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[173] Nelson, Michael H. 2006. "Political Turmoil in Thailand: Thaksin, Protests, Elections, and the King." *Eastasia.at* Vol. 5, No. 1, September 2006 22 pp. Page 9.
[174] *Ibid.*
[175] Hewison, Kevin. Thaksin Shinawatra and the reshaping of Thai politics. *Contemporary Politics*. Vol. 16, No. 2, June 2010, 119–133.
[176] Nelson, Michael H. 2006. "Political Turmoil in Thailand: Thaksin, Protests, Elections, and the King." *Eastasia.at* Vol. 5, No. 1, September 2006 22 pp. Page 9.

the military through using the government's annual military promotion procedure to put key allies into positions of power.[177] The military also had much to gain from the coup. The CNS hand-picked assembly increased the 2007 defense budget by roughly 50 percent.[178]

Others argue that the military may have been the muscle, but that the coup was carried out at the direction and for the benefit of the monarchy in what could best be described as a royalist coup.[179] According to Connors and Hewison, the king disliked Thaksin fairly early on, and that Thaksin's falling out with the palace became much more acute later in Thaksin's tenure due to his complaints about Prem's interference and his disregard for palace interests and concerns. But they say that more significantly, the palace had a reason to push for a coup because they believed that Thaksin was winning the battle for control of the hearts and minds of the Thai rural masses.[180]

Despite planned and royally approved elections, which were planned for October of 2006, on September 19, 2006 Sonthi Boonyalakgarin, Commander-in-chief of the Army, led a coup to oust Thaksin.[181] Sonthi replaced the democratic government with

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[177] Each year the Prime Minister must sign off on promotions for the top military brass. In years past the Prime Minister's approval was more of a rubber stamp for the military leadership, but in 2006 Thaksin used this promotion function to attempt to assert civilian control over the military.

[178] Connors, Michael K., and Kevin Hewison. (2008) "Special Issue on the Coup." *Journal of Contemporary* Asia 38 (1):1-10. Page 243.

[179] Hewison, Kevin. (2008). "Introduction: Thailand and the Good Coup." *Journal of Contemporary Asia Quarterly*. Vol. 38, No. 1. Pages 2-5.

[180] Connors, Michael K., and Kevin Hewison. (2008) Special issue on the coup." *Journal of Contemporary Asia.* 38 (1):1-10. Page 243.

[181] "The military reveals the Coup and Prem gives his approval." *Khom Chat Luek.* September 20, 2006. In this article, the author states that the coup against Thaksin was retaliation for his shakeup of the military to put in place many of his classmates from Group 10. And the army was very upset about this.

an administrative body called the Council of National Security (CNS) that would rule the country for the next 15 months.[182] As Pasuk put it, "Ultimately, the 2006 coup was about opposing the changes Thaksin wanted and preserving the status quo that involved the dominance of the old oligarchy. To take down Thaksin and to overcome the challenge he posed, the old oligarchy had to become more actively politically engaged than it had been for about three decades." But the 2006 coup was far from unique in Thailand's history. Pasuk called it, "One point in a sequence going back to the coups of 1947, 1957 and 1976… [in which] in all these four events, the army and royalists moved in alliance to eject an elected government on grounds that the elected government was too weak, too strong, too corrupt, too disrespectful of the monarchy, or too something else."[183] The impact of the PAD on the coup was debatable. Just weeks before the coup, Michael Nelson remarked that the PAD had been greatly weakened and that protest turnout at several recent rallies had been dwindling.[184] This seemed to contradict one of the rationale for the coup given by Sonthi Boonlakgarin immediately following Thaksin's ouster that he had undertaken the coup to protect the country from a confrontation between Thaksin supporters and the PAD.

Following the coup, Thaksin's leadership style and egotism gave ammunition to his political opponents to frame him and his political system as intolerable and undemocratic. Conversely, Thaksin's social programs, the legacy of central-periphery

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[182] The Council of National Security was a security administrative body set up immediately following the 2006 coup of Thaksin Shinawatra by the main coup plotters, led by Sonthi Boonyalakgarin. It was established to maintain control over the government security apparatus and oversee the political administration, the day-to-day duties of which were undertaken by an appointed, civilian interim government.

[183] Phongpaichit, Pasuk (2007). "Thai politics beyond the 2006 coup." Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. *Asian Insights. Thailand and the 2006 Coup*. 3/2007. Page: 6.

[184] Nelson, Michael H. 2006. "Political Turmoil in Thailand: Thaksin, Protests, Elections, and the King." *Eastasia.at* Vol. 5, No. 1, September 2006   22 pp. Page 10.

conflict, and cultivation of a political base in the provinces gave his supporters leverage to claim that the coup was an attack on democracy and Thailand's rural masses.

CHAPTER 5. POST-THAKSIN THAILAND: AN ANALYSIS OF COMPETING COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMES OF THE 2006 COUP AND TRANSITION

On September 19, 2006, a group of army generals with backing from a broad cross-section of Thailand's elite, ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, The coup was a critical event in Thailand's history. Winichul argues that the coup of 2006 took the country in a dangerous undemocratic direction and was part of an effort by royalists to reestablish control over the government.[185] This chapter looks at an important period of Thailand's contemporary political history. It follows events through the transformative coup of 2006, to a highly contested constitutional drafting process managed by the coup makers during the first half of 2007, and finally to the first post-coup election in December 2007, when Thaksin's party regained control of the government. It explores how each side (pro-Thaksin and anti-coup groups, and government supporters) framed the coup, new constitution, new political landscape, and major players and institutions, to influence the lens through which groups and individuals both domestically and abroad viewed Thai politics. This framing contest was part of a struggle for power in the Thai political system.

This chapter also explores which frames resonated with the general public and which fizzled out and to what extend the actions of different groups, as well as the broader

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[185] Winichakul, Thongchai. (2008) "Toppling Democracy." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* Vol. 38, No. 1, February. pp. 11–37. Page 12.

political and cultural opportunity structures, contributed to frame selection and
frequency. It focuses on frames and discourses found in two major daily
newspapers— the Bangkok Post and Khaosod (Fresh News). This chapter addresses
the following questions:

1. What collective action frames did Thaksin supporters and anti-coup groups use
    during this period and what frames did the CNS and interim government, and
    their supporters, use?

2. What discourses were included in frames and how did the collection of frames
    and discourses attempt to influence the debate?

3. How did the frequency of these frames change over time and what factors may
    explain these changes?

4. Which frames resonated with their target audiences and which did not, and
    why?

5. What differences, if any, were there in frame types and frequency between the
    Bangkok Post and Khaosod newspapers?

5.1 THE COUP

The coup of Thaksin Shinawatra on September 19, 2006 was an immensely disruptive
event in Thailand's modern history. It was carried out by Sonthi Boonyaratglin, then
Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army. Shortly after ousting Thaksin, Sonthi
and other senior members of the military formed the CNS. Many political groups and
citizens were ambivalent about the coup. While some groups lamented the need to use
anti-democratic means to remove Thaksin from power, they believed that the coup
was necessary to rid the country of a corrupt, dictatorial leader. Influential social
critics Anek Laothamas and Thirayuth Boonmi argued that democracy needed to be

the Thai way, which included space for the monarchy to retain influence in politics, and not the Western way, in which elected institutions were paramount.[186]

Other groups were adamant that the coup was a blatant power grab by forces opposed to democracy. Thongchai argued that the 2006 coup bore close resemblance to coups in the past in terms of royalist and military excuses of intolerable levels of corruption, and promises that a new moral, ethical government would take over. However, Thongchai argues that in this round, unlike in the past, Thailand had already experienced 14 years of parliamentary, electoral democracy and the government and the TRT was very popular. In the aftermath of the coup, various groups and institutions framed the ouster of Thaksin in dramatically dissimilar ways to influence public interpretations and beliefs about the coup, and the main actors and motivations.

In the years prior to the coup, Thailand had been on a clear path towards democratic consolidation. The country had "graduated" from the United States Agency for International Development's democracy promotion program and was viewed by the West as a model for democracy in Southeast Asia. There had been a peaceful transition of executive power between the two major parties, and, in a country that had experienced 17 coup d'états, it had been nearly 15 years since the previous putsch. The coup of 2006 was a stark reminder to Thais, as well as to the international community, that Thailand still suffered from democratic instability.

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[186] Nelson, Michael (2012). "Some Observation on Democracy in Thailand." The Southeast Asia Research Centre (SEARC) of the City University of Hong Kong publishes SEARC Working Papers Series. Page: 4.

Three major frames emerged immediately after September 19th to describe and explain the coup. The first of these was the "Step Back" Frame, which was employed domestically by coup opponents, as well as by several sources in the international community, to frame Thailand as a country in the process of democratic consolidation that had experienced significant democratic retreat as a result of the coup. In the weeks following Thaksin's ouster, many Western leaders, and several Thai leaders and organizations, were vocal in their opposition to the coup, calling it undemocratic and a major step backwards for Thailand. The frame's significant attention in the media threatened the legitimacy of the CNS and interim government.[187] The prevalence of the Step Back Fame in the Thai and international media immediately following the coup, and the depth of support for Thaksin in large parts of Thailand, compelled the CNS and its supporters to communicate why they believed that the coup was a necessity and reaffirm that the CNS leadership was committed to democracy.[188]

The CNS response was to create a "Good Coup" frame, which portrayed the coup leaders as saviors of the country against an evil dictator and corrupt administration. This frame also claimed that the coup enjoyed overwhelming public support.[189] The Good Coup frame featured prominently in the Bangkok Post and Khaosod following

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[187] There is evidence from the newspaper articles that the administration was concerned over the perception of legitimacy of the coup mainly in the international media.

[188] "CNS Hunts for People Behind Leak" *Bangkok Post*. April 10, 2007. The leak in question concerned the CNS public relations strategy to convince the West and Thailand that the coup was a necessity. This strategy included the hiring of an international public relations firm.

[189] In multiple articles writers, academics, and members of the CNS spoke of Thaksin and his government as a dictatorship that was a democracy in name only. They claimed that the Thai public was overwhelmingly supportive of the coup. Several articles claiming public support for the coup put forth evidence that was largely anecdotal or taken from surveys limited to the Bangkok region, whose population comprises a small fraction of the national population.

the coup as it was widely supported by the Bangkok elite and middle class. Largely

due to CNS suppression of the media and public protest through the use of martial

law, there was limited mainstream counter-framing of the coup in the Thai press.[190]

There were, however, bastions of opposition within the media that were not

suppressed. One such place was Khaosod, where immediately following the coup,

writers openly expressed anti-coup sentiment, promoting what is called here the Evil

Coup Frame, which was a direct counter-frame to the moral, popular portrayal of the

coup by the CNS and its supporters.

The Evil Coup Frame claimed that the coup was an attack on democracy that

disenfranchised Thailand's poor and alienated Thailand from the West. The coup was

said to be far more selfish and damaging to the country than any policy under the

Thaksin administration. The Evil Coup Frame gathered strength over time, spreading

from the Khaosod onto the pages of the more conservative Bangkok Post and

proliferating through the Thai media—as pro-Thaksin forces regrouped, as the

economy under the interim government underperformed, and as pro-democracy

advocates saw mounting evidence of attempts by the coup group to create greater

powers for the military under a new civilian government. In the middle of 2007, The

Evil Coup Frame began to overtake the Good Coup Frame in terms of mentions in the

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[190] "CDRM warns instigators of hatred." *Bangkok Post*. September 24, 2006. One medium that would
have been expected to provide a platform for a counter-frame of the good coup was local radio in
Northern and Northeastern Thailand, which were Thaksin's political strongholds. However, radio
stations across those regions were closed shortly after the coup under order from the CNS. The
rationale used to justify this action was that the radio stations were inciting unrest, encouraging
disunity, and threatening national security.

Bangkok and Khaosod. The trajectories of these three frames during the study period

are illustrated in Figure 5.1-1.[191]

Major Frame Trajectories of The 2006 Coup
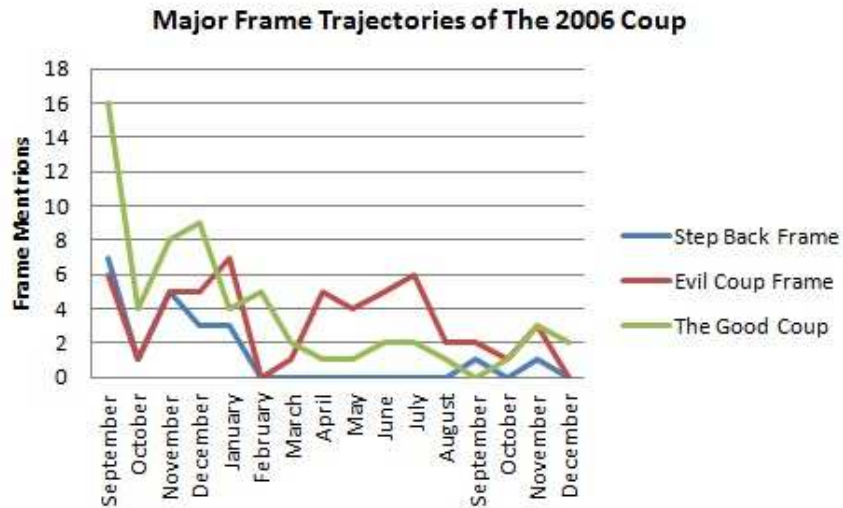
Figure 5.1-1. Trajectory of coup frames by frequency of mention in the Bangkok Post and Khaosod.[192]

5.1.1   STEP BACK COUP

For several weeks following the coup of Thaksin Shinawatra, Western governments

were vocal in their displeasure at the interference of the Thai military in political

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[191] The presence of the Good Coup and Evil Coup Frames are discussed by Michael Conners and Kevin Hewison in 2008, in which they state that these two frames were active in the political discourse following the coup. They also say that discussion of these frames reflected the Tale of Two Democracies explanation of Thai politics advanced by scholar Anek Laothamas, which they argue is an oversimplification of a much more complex political landscape in Thailand. However, the presence of these frames was an attempt to influence a simplified view of a major event and was aimed at certain groups. See: Conners, Michael K; Hewison, Kevin. (2008). "Introduction: Thailand and the Good Coup." *Journal of Contemporary Asia Quarterly*. Vol. 38, No. 1.

[192] Three main frames of the coup were identified. The first was the Step Back Frame: n=23. The second frame was the Evil Coup Frame: n=53. The third frame was the Good Coup Frame: n=61. These frames were constructed by analyzing details of each article coded in both publications for evidence of the frame.

affairs, publically urging the country's new leaders to immediately restore democracy to Thailand. They labelled the coup as a significant step back for the country.[193] The United States Assistant Secretary of State remarked that democratic elections were critical to restoring US faith in Thailand and military aid to the country. Even Abhisit Veejajiva, Democrat Party leader, and frequent critic of Thaksin, acknowledged that the coup had caused the country to, "lose the [1997] constitution and the trust of the international community."[194] The cognitive structure of the Step Back Frame is illustrated in Figure 5.1.1-1.[195]
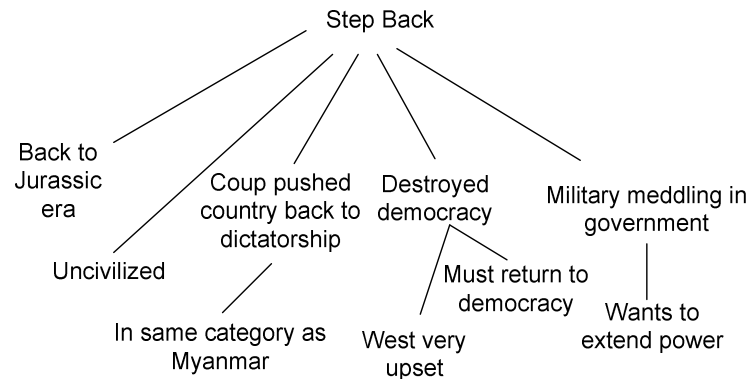
Figure 5.1.1-1. The Step Back Frame.

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[193] "General vows to quit in a fortnight - THAI COUP" *The Australian (Australia)*. September 21, 2006. It was reported in this publication that, "Leaders around the world denounced the coup, which rattled Asian stock markets and overshadowed the opening of the annual UN General Assembly in New York, where Mr. Thaksin was to deliver a speech."

[194] "Mark says that a coup is a coup." *Khaosod*. September 26, 2006. Mark is the nickname for Abhisit Vejjajiva, leader of the Democrat Party, which was the main opposition party to Thaksin's TRT Party.

[195] Figure 4.1-1 is a schematic showing the cognitive structure of the Step Back frame. The frame is listed at the top and the events, labels, discourses, and sub-frames attached to the frames are mapped below. This is the approach taken throughout this thesis to construct the mental components of collective action frames. For more on this approach, see: Johnson, Hank. *Comparative Frame Analysis*. In Frames of Protest. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006.

Domestically, opponents of the coup also referenced the Step Back Frame. A Khaosod newspaper editorial argued that no civilized country solved political crises in this way, lamenting that the West would now put Thailand in the same category as Burma and cancel military aid and future projects.[196] The Bangkok Post reported tepid reactions to the coup from several Southeast Asian leaders.[197] Drawing heavily on the discourse on the Thai military. Professor Boonrak Boonyaketmala of Thammasat University called the coup "horrible" and said, "[That the coup] pulled the country back to the Jurassic Era."[198] In the Bangkok Post, such frames were not prominent until nearly one year following the coup. Yet in the Khaosod, these critical labels and descriptions were present within days of the coup.[199]

The step back was described on many levels. It was a step back to an earlier time when Thailand was ruled by dictators. One writer depicted the coup as reintroducing an era of the 20th century in which the Thai military dominated politics. It was also described as a step back to the time of absolute monarchy, an undemocratic, uncivilized period in Thailand's history. A group of activists at Thammasat University announced that it would, "Lead the country back to the black age."[200] Not only was it portrayed as a step back in political terms, but also a step back to an economically undeveloped period. Finally, it was portrayed as a step back in terms of relations and association with the West.

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[196] "One year from now." Editorial. *Khaosod*. September 26, 2006.

[197] "International leaders speak out against military coup." *Bangkok Post*. September 21, 2006

[198] "The melodrama of politics, Thai—style." *Bangkok Post*. September 19, 2007.

[199] One possible reason for the lack of criticism of the coup in the Bangkok Post was due to the newspaper's royalist leanings.

[200] "The Dom Daang group from Thammasat University announced their opposition to the coup." Khaosod. 23 Sept 2006.

The Step Back Frame only lasted a matter of weeks in the international media before largely disappearing. The international community quickly accepted the Thai establishment's rationale for the coup. It may have grown bored with Thailand's political situation, which quickly stabilized under the CNS. Another potential explanation was that shortly after assuming the post of Interim Prime Minister, Surayud Chulanont announced the government's decision to hire a public relations firm in the United States.[201] Additionally, the coup government's announcement of an upcoming election with a clear time frame likely had an ameliorating effect on the international media and Western governments. Finally, Thaksin was unpopular with the international media for his poor human rights records and few mourned his forced exit from politics.

Whether it was as a result of the media cycle, or Thai government lobbying, within weeks of the coup, mentions of the Step Back Frame were largely absent in the international media. International attention shifted away from diagnosing the problem as a step back, to stressing a solution of "return to democracy". International leaders and political observers spoke with anticipation and approval about the interim government's plans to hold elections.

In Thailand, criticism of the coup was sparse. The CNS informed the media that it was unwise to criticize the interim government because it would damage internal security. Within days of the coup, CNS senior leader Saprang Kalayanamitr passed an order to close 17 radio stations across the north. He is reported to have said that

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[201] Surayud said that the reason for this was to counter Thaksin's efforts to hire PR firms to damage the government.

people should not compare this situation to history, which might cause a conflict in society.[202] Some interim government supporters countered the Step Back Frame by arguing that it was a necessity and that it was not a return to the dark ages. Saneh Chamarik, Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission said that, "The coup was just one way to change the government. It doesn't mean that the democratic system is destroyed. Don't say that we stepped back in the canal. This is not a story of step back or step forward."[203] The interim government's main message for international audiences was that the coup was necessary to help Thailand move towards democracy and that the government was firmly committed to democratic ideals.[204]

5.1.2 THE GOOD COUP

The framing of the Good Coup was a massive undertaking in which frame communicators across numerous groups and institutions often appeared to coordinate their statements about the coup in the media.[205] The Good Coup framers drew upon many different discourses on Thai politics, specific interpretations of Thai history, and collective social memory. Figure 5.1.2.-1 illustrates the components of this frame.

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[202] "Third army group close the radio station broadcast because it could influence people to protest." *Khaosod*. September 23, 2006.

[203] "Open the Arena." *Bangkok Post*. September 26, 2006.

[204] "CNS Hunts for People Behind Leak." *Bangkok Post*. April 10, 2007. It was deemed important to the CNS and interim government that the international media believe that the coup was progress towards democracy, and not a step back.

[205] Hewsion, Kevin. "Thailand after the Good Coup." *Brown Journal of World Affairs*. 14, 1, 2007. In this article Hewison talks about the frame of Good Coup and the way the coup leaders attempted to position the coup in the minds of Thai people and international audiences as apolitical and an attempt to restore democracy.

The Good Coup

Most Peaceful in History

The people supported it

Protect democracy

Coup group like pro-democracy group of 1970s

Protestor pictures with soldiers

Democracy failed

Protect Monarchy

Averted political crisis

Coup leaders put the national interest first

Under Thaksin not really demo.

Stop corruption of Thaksin

National Security

Part of healing process

Pure intentions

Freeing a suppressed media

Corrupted checks and balances

Thaksin threatened the monarchy

Coup had support of the Monarchy

Last resort

Worsening period of crisis

Military's traditional role of protector

Claim of wide public support

Privy councilors part of interim gov.

Figure 5.1.2-1. Cognitive Structure of the Good Coup Frame.

The Most Peaceful Coup in History

The Bangkok Post described the military coup, led by Sonthi Boonyaratglin, as the most peaceful coup in Thailand's history. By labelling it in this way, the CNS and its supporters were able to frame the coup as good-intentioned, benign and undeserving of the negative connotations and imagery typically associated with coups. According to the interim government, the coup was meant to heal the country and end the dangerous divisiveness in Thai politics. It was also, the CNS and its supporters argued, an action that was largely supported by the Thai citizenry. One editorial claimed that, "Many members of the public at large sighed with relief that a long period of uncertainty and the divisiveness that it engendered was coming to an end."[206] Visual imagery of Thai citizens and expatriates posing for pictures with soldiers added further empirical credibility to the Good Coup Frame. The

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[206]"Council has to do the right job." *Bangkok Post*. September 21, 2006.

international community may have labeled the coup as a step back, but the CNS countered this by arguing that 80-90% of Thai people accept the situation.[207]

Following the coup, the CNS and interim government, as well as its supporters in the media and academia, spoke extensively about the concept of "The People". Treated as a monolith, they argued that The People understood the need for the coup and that they supported the CNS and rejected Thaksin. Among government supporters in both the Khaosod and Bangkok Post, "The People" was one of the most frequently mentioned discourses behind "Thaksin", as illustrated in Figure 5.1.2-2.

Top Government Supporter Discourse Referenced (Khaosod and Bangkok Post)

n=712
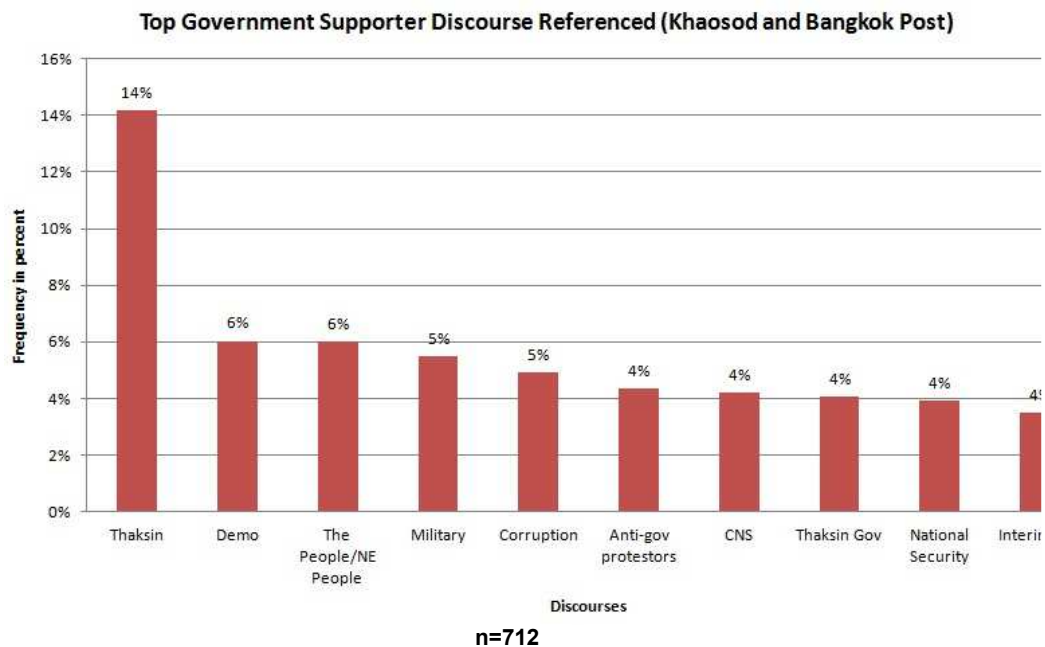
Figure 5.1.2-2. Government Supporter Discourses Referenced. "The People" was tied for the second most referenced discourse in both publications.

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[207] "The foreigners are confused to know that Thai people support the coup." *Khaosod.* September 26, 2006. This claim of widespread domestic support for the coup was advanced by Somchai Jakupat, head of the Well-Being Counseling Organization of the interim government.

An editorial appearing shortly after the coup argued that, "The People know this [that Thaksin is bad] and that is why they welcomed the coup."[208] Another editorial suggested that the majority of Thai citizens agree with the reasons given for military intervention and that they trusted the interim government.[209] General Sonthi was said to have received numerous letters demanding military intervention. Sonthi said that the people did not accept Thaksin because they knew that he was corrupt, and that the result of the peaceful coup was evidence of their rejection of Thaksin.[210]

This notion of The People's support of the coup did not go unchallenged by anti-coup groups. An unnamed anti-coup publication released in May of 2007, reported that "Sonthi said he respects the voice of the people. But he doesn't respect the voice of 19 million who voted for Thaksin in the previous election."[211] The question of who are "the people" is an important one to the claim of the Good Coup. The People were to the CNS and interim government those who were educated, thought and acted rationally, who rejected Thaksin, and who lived in the Bangkok or southern region. The CNS and interim government omitted in their definition the 19 million people, mainly in the North and Northeast, who supported Thaksin and had just recently voted for him in an overwhelming victory for the Thai Rak Thai Party (TRT). However, while they were excluded in the government's definition of the people, they could not be ignored. Interim Prime Minister General Surayud Chulanont suggested that the poor in those regions were tricked into supporting Thaksin and that they

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[208] "Resolution was Impossible". *Bangkok Post*. September 24, 2006.

[209] "A democracy answerable to the people." *Bangkok Post*. November 8, 2006.

[210] "People still miss me, says Thaksin." *Bangkok Post*. July 9, 2007.

[211] "General Sonthi Boonyalkit. Rebellion Grab Power from the King." Unnamed publication distributed at anti-coup rally in 2007. Likely date of publication is March-April, 2007.

needed more information and guidance.[212] The discourse of rural ignorance would be

used by royalist and anti-Thaksin groups in the coming years to explain Thaksin's

continued popularity in the northern and northeast.

Protecting Democracy
One important justification for the coup was that it was undertaken in an effort to

protect democracy. Communicators of the Good Coup Frame argued that under

Thaksin, democratic institutions had been so deeply compromised that the coup was

not actually a coup against democracy, as some suggested, but an effort to reinstall

democracy by removing a corrupt dictator.[213] Nakarin Mektrairat, then-Dean of

Thammasat University's Political Science Department said that, "The nation was left

with no other option but the coup because normal political mechanisms could not

function."[214] Democracy had failed in Thailand and needed to be "rebooted". While

the protecting democracy sub-frame was communicated extensively in the days and

weeks following the coup, it was rarely mentioned later in the CNS and interim

government's tenure. One of the possible reasons for this was that the sub-frame

lacked empirical credibility. Following the coup, the CNS maintained martial law

across many areas of Thailand, disallowing public gatherings, and censored the

media.[215] These actions were consistent with typical expectations of coup

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[212] "A democracy answerable to the people." *Bangkok Post*. November 8, 2006.

[213] Hewsion, Kevin. "Thailand after the Good Coup." *Brown Journal of World Affairs*. 14, 1, 2007.

[214] "Academics in quandary after Putsch." *Bangkok Post*. September 21, 2006.

[215] Martial law was kept in effect in many Thaksin strongholds even during the constitutional referendum in August 2007 and was only lifted completely in October 2007. There were inconsistencies in the way the CNS and interim government talked about the reasons for maintaining martial law. When asked why martial law was still in place, Sonthi and other members of the CNS said that it was because of the southern violence and drug trafficking, while Surayud claimed that martial law remained in effect because of the threat posed by the old power regime. These inconsistencies led many to believe that the real reason for the continuation of martial law was a fear of revolt by pro-Thaksin/anti-coup groups.

governments, were not policies of the former government, and did not align with the stated goal of the coup group to quickly return the country to democracy. The sub-frame of protecting democracy did not align with the post-coup reality of the CNS policies restricting basic freedoms. Instead, the CNS and interim government shifted focus to other rationale for the coup. This misalignment between frame and action is cited widely in the collective action literature as a key reason for frame failure.[216]

Data collected from the Bangkok Post and Khaosod in Figure 5.1.2-3 suggest that "protecting democracy" was just one of several sub-frames mentioned regularly by government supporters. While it was used quite heavily in the months following the coup, its use diminished rapidly over time.
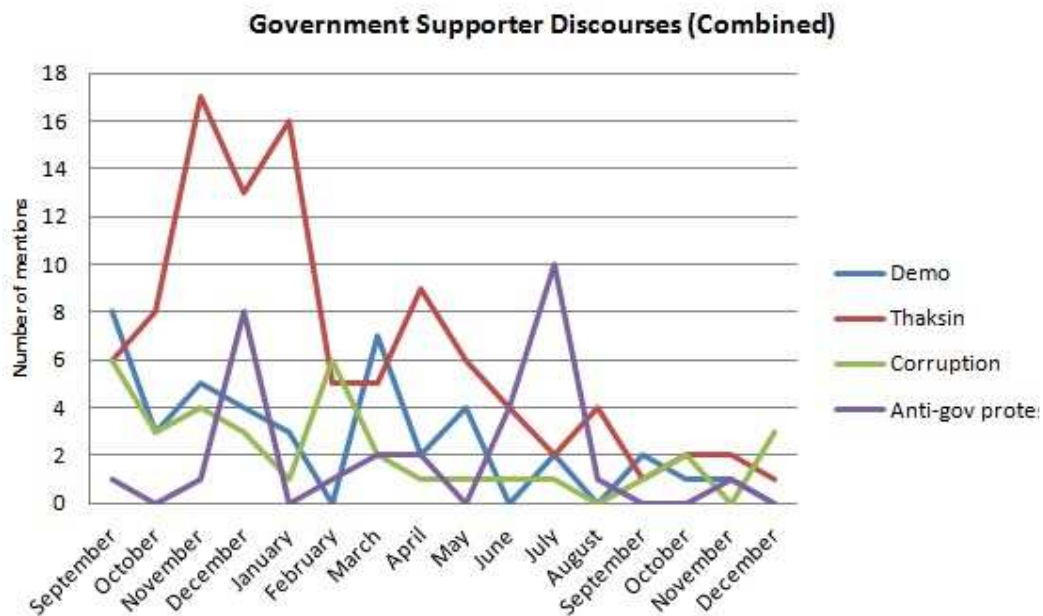
Government Supporter Discourses (Combined)

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[216] Snow, David A., R. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford. (1986). Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation. *American Sociological Review*, 51: 464-481.

Government/Supporter Mentions of the Democracy Discourse
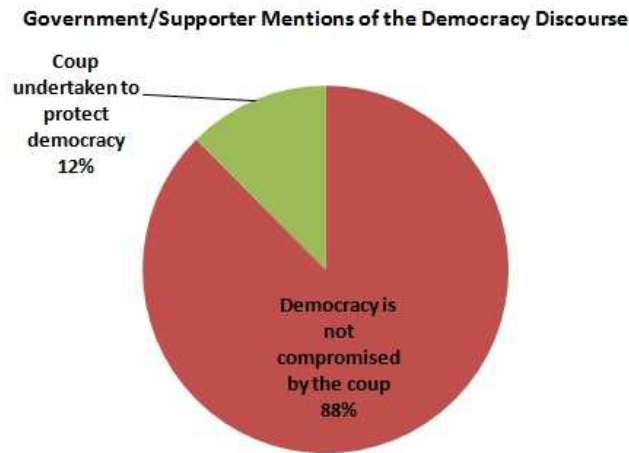
Figure 5.1.2-3. Government Supporter Discourses Referenced. The discourse on Thaksin was the most frequently cited discourse by government supporters over the study period, followed by discourses concerning democracy, corruption and anti-government protestors. While democracy was the second most frequently mentioned discourse, only 12% of those mentions involved claims that the coup was carried out to protect democracy. Most involved counter-framing pro-Thaksin groups' claims of a step back by arguing that democracy was not compromised by the coup.

The sub-frame protecting democracy did not gain much traction as a government/supporter frame. However, while it was not widely cited domestically, it was more frequently used in communication with international audiences. In the May 1 issue of the Bangkok Post, interim Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont talked about the administration's decision to hire a PR firm in the United States to convey the message that the coup was necessary to help Thailand move towards democracy.[217] In another public speech in Japan to sign a free trade agreement, Surayud Chulanont said that democracy will emerge stronger after the next election.[218] The interim government also dispatched a number of lecturers to give talks in London, Berlin and

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[217] Surayud also said that this PR effort was meant to counter what they said was Thaksin's efforts to hire PR firms to damage the government.

[218] "PM Flays Thaksin in Tokyo talks." *Bangkok Post*. 4 April 2007.

Canberra to defend the coup on the grounds that it protected democracy in

Thailand.[219]

Put the National Interest First

The Thai military had long cultivated the image of protectors of the country.

Beginning during the period of military dictators, the military has followed the

ideology that Thai society has three pillars: Nation, Religion and Monarchy. It is a

role that all army officers become familiar with in their time at the prestigious

Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy, where they take an oath to protect these

pillars and remain loyal to the monarchy above all else to maintain the country's

independence.[220] The military has often used this rationale when interfering in

politics. Underpinning this is the belief that popular elections are not the only source

of legitimacy in Thai politics.[221] Sonthi and other coup leaders felt that Thaksin had

lost the authority and legitimacy to govern and that it was their historical and rightful

role to remedy the situation. The traditional view of politics views political

sovereignty in Thailand as not emanating from the people, as in a democracy, but in

the institution of the monarchy. General Saprang Kalayanamitr, Assistant Army

Chief at the time, echoed this belief in a public address on the topic of coups, saying

that they should never be ruled out and that the national interest was supreme. "If in

crisis", he said. "Coups happen."[222]

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[219] "Report on SOAS event in London: 'Thailand after the Coup.'", *New Mandala*. 30 May 2007.
[220] http://www.crma.ac.th/English/mission.htm
[221] *"Overshadowed by the Armed Forces: The Current State of Democratization in Thailand." By* Paul Chambers. Paper presented at the 11th International Conference on Thai Studies, July 26-28, 2011. In this paper, Chambers talks about the ideology within the Thai military that the institution is a guardian of the country and views protection of the monarchy as its most important goal.
[222] "Military Coups Should Never be Ruled Out". *Bangkok Post*. Mar 8, 2007.

Connected to the idea of the traditional role of the military in politics, and to the concept of the monarchy, was the idea expressed in many areas of Thai life that true leaders have pure and good intentions and are above personal self-interest. The goal was to successfully paint the coup leaders as moral, pure intentioned, incorruptible patriots. [223] The CNS used the concept of moral leadership to explain the rationale behind the coup and counter arguments by coup opponents and the international media that it was carried out to extend the power of the military. Ruengroj Mahasaranon, Chief Advisor to the CNS, maintained that the coup was only staged to solve the nation's problems and the CNS had no intention of holding on to power.[224] The military was compelled to intercede to put democracy back on track when all other options had been exhausted.[225]

Reinforcing the idea that the coup group acted in the national interest and that they had pure intentions was the claim made in several articles that the entire nation supported the coup, especially Thai people in the provinces.[226] This gave the appearance that the CNS acted with popular consent, even though there were no statistical data to support the claim. By employing the oft-used military role as protectors of the national interest, and claiming that their actions spoke for the people, on both fronts, the coup group's argument was that they had the legitimacy and authority to remove the Thaksin government.

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[223] "Coup d' etat spending not denied by Sonthi." *Bangkok Post*. Dec 20, 2006. Months after the coup, information was leaked to the public that the CNS used government money to fund the coup. Many Thai leaders came to the defense of Sonthi, arguing that he did not use money illegally or act immorally and that he did what was in the best interests of the country.

[224] "Ruengroj didn't back Thaksin to stop coup*." Bangkok Post*. September 30, 2006.

[225] "No constitution can be written to prevent coup." *Bangkok Post*. November 5, 2006.

[226] "Council has to do the right job." *Bangkok Post*. September 21, 2006.

Protect the Thai Monarchy

A critical component of the frame of Good Coup was that the coup was undertaken to protect the Thai monarchy. Following the coup, it was widely communicated that Thaksin had disrespected the monarchy, or worse, was plotting its downfall. Coup supporters claimed that Thaksin's long-term goal was to weaken the influence of the monarchy. Another argument tied to protection of the monarchy was that Thaksin had instigated conflict between political groups, which by its very nature constituted a threat to the royal institution.[227] After Thaksin's ouster, anti-Thaksin groups positioned his economy policies as in opposition to the King's economic theory of sufficiency economy.[228] When coup opponents criticized the selection of individuals for the interim government cabinet, the Prime Minister's Secretary-general designate, Pongthep Thetpratheep intimated that Thaksin was attacking the monarchy by criticizing the cabinet selection. He said that, "The interim cabinet is royally designed. Criticizing the PM's choice of cabinet members is interfering in royal business. This means that it is potentially a major offense."[229] In numerous articles, pro-Thaksin supporters counter-framed that Thaksin was being set up by opponents. They acknowledged that the government had tried to frame Thaksin in that way. In one of the first post-coup publications by Thaksin supporters, numerous articles mentioned that the government and Thaksin opponents had tried to frame Thaksin in that way.[230]

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[227] "Ruengroj didn't back Thaksin to stop coup." *Bangkok Post*. Sept 30, 2006. The argument was that Thaksin threatened the monarchy by attempting to draw the institution into politics.

[228] "Sonthi puts time limit on probes. Should be in court six months after coup." *Bangkok Post*, December 17, 2006. Privy Councillor Ampol Senanarong mentioned the King and sufficiency economy on one side, and Thaksin and capitalism on the other. Also See: "Thaksin used Democracy as Means to an End." *Bangkok Post*. March 5, 2007. In this article, Editor in Chief of the Bangkok Post Veera Prateepchaikul claimed that Thaksin criticized the King's sufficiency economy philosophy.

[229] "Cabinet critics urged to stop interfering in royal business." *Bangkok Post*. October 9, 2006.

[230] In *"Operations. We are ready",* the author says that anti-Thaksin elements claim the deposed leader was weakening or trying to destroy the monarchy. Also See: *"The System of Prem coup Destroy the Country."*

In one article the author says that, "They charged Thaksin with many things and use propaganda, including that he discredited the monarchy. They repeat the charges again and again."

The protecting-the-monarchy sub-frame was bolstered by the announcement by the King in which he asked all Thais to follow the orders of the coup makers.[231] The day after Thaksin's ouster, King Bhumibol Adulyadej formally endorsed the coup group during a meeting with CNS chief Sonthi Boonyaratglin.[232] While this was mainly a symbolic gesture, and every new government, whether a dictatorship or popularly elected, was required to personally visit the King to receive his blessing, the undeniable message was that the CNS had intervened to protect the monarchy and that the royal institution was now safe.[233]

This was just one of many examples of the monarchy's role in legitimizing the coup. Another was that several of the King's closest aides publically supported the coup and interim government. Several months after the coup, the King's Chief Privy Councilor Prem Tinsulanonda invited the coup leaders to his house for the traditional New Year meeting, where he gave them each a book on morality and ethics and urged them to re-establish ethical leadership in the government.[234] Surayud Chulanont had taken

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[231] "New Thai rulers prohibit political activity." The Guardian. September 21, 2006.

[232] Privy Councilor Prem Tinsulanonda, Sonthi Boonlakgarin and other coup leaders met with the King and Queen on September 20, 2006, the day after to coup, to receive their royal endorsement, and during their meeting pledged to return the country to a civilian government within two weeks. "Two week project for the coup group." *Khaosod*. September 26, 2006.

[233] Under the Thai constitution, governments must receive the blessing of the King before they can form the government. It is considered a formality, but it is critical to establishing a government's legitimacy.

[234] "The military reveals the Coup and Prem gives his approval." This is from an untitled pro-Thaksin publication that came out in the first half of 2007. It was not labeled and no publication information was provided likely due to fears of government repression as press freedoms were curtailed at the time under martial law. Prem Tinsulanonda is the King's Chief Privy Counselor and closest aid, and is one

leave as a member of the Privy Council to serve as the interim prime minister. These

factors provide strong evidence that the Monarchy supported the actions of the CNS.

Averting Political Crisis

The CNS and its supporters often referenced as a rationale for the coup that it was a

last resort to avert what would have been a violent showdown between supporters and

opponents of Thaksin.[235] One editor in the Bangkok Post framed the impending

showdown between these groups as a D-Day, drawing on a discourse of World War II

that enhanced the magnitude of a potential clash that had been averted by the coup.[236]

To coup supporters, Thaksin bore the responsibility for this showdown. The

divisiveness that compelled the coup was said to be rooted in Thaksin's failure of

leadership and excessive corruption. According to this narrative, the coup leaders had

no choice but to intervene to pre-empt violent clashes between pro- and anti-Thaksin

groups supposedly planned for September 20.[237] This proved that politicians were

unable to manage the conflict any longer and that the situation necessitated military

intervention. CNS leader Sonthi Boonyalakgarin announced that, "The last resort was

to do what he dreaded doing most, staging a coup."[238] Defending his decision in later

months, Sonthi said that the he only followed through with the coup because he felt

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of the most powerful and divisive figures in Thai politics. He is a former military hero and prime
minister with significant informal power in Thai politics. Pro-Thaksin groups held Prem personally
responsible for the 2006 coup.

[235] "No constitution can be written to prevent coup." *Bangkok Post*. November 5, 2006. 2. In this
article, Dr. Borwansak Unno, former Secretary-General of the Cabinet during the Thaksin
Administration, suggests that the military had valid reasons for the coup in relieving pressure in society
and avoiding confrontation between pro- and anti-Thaksin groups. "Sonthi puts time limit on probes.
Should be in court six months after coup." *Bangkok Post*. December 17, 2006. This editorial argues
that the coup averted bloodshed that would have been created if Thaksin supporters and opponents
clashed.

[236] "Thaksin's empty words for national reconciliation." *Bangkok Post*. June 18, 2007.

[237] "Ruengroj didn't back Thaksin to stop coup." *Bangkok Post*. Sept 30, 2006.

[238] "Sonthi puts time limit on probes. Should be in court six months after coup." *Bangkok Post*. 17
December 2006.

he had no choice due to the escalating potential for violence. [239] While Thaksin

received the blame for creating the political conflict, the opposition to Thaksin was

framed as a people's movement.[240] The framers drew on the discourse on national

security to suggest that a crisis was imminent and reinforce the role of the military to

protect the security of the nation. In order to justify military intervention, a crisis had

to be said to exist.

Coup group is pro-democracy group of 1970s

In an explicit effort to frame the present in historical terms, coup supporters used the

event of the 30th anniversary of the October 1976 crackdown on university protestors

at Thammasat University to frame the coup and the major political actors. This

important anniversary occurred several weeks after Thaksin's ouster. Due to its close

timing to the coup, and the deep scars left by the events of 1976 on Thailand's

collective memory, it provided an important context in which to make comparisons

between the present and past. Coup supporters framed the CNS as similar to the

student pro-democracy advocates of the 1970s. The elected government of Thaksin

was compared to the dictatorial regimes of previous decades.[241]

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[239] "Politics to Change for Better." *Bangkok Post*. January 1, 2007. In this article, Meechai Ruchupan, leader of the National Legislative Assembly argues that under the Thaksin administration politics had become so divisive that a change was needed.

[240] "Resolution was Impossible." *Bangkok Post*. 24 Sept 2006. Thongbai Thongpao, Senator called the Yellow Shirts a people's movement and explains their growth as an issue of government stability as another way to explain or excuse the coup. Thongbai said that the people know this and that is why they welcomed the coup. Also see: "Send a message back to the mob." *Bangkok Post*. 24 July 2007. In this editorial, the writer contrasts the Red Shirt protesters with the anti-Thaksin Yellow Shirts, labelling the former an undemocratic mob, while calling those who fought against Thaksin a democracy group.

[241] "Send a message back to the mob." *Bangkok Post*. 24 July 2007. In the same article, the editor compares the Thaksin regime and the Red Shirt protesters to the dictator regime and paid paramilitaries of 1973 and 1992. Even interim Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont compared the Thaksin government to past dictatorial regimes when he defined the coup as a democratic transition not unlike those that occurred in 1973 and 1992. See: The Year of Great Reforms. *Bangkok Post*. 25 Jan 2007.

Seri Suwanphanon, member of the Constitutional Drafting Assembly, remarked that

the CNS was trying to move the country forward, but the anti-coup group was

attempting to destroy the country's progress. The CNS was portrayed as a progressive

movement and the opposition as wanting to destroy the constitution. Kraisak

Choonhavan, an anti-Thaksin senator, said that the 2006 coup was different from the

previous ones because this time the leader is clear that he [Sonthi] just wants to

remove the former government and then he will step aside and allow democracy to

return.

The government and its supporters counter-framed efforts by anti-coup groups to

frame the new regime as a dictatorship. The CNS and interim government drew sharp

distinctions between the current administration and government dictatorships of the

past, claiming that they were the pro-democracy group. Evidence presented earlier

seems to shows that this sub-frame lost steam during the charter drafting process,

most likely due to anti-democratic proposals by the ruling government. The anti-coup

group was successful in counter-framing that in fact they (the opponents of the coup)

were the real pro-democracy group, pointing their fight against media suppression and

the continuation of emergency law under the CNS as evidence.

Stop Corruption of Thaksin

The most impactful of the Good Coup sub-frames focused on Thaksin and

Corruption, which were the two discourses employed most frequently by government

supporters. Figure 5.1.2-4 shows the frequency of articles in which the discourses of

Thaksin or corruption were mentioned.

Frequency of mention in frames defending government actions
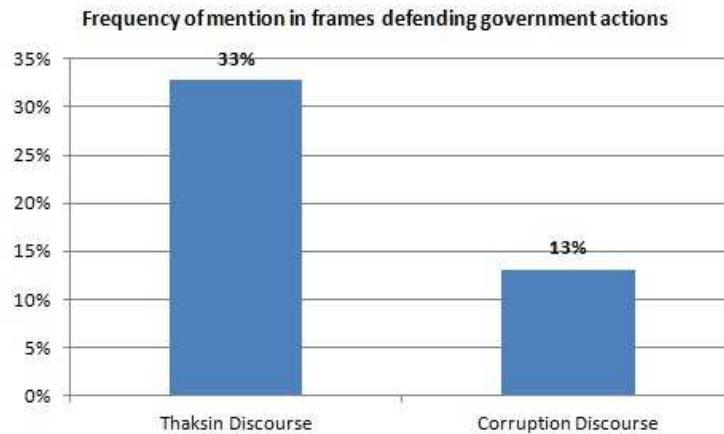
n=61

Figure 5.1.2-4. The Thaksin discourse. The Thaksin discourse (in both the Bangkok Post and Khaosod) was mentioned repeatedly in government frames defending their actions regarding the coup and subsequent measures taken to limit free speech and assembly.[242]

In several articles, CNS leaders described corruption as a disease that threatened to destroy the Thai political and social system and that politicians were not enough to rid the country of the disease. Coup and interim government supporters argued that the crisis that Thaksin created through corruption required military intervention. In a tour of the northeast to cultivate greater support in the heavily pro-Thaksin region, interim Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont talked about Thaksin's corruption of the court and bureaucracy and the need to step in and change the situation.

Elite attitudes towards Thaksin were a catalyst in the creation of a discourse on clean politics, which was presented a cure for the excessive and immoral corruption under

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[242] The Extensive Corruption discourse is inexorably tied to Thaksin. It was used effectively in a major movement led by Suthep Thaugsuban to oust the government of Yingluck Shinawatra, Thaksin's younger sister, in 2013 and early 2014, and it was a major justification for the military coup on May 22, 2014.

Thaksin. The discourse on clean politics emerged during the 1980s in response to elite

concerns in Bangkok with the electoral success of provincial politicians. Thongchai

maintains that this discourse was created by royalists to weaken the electoral system

of government.[243] It was later used to highlight the evils of corruption under Thaksin.

Duncan McCargo said of the discourse on clean politics that, "It challenges and

undermines politicians and the electoral politics…[and] acknowledges moral

authority as the superior and ultimate legitimacy.[244] The strategy of the elites in the

post-Thaksin coup era was to focus significant attention on the evils of corruption to

bolster the importance of the remedy of clean politics as a way of highlighting moral

authority above other mechanisms of authority such as electoral or legal.

5.2   THE EVIL COUP

Following Thaksin's ouster, it took some time for opposition to the coup to mobilize.

This was due mainly to the shock of the coup and the apprehension among Thaksin

supporters of not knowing how the coup leadership would respond to organized

protest. Moreover, while Thaksin enjoyed enormous support in the North and

Northeast, support for democracy as a message in these regions was still not deeply

resonant. Once the charter drafting process began in the middle of 2007, there was an

explosion in criticism of the government and CNS. There was widespread belief

among not only government opponents, but also coup supporters that the proceedings

were heavily influenced by the military with the goal of extending its power under a

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[243] Winichakul, Thongchai. (2008) "Toppling Democracy." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. Vol. 38, No. 1, February 2008, pp. 11–37.

[244] McCargo, D. (ed.) (2002). *Reforming Thai Politics*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press. Page 5.

new constitution. Groups from across the political divide disagreed with several charter amendments that were supported by the interim government and their allies.

Both internationally and domestically, the pro-Thaksin camp framed the coup as a military power grab. Within the circle of Thaksin supporters, a publication that came out in the first half of 2007 but which carries no identifying characteristics (probably to protect its authors) widens the frame beyond the military, also implicating the palace, and particularly Prem (Chief Privy Counselor) and other individuals, as responsible for the coup. Another important message disseminated by anti-coup groups was the sub-frame of "democracy is dead", which highlighted that the coup group had robbed democracy from the people. In addition to pointing out the ill-intentions of the coup group and the impact they had on democracy, the Evil Coup Frame also highlighted how the coup embarrassed the country in the international community. Figure 5.2-1 outlines the cognitive structure of the Evil Coup Frame.[245]

Evil Coup

Hurt economy — Hurt small business people — Abroad Cancelled orders — Skip Thailand. Invest elsewhere — Military negative intentions — Military Revenge — Military Power Grab — Directed by the palace — Democracy is dead — Rob democracy from the people — Many Thais do not support — Just like military dictator coups of past — Destroyed image in international community — Just like what happens in Burma, Russia

Figure 5.2-1. Evil Coup Frame.

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[245] In framing by anti-coup groups following the coup, the frame type "defining the problem" was the most frequently cited. Two of the most prevalent discourses touched upon were the discourse on the CNS (28%) and the discourse on the Military (24%). N: 79.

Military's Negative Intentions

Editorials in the Bangkok Post and other newspapers, as well as in pro-Thaksin

publications, stated that the military was wrong for taking power and had no right to

end democracy. The military was blamed for abrogating the most democratic

constitution in Thailand's history. The sub-frame of military power grab drew on and

compared cognitive material from the past, including ideas and beliefs about the 1976

and 1992 coups and their negative effects on Thai society. Assistant Army

Commander-in-Chief Saprang Kalayanamitr made brash statements condoning coups

under a number of different circumstances, imploring Thais not to compare the

current coup to others in Thai history because it could cause conflict in society.[246]

Interestingly, some anti-coup groups and Thaksin supporters framed the power grab

as taking power from the people, while others framed it as taking power from the

King. Perhaps it was thought that the latter would garner more sympathy from the

people of Bangkok and the Thai middle class, who historically are fiercely loyal to the

royal institution.[247] But this frame might have sought to point out that while people

within the royal institution had supported or even helped to orchestrate the coup, the

King was not involved. In one article in an unnamed publication, the author claims

that the coup made the King upset because it took power from the people and that

Sonthi grabbed power for his own personal self-interest.

> *"He [Sonthi] grabbed power from the people to set up his*
> *own system of power. He wanted to decide who will*

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[246] "Third army group closes the radio station broadcast because it could influence people to protest." *Khaosod*. September 23, 2006.

[247] The largest concentration of the middle class is in Bangkok and the composition of the middle class is predominantly Thais of Chinese descent. Thai Chinese love King Bhumibol because he protected the Chinese against the anti-Chinese policies and discriminations under Phibul Songkram during the 1940s and 1950s.

administer the government. When Sonthi grabbed power, he
actually took power from the King. This was unprecedented.
Sonthi actually tried to remove the King from the head of the
government system. Every year they give a medal to show
the position but this year, May 2006, they didn't get it from
the King and then in response Sonthi did this. Everyone
across Thailand need to come to join together to get rid of
Sonthi. He is drunk with power. We all have to come to take
power back to the King."[248]

One of the ideas underpinning the negative intentions sub-frame was that the coup
was revenge by bitter military leaders and others who had lost power or prestige. In
an early issue of Mahaprachachon, Weesa Kantap wrote a poem in which he touched
upon the issue of revenge as a motivator for the coup.[249]

Ego and pure do they have it or not
Or has it disappeared and not left
You cannot join hands because your hands are paddles
They take the advantage for their own benefit
They want to make the country go in a bunker
Expect to get benefit and expand advantage
Jealous and want revenge.[250]

Democracy is Dead
The democracy-is-dead sub-frame highlighted the major sacrifices that were made by
the Thai people in 1976 and 1992 to bring about democracy. The CNS was claimed
by anti-coup supporters to have turned back the clock on this hard-fought democratic

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[248] "General Sonthi Boonyalkit Rebellion Grab Power from the King." Untitled and undated
publication on the role of the Thai military put out in approximately May of 2007. Author unnamed.
[249] Weesa Kantap is a folk singer, poet and writer who became famous for singing songs about the
local way of life. His words had credibility in conveying the experiences and feelings of everyday rural
people.
[250] "Ego, by Weesa Kantap. Mahaprachachon. June 11, 2007. Mahaprachachon (มหาประชาชน (or "Great
People" was a weekly, Thai language Red Shirt publication and one of the most successful and
enduring within the Red Shirts movement. Mahaprachachon is a mainstream movement publication
with a wide circulation, and the president of the publication, Veeragan Musikapong, is one of the most
recognizable leaders of the Red Shirt movement. Many of the writers and subjects of articles are also
movement leaders.

gains. It was also argued that this event threatened the image of Thailand as a place where democracy flourished. Framers claimed that Thais would not and should not stand for this and that democratic culture was too deeply entrenched and too strongly demanded for the CNS to remove it.[251] An editorial in the Bangkok Post in December of 2006 argued that the people would not easily accept an illegitimate seizure of power because democratic consciousness had developed in the people steadily over the past decade.[252]

There was also a class dimension to this sub-frame in which the coup was framed as an act initiated by the rich to control the poor. It was mentioned that the coup was an example of a society corrupted by a cult of the rich and powerful and that the elite had ignored the rights of the poor by removing a leader they voted into power. This sub-frame was made more salient by issues of regional differences. The coup wasn't widely characterized in this way in either publication but this message was present in a handful of articles and statements by anti-coup and pro-Thaksin groups.

Just like Military Coups of the Past
One frequently occurring sub-frame sought to tie the coup of September 2006 with previous coups in the country's history. Coup opponents compared the recent coup to remove Thaksin to all coups of the past to counter-frame efforts by the CNS to frame the coup as unique in the annals of Thai history for its pure intentions and moral leadership. The 2006 coup was compared with the coup of 1976, which ended in bloodshed as the military and paramilitary forces violently suppressed a popular

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[251] "Coups are not cure-all solution." *Bangkok Post*. March 17, 2007.

[252] "CNS urged to relax freedom of expression. If the CNS wishes to create a democratic nation, it must create a democratic atmosphere and allow expression –even of those that are anti-coup." *Bangkok Post*, December 17, 2006.

protest by university students in Bangkok. This abruptly ended Thailand's first

sustained period of democracy. Dr. Weng, a member of the TRT Party and leader of

the 1976 student movement against dictatorship, said that the coup reminded him of a

similar one in 1947 in which a military dictator forced democratically elected leader

Pridi Panomyoung to flee Thailand. The significance of this was to point out that in

that year, the military set a precedent for interference in civilian government and

established the philosophy that the institution had the moral authority to take control

of the government when they deemed it in the country's best interest.[253]

Hurt the Economy

The final component of the Evil Coup Frame was the message that the coup had

caused significant damage to Thailand's economy. Anti-coup groups claimed that

small businesses and everyday poor people were hurt because the coup had caused

property values to fall and the general uncertainty made banks wary about providing

business loans.

The other message of the economic impact of the coup was that the international

community had been frightened by the coup and international corporations were

beginning to look at other countries, such as Vietnam, as locations for investment.

One popular activist and economist Jakraphob Penkair wrote an article suggesting that

Vietnam was receiving investment that would have gone to Thailand if the coup had

never taken place.[254]

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[253] "Dr Weng is also against the coup." *Khaosod*. September 23, 2006. Dr Weng went on to become one of the leaders of the UDD, also referred to as the Red Shirts.

[254] "PTV to shift its rallies to Sundays." *Bangkok Post*. April 28, 2007. "Jakrapob Penkair is a Thai political dissident and fugitive, founding member of the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship, and former Minister to the Prime Minister's Office under the premiership of Samak Sundaravej."—Wikipedia.

Anti-coup activists spoke out against CNS assertions that the economy would be minimally affected by the coup. They claimed that the CNS timeline for holding elections was too distant in the future and that waiting that long would definitely have a negative impact on the economy.[255] Interestingly, the CNS was keenly aware of the possible negative perceptions of the business community regarding the coup and quickly convened business leaders on the day following the coup to reassure them that the economy would be minimally affected by the coup.[256]

5.3   DOUBLE STANDARD

Shortly after the CNS took control of the government, activists and critics began claiming that they were applying a double standard in the treatment of media outlets. They decried what they saw as a CNS policy of targeting anti-coup media while ignoring military-controlled outlets and those of known government supporters.[257] The CNS shut down several pro-Thaksin media outlets claiming that they threatened national security by promoting conflict, while they ignored outlets that were equally or more aggressive because they had a history of anti-Thaksin sentiment.[258] The CNS counter-framed that they were neutral and unbiased, but the fact that there was some selectivity in deciding which media outlets to target supported the frame of double

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[255] "TRT announced that even though Thaksin is not here, party will stay." Khaosod. September 23, 2006.
[256] "Business leaders hope time is right for reform to take hold." *Bangkok Post*. September 21, 2006.

[257] "Media reform not going far enough." *Bangkok Post*. Dec 20, 2006. In this article, activist Jiles Ungpakorn and others claimed that the military laid a trip to make people think that they are reforming the media.
[258] "Media reform 'not going far enough'." *Bangkok Post*. December 20, 2006. In this article, whether the military is was trying to enhance the independence of the media or consolidate its control over it, former senator Jon Ungpakorn and others claimed that the military had an agenda to make people think that they were reforming the media when really they sought to control it.

standard and chipped away at the morally unbiased and politically neutral discourse that the CNS sought to cultivate through the Good Coup Frame.

5.4 NO INTEREST IN DEMOCRACY

In late January of 2007, the Anti-coup Network organized a protest of approximate 1,000 people at Sanam Luang Park in central Bangkok.[259] The occasion was to demand that the CNS generals and Chief Privy Councilor Prem Tinsulanonda stop interfering in politics. The Anti-coup Network argued that Thailand was living under a CNS-imposed dictatorship and demanded that the generals leave politics and hand power back to the people.

One way in which the frame's empirical credibility was bolstered was that the CNS prolonged martial law in much of the country for more than one year following the coup. One Khaosoad editorial argued that the prolonging of martial law restrained freedom and prevented democracy.[260] The CNS claimed that martial law was required to maintain security. As time passed and national security became a less credible excuse for its maintenance, Sonthi announced that martial law was still required in the North and Northeast to combat narcotics and human trafficking.[261] Another editorial in the Bangkok Post argued that this was not a viable excuse and that martial law must be abolished immediately. Even Abhisit Vejjajiva, one of Thaksin's biggest

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[259] "Protest Demands Army Quit Politics." *Bangkok Post*. January 22, 2007. The Anti-coup Network was an early anti-government movement organization that criticized the coup and demanded that democracy be reinstalled.

[260] "CNS must move to lift martial law." *Bangkok Post*. September 10, 2007.

[261] "Martial law is not political." *Bangkok Post*. Sept 22, 2007. Sonthi's message was that martial law was not political and that the reason for its maintenance was to stop rampant drug and human trafficking. Sonthi claimed that martial law was not a political issue, refuting the claims of the major political parties and many academics, who were urging the CNS to lift martial law.

political rivals and head of the Democrat Party, urged the immediate lifting of martial law to ensure that all sides could contest the upcoming election fairly.

Shortly following the coup, the military shut down Thaksin-aligned local radio stations across the North and Northeast.[262] Even mainstream news outlets were informed by the CNS that they should steer clear of criticism of the interim government and CNS in the interest of promoting healing and harmony.[263] The CNS also promoted the reinstallation of the oppressive 1941 Print Act, which would have given the government sweeping powers of media censorship. Finally, and most publically, the interim government and CNS blocked several pro-Thaksin websites. The webmaster on one of these sites posted in response to the censorship, "We will never bow to dictatorship".[264] Former senator Jon Ungpakorn and others accused the CNS and interim government of attempting to consolidate control over the media.[265] These acts of media suppression were characteristic of an undemocratic regime and not of a new democracy, which the coup leadership claimed was their intended goal.

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[262] "CDRM warns instigators of hatred." *Bangkok Post*. September 24, 2006. Also see: Rally of 1,000+ anti coup protestors at the organization of the PTV, a pro-Thaksin broadcaster owned by Thaksin as the organizers. The broadcaster had been banned under the CNS. They talked about economic decline under the CNS.

[263] ICT Blocks Pro-Thaksin Website." *Bangkok Post*. March 14, 2007. For more on CNS efforts to close websites critical of the coup also see: "State and Media in Thailand during Political Transitions. Communicating to the Mass on Cyberspace: Freedom of Expression and Content Regulation on the Internet."
Phansasiri Kularb, Department of Journalism and Information, Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University Proceedings of the Symposium organized by the French Embassy, The German Embassy, the National Press Council of Thailand and the Thai Journalist Association Building, May 23, 2007.

[264] *Ibid.*

[265] The discourse on the media was also referenced in relation to concerns about whether the military was trying to enhance independence of the media or consolidate its control over the media.

In addition to media censorship, the CNS suppressed public protest through enforcement of emergency decree and also by physically blocking anti-coup protest leaders and TRT Party members from joining protests. In several instances, TRT leaders claimed that they were blocked from going to anti-government protests.[266]

5.5   POOR DRAFT CHARTER

The frame of Thailand as CNS dictatorship was bolstered by several widely criticized actions by the CNS and interim government during the charter process. Among numerous criticisms of the new charter, one of the most frequently levied was that the interim government put forward a new constitution, when many believed that the 1997 charter was the most democratic in the country's history.[267] Another criticism included that the charter drafting process did not incorporate diverse ideas and opinions from across the political spectrum but was instead dominated by a small group of government supporters. One writer noted that, "It was not quite representative and needed to change in order to uphold democratic principles."[268] Not only was the process under fire, but many were unhappy about a proposal that the

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[266] "CNS urged to relax freedom of expression. If the CNS wishes to create a democratic nation, it must create a democratic atmosphere and allow expression –even of those that are anti-coup." *Bangkok Post*. December 17, 2006.

[267] "Constitutional Test Fast Approaching." *Bangkok Post*. July 15, 2007. The TRT Party called for a no-vote on the new constitution and a return to the 1997 constitution, claiming that the 1997 charter was superior. Even previous government supporters felt that when comparing both constitutions, the process of the new charter and some of its components unnecessarily strengthened the military and that the 1997 constitution was much better.

[268] The Threat to Media Freedom." *Bangkok Post*. May 13, 2007. Also see: "Keeping things democratic." *Bangkok Post*. December 17, 2006. In what is a neutrally written piece, the writer says that the mere discussion of an unelected prime minister is dangerous. He says that certain NLA members are trying to further an agenda that is bad for the country. The author also talks about what democracy means and says that it is demanded by the people, is a major part of the culture, and should be a part of Thailand's political scene.

new constitution include a provision for an unelected prime minister in periods of crisis.

Several proposals presented by CNS supporters in the National Assembly were viewed as undemocratic. One of these was the proposal to reinstitute the 1941 Print Act, which had first been introduced decades ago to suppress media criticism. Another proposal the CNS presented and strongly advocated was the Internal Security Bill. Eventually passed, the law gave the military sweeping political powers. Opponents of the bill said that it would give the military a blank check to violate human rights.[269] Many NGOs, democracy advocates and members of the media were strongly opposed to these proposals, labelling them anti-democratic and dictatorial. These voices started to blend in with criticisms from the pro-Thaksin camp, creating a chorus of opposition to the new charter and framing it as a military attempt to consolidate power.

5.6   EVIL THAKSIN

Thaksin's opponents undertook a vigorous framing effort of the deposed leader in the days and weeks following his ouster. Labels describing Thaksin and his influence on Thai politics as a disease and incurable cancer appeared often in the Bangkok Post and Khaosod. The term money politics was assigned to explain the mechanism through which Thaksin spread cancer through the body politic. Different groups sought to draw him in the most negative light possible to justify the coup. Some frames of Thaksin spoke to the necessity of the coup to end the political divisiveness caused by the former leader. Others focusing on Thaksin's human rights abuses and

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[269]"Still hoping for the best in the face of despair." *Khaosod*. November 15, 2007.

corruption surfaced later and were in direct response to a wave of anti-coup criticism from some local sources and the international community. Yet another wave of anti-Thaksin framing attacking all aspects of his behavior and administration, and appeared as the investigations of alleged corruption by the Asset Examination Committee stalled.

Labels Thaksinomics and Thaksinocracy described a dictatorial and corrupt approach to administering the economy and country. Taken together, these frames and labels point to a master frame of Thaksin as an evil, corrosive force in Thai politics and a threat to the nation.

Figure 5.6-1 outlines the cognitive structure of the Thaksin is Evil Frame.
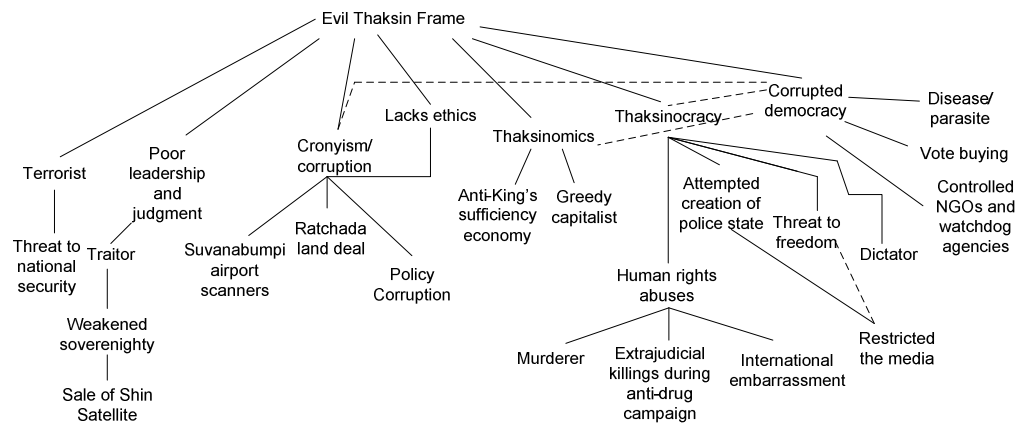

Figure 5.6-1. Evil Thaksin Frame.

Following the coup, the interim government and CNS conceded that they were losing the battle to frame Thaksin, particularly in the international media. In April of 2007, a source in the CNS leaked to the press that the organization was launching a public relations campaign against Thaksin that would focus on attacking him in three areas:

adverse effects of his economic policies, human rights abuses, and corruption.[270] The

CNS had previously released a 35-page White Paper outlining the justification for the

September 19, 2006 coup.[271] The public relations brief and White Paper provide a

glimpse into the CNS and supporters' efforts to influence public opinion about

Thaksin and the coup.

Thaksinocracy

The label Thaksinocracy described a Thaksin governance system that was based on

money politics, in which elections were won through vote-buying, and in which

democratic institutions were corrupted and twisted to Thaksin's will.[272] Thaksin was

blamed for administering the country much like a dictatorship.[273] He was also

criticized for his supposed poor record on human rights. The focus on human rights

abuses was a direct attempt to convince the international community of the necessity

of the coup. General Sonthi Boonyaratkalin also mentioned Thaksin as a corrupt

leader who condoned or protected murderers. This frame spoke to a deeper level of

criminality, depicting Thaksin as a murderer or a protector of murderers. Framers also

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[270] "CNS Hunts for People Behind Leak." *Bangkok Post*. April 10, 2007. The strategy by the CNS was to focus communication of Thaksin's human rights abuses in the international media and use local media sources to highlight charges of corruption.

[271] "White Paper outlines Thaksin's misdeeds: The Council for National Security has produced a 35-page White Paper outlining the justification for the September 19, 2006 coup." *Bangkok Post*. Nov 26, 2006. The categories included: Corruption and conflict of interest, power abuse, ethics violations, meddling in the constitution's checks and balances mechanisms, human rights abuses, and exploitation to benefit family and closet cronies. The theme of the white paper was that Thaksin perpetrated many ethical and human rights abuses, and that the coup was a last resort to put an end to these abuses. Corruption was also a major underlying theme in the white paper. Dictatorship was mentioned implicitly, especially when discussing the destruction of checks and balances.

[272] Thirayuth Boonmee, "สี่ปีของทักษิโนเครซี่ [Four Years of Thaksinocracy] Matichon Weekly, (30 July 5 Aug): 9-11.The term was said to be created by Dr. Teerayut Bunmee, a fervent anti-Thaksin academic. He coined the term to describe what he said was extensive corruption, vote-buying, and weakening of independent institutions. A major critic of Thaksin and Campaign for Popular Democracy Secretary General Suriyasai said that TRT members discussing leaving the party must no longer follow the Thaksinocracy system that has weakened the country.

[273] Nelson, Michael H. "Looking Back Before the Election of 2011: Thailand's Constitutional Referendum and the Election of 2007." *European-Asian Journal of Law and Governance*. Page 56-57.

claimed that Thaksin's flagrant disregard for human rights was an embarrassment for the country. Overall, however, criticism of Thaksin's human rights record was limited during the period in these publications.

Human Rights Watch drew on components of the Thaksinocracy sub-frame in their criticism of The Premier League for allowing Thaksin to buy the Manchester City football team. They argued that, due to his poor HR record, he should not be allowed to purchase the team.[274] The National Human Rights Commission and Lawyers Council of Thailand called for the government to ratify the convention of the International Criminal Court so that Thaksin could be tried for crimes against humanity for his anti-drug campaign.[275]

Human rights abuses were a main message abroad, while at home, throughout the period from the coup to the first post-coup election, human rights abuses were mentioned less frequently than corruption and cronyism as the rationale for the coup. One possible reason for this is that Thaksin's heavy handed policies towards the Muslims in the south, and his war on drugs, enjoyed widespread local support, including in royalist and military circles. Calling attention to these topics too frequently would have put the CNS at odds with popular sentiment and spotlighted the involvement of the military and royalists.

Another criticism of Thaksin was that he suppressed media freedoms. This frame was used much more frequently before the coup and in the weeks following it, but later in the study period the frame of media suppression rarely surfaced. A reasonable

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[274] "Criticism by rights group rejected." *Bangkok Post*. August 2, 2007.
[275] "Thaksin 'must be tried for deaths'" *Bangkok Post*, November 20, 2006.

suggestion for why this was the case is that under the CNS press freedom and

freedom of assembly were greatly curtailed. Even Thaksin's opponents came to

believe that media freedom was much more restrictive under the CNS than it had been

under Thaksin.[276]

Corrupted Democracy

Another key sub-frame used to rationalize the coup was that Thaksin had corrupted

democracy.[277] The CNS and interim government argued that Thaksin sought to

control NGOs, engaged in wholesale vote buying, and compromised the work of

independent watchdog agencies, thereby corrupting democracy to the point that the

only cure was for it to be temporarily suspended.[278] Two months after the coup, then

Deputy Commander of the Royal Thai Army Anupong Paochinda said that NGOs

under Thaksin were not able to operate freely and that the coup allowed them more

space.[279] Thaksin was often criticized in the press during the period for employing

vote buying and propaganda to win an electoral mandate. It was argued that he would

not win election if it wasn't for his ability to buy votes.[280] Vote buying was described

as a scourge that weakened democracy and people who sold their votes were

described as weak and ignorant. The corrupting democracy sub-frame was present but

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[276] "Web censorship draws rising global concern." *Bangkok Post*. May 25, 2007. Human Rights Watch criticized the interim government for severally cracking down on press freedoms. They claimed that the Thai government was far worse than Thaksin when it comes to cracking down on media. Also see: Political website fights. *Bangkok Post*. June 9, 2007.

[277] "Sonthi puts time limit on probes. Should be in court six months after coup." *Bangkok Post*. Dec 17, 2006

[278] "Corruption-proofing the constitution." *Bangkok Post*. December 17, 2006. Thaksin was blamed by Kiatchai Pongpanich for exploiting some of the loopholes in the 1997 constitution

[279] "Saparang and Anupong take care of two cases." *Khaosod*. November 1, 2006.

[280] "Sonthi: Next army boss must win public trust," *Bangkok Post*. August 23, 2007. In this article, Sonthi Boonyalakgarin implies that the people who voted against the constitutional referendum were paid [and thus morally flawed] and those voting for it had pure intentions.

not widely referenced during the period.[281] In his analysis of rural Thai politics, which

he labels "Communities of Desire", Jakkarit says that the idea that rural people

readily sell their votes and do not understand or respect the democratic process is a

myth.[282]

Lack of Ethics

The CNS and interim government also highlighted Thaksin's lack of ethics and

morals as rationale for the coup. He was criticized for exploiting the constitution, and

evading taxes on the sale of his Shin Satellite firm to Singapore based Temasek

Holding. Following the coup, there was extensive discussion by senior officials within

the CNS and interim government about the need to improve morality and ethics in

government. Even King Bhumibol Adulyadej in several speeches to the country

before and following the coup highlighted the importance of moral and ethical

leadership.[283] Following the coup, during the New Year, coup leaders and Interim

Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont made the annual visit to the home of Chief Privy

Councillor Prem Tinsulanonda, where they were lectured on the importance of

morality and ethics. They were each given a book on the topic and the event was well

covered in the local press.

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[281] The frame of corrupting democracy was again employed effectively by anti-Thaksin groups in the 2013 and 2014 People's Democratic Reform Committee's (PDRC) attempts to force Yingluck and the Pheua Thai Party to step down. The frame had greater empirical resonance during this period because it came following the Pheua Thai Party's attempt to use their majority position in the parliament to push through an amnesty bill that would have pardoned Thaksin, who was convicted while in excile of corruption in February 2010, along with all those involved in political conflict beginning during the anti-Thaksin campaign of 2006.

[282] Jakkarit

[283] "King lends govt moral support: Urges subjects to help steer nation from peril." *Bangkok Post.* December 5, 2006. In his annual birthday address, the King said that the government of PM Surayud was moral and that all members, and especially Surayud, have high principles and do this position out of sacrifice and not for political reasons. The goal was to show support by labeling the interim government as moral, ethical, and without political interest.

In early 2007, the government made a major public relations trip to Thaksin's electoral stronghold in Northeast Thailand. During the trip, Surayud spoke repeatedly of the importance of morality and ethics in government. The Minister of Education under the interim government announced that he was adjusting the school curriculum to put the topic of morality and ethics on equal footing with the pursuit of knowledge because of the need to build moral and ethical citizens. These actions and initiatives created the image of a crisis of morality and ethics that was a direct result of Thaksin and his system of government.

Thaksinomics

While the Thaksinocracy frame depicted Thaksin as a corrupt leader who distorted the political system, the Thaksinomics frame described the corrosive influence of Thaksin in the economic realm. The original description of Thaksinomics was an economic system that sought to develop the country using domestic resources and capacity and to protect local companies from international competition.[284] Over time, however, the term took on a negative connotation of a country that was run like a company, with little input from voices outside of Thaksin's team of economic advisors. Groups also began to claim that Thaksinomcs compromised the country in the global realm, ran counter to the King's philosophy.[285]

Framers depicted pro-Thaksin groups as capitalists who sold the country. One such claim was that Thaksin had politically empowered greedy capitalists who were unfit to be involved in politics. Thaksinomics was also said to have enabled global

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[284] Phongpaichit, Pasuk; Baker, Christopher. "Thaksin: The Business of Politics in Thailand." *Nordic Institute for Asian Studies*, 2004.

[285] "PAD to protest against Somkid's appointment". *The Nation*. February 18, 2007.

corporations to hurt Thai people. This frame highlighted negative stereotypes of capitalists that they served narrow interests and sought individual benefits, however this discourse of global capitalism and its negative impact on Thailand was not mentioned widely in framing efforts. [286]

When the interim government and CNS hired Somkid Jatusripitak, Thaksin's former minister of commerce and force behind Thaksinomics, the move was opposed by many within the CNS and interim government camp, who labeled Somkid as pro-capitalist and anti-democratic.[287] The notion of greedy capitalism was juxtaposed with the King's sufficiency economy philosophy, which was framed as an alternative economic system that focused on the national interest and promoted modesty over excessive materialism. Privy Councillor Ampol Senanarong stated that the decision of the country's future economic direction was a choice between the sufficiency economy philosophy and Thaksinomics. Thaksinomics was framed as a rejection of the King's philosophy and by extension the King himself. In May of 2006, the PAD in their efforts to bring about the removal of Thaksin announced the creation of a political party called the Mass Party to in their words, "campaign against Thaksinomics."

Poor Leadership and Judgment
Another component of the Evil Thaksin Frame was that Thaksin showed poor leadership and judgement. He was said to be heavy handed, egotistical and focused solely on enriching his family. The CNS and interim government framed Thaksin's sale of Shin Satellite to Singapore as an act of treason and as weakening Thailand's

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[286] "Charter Keeps Rights and Liberties: Deans." September 27, 2006.
[287] "Surayud creates a bad feeling in society." *Khaosod.* February 17, 2007.

sovereignty, drawing on a nationalist discourse to fuel anti-Thaksin sentiment. This

sub-frame did not attack Thaksin's administrative decisions and leadership because

under Thaksin the economy had performed strongly and policy implementation was

more efficient than under previous administrations. It instead attacked Thaksin's

personality as the root of the problem. Borwornsak Uwanno, Cabinet Secretary-

General under the Thaksin administration, labeled Thaksin a demagogue who ignored

advice and regularly berated his underlings.[288] Thaksin was also said to react with

emotion instead of logic and rational thinking. One high ranking Pheua Thai Party

member lauded Thaksin's leadership skills but said that he was inclined towards

hubris.[289]

Cronyism/Corruption
One of the most frequent accusations against Thaksin was that his government was

involved in significant budgetary and administrative corruption. One focus of these

charges was in the planning and construction of the Suvarnabhumi Airport in

Bangkok. This topic surfaced repeatedly in articles and statements critical of the

former leader. Another element of the sub-frame involved the Rachada land deal and

accusations that the Thaksin family benefited by purchasing land in Bangkok along

Rachada Road at a cheap price from the government.

The problem was framed not as a democratically elected leader ousted by the military,

but as a corrupt leader who was removed for the good of the nation. The Democrat

Party released a black book that lists all acts of supposed corruption by Thaksin, and

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[288] "No constitution can be written to prevent coup." Bangkok Post. November 5, 2006.
[289] Author interview with senior Pheua Thai Party leader. April, 2012.

was said to counter Thaksin's narrative that he was a victim of a military vendetta.[290]

The discourse on corruption also changed with Thaksin's ouster. The label policy corruption surfaced in 2004 and was echoed repeatedly following the 2006 coup to describe a system in which Thaksin used populist policies and programs to benefit companies owned by himself, his family, close circle of associates, and party members.[291] The policy corruption label was used not only to criticize Thaksin, but also to discredit his populist programs and make an argument for why they should be discontinued.

In speeches, Interim Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont spoke of corruption using the metaphor of a life-threatening disease. The title and by-line of one article stated that the, "national disease of graft will be crushed." The use of metaphors of disease, parasite, and cancer gave the issue of corruption a more serious and insidious character with the goal of making the cure of radical reform more palatable to the public.[292]

Figure 5.6-2 illustrates that the government and its supporters cited corruption most frequently in discussions of Thaksin. Another area connected frequently with discussion of Thaksin was that he was a terrorist and threat to national security. The

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[290] "Black Book lists Thaksin era gaft." *Bangkok Post*, February 6, 2007.

[291] "Study: Shares in Shinawatra firms soar on back of govt policy." *Nation Multimedia*. June 27, 2004.

[292] The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI) dropped slightly from 3.6 in 2006 to 3.3 in 2007 and then back up to 3.5 in 2008. According to this, corruption didn't decrease markedly from the period during Thaksin to the post-Thaksin administration. See: http://asiancorrespondent.com/71102/is-corruption-in-thailand-decreasing/

discourses of terrorism and national security were popular themes in Western

countries at this time and were used here to justify actions taken by the military.

Government /Supporter Thaksin Discourse and Major Themes

n=123 (Other category=24%)[293]
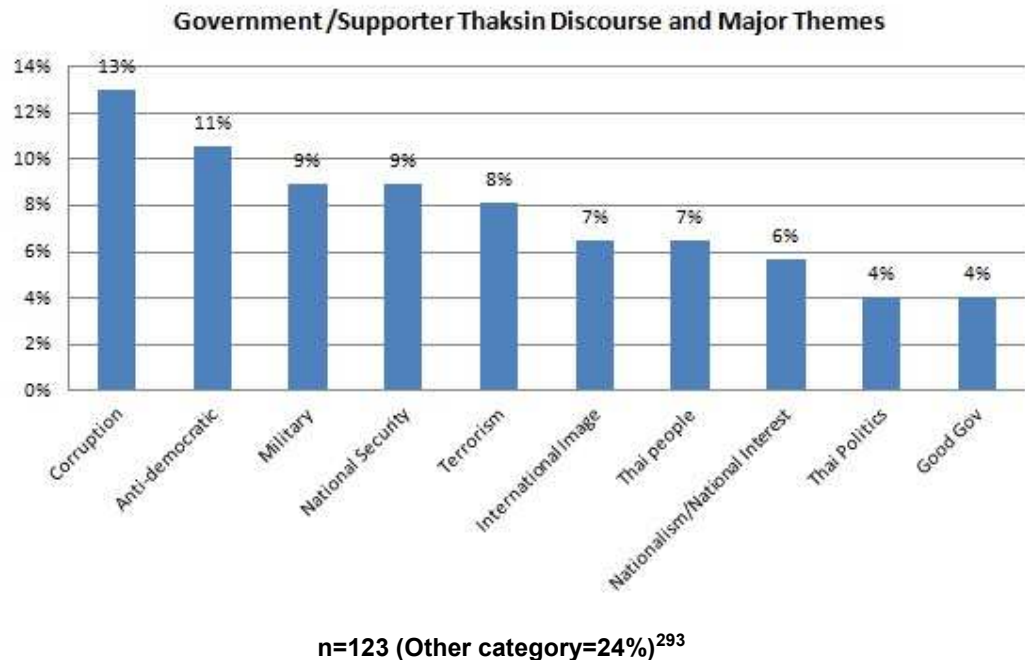
Figure 5.6-2. Corruption Statistics. Corruption was the number one theme in mentions of the Thaksin discourses by the government and its supporters.

Corruption was a discourse that resonated deeply with the middle class.[294] Since the

1990s administration of Prime Minister Chatchai Choonhavan's "buffet cabinet".

Corruption was used as one of the issues making up the pretext to oust the Chatchai

regime in a coup in 1991.[295] Human rights, while an important discourse for

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[293] The "Other" category included: Power Distribution, Southern Conflict, Sufficiency Economy, Vote buying, Morality, Capitalism, Econ Administration., Monarchy, Human Rights, and War on Drugs.
[294] Marc Saxer. "A democratic anti-corruption discourse for Thailand. May 17, 2014. New Mandala. http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2014/05/17/a-democratic-anti-corruption-discourse-for-thailand/
[295] Tamada, Yoshifumi. "Coups in Thailand, 1980-1991: Classmates, Internal Conflicts and Relations with the Government of the Military." *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 33, No.3, December 1995. Page 52-54.

international audiences, was not a focal point of framing efforts domestically because

Thaksin's War on Drugs enjoyed widespread support, as did his actions towards

Muslims in Thailand's southern region. This made framing of Thaksin as a human

rights abuser much less effective and so the government and its supporters did not

spend as much effort in this area. Figure 5.6-3 shows that the most aggressive

promulgators of the Thaksin is Evil Frame were members of the media, not the

interim government or CNS.
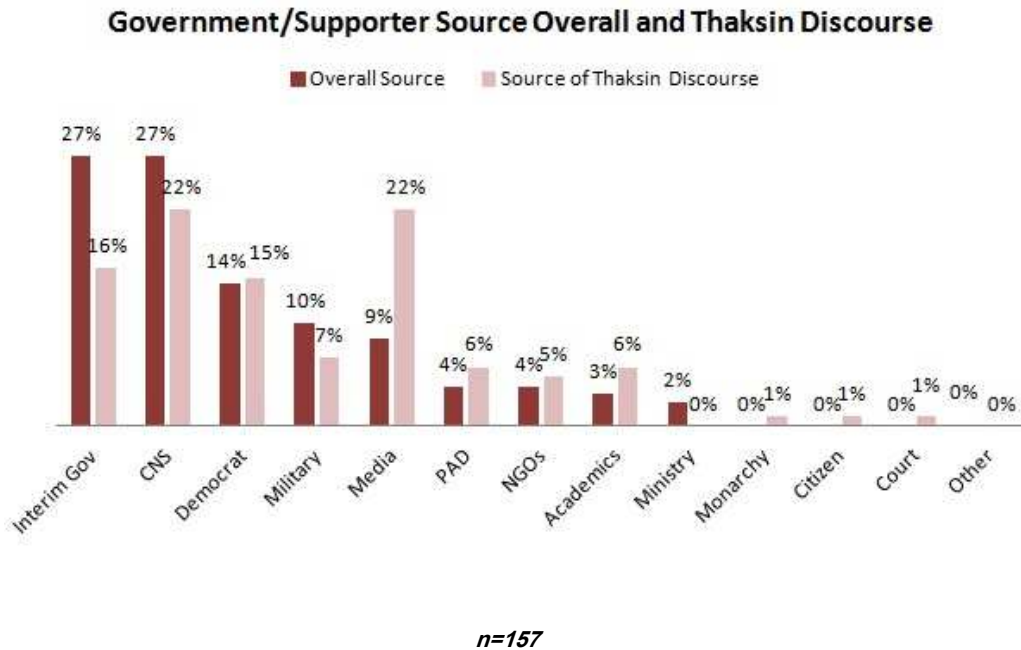
Figure 5.6-3. Media and Criticism of Thaksin. The Media was a major source of criticism of Thaksin, but played a far less important role overall in government/supporter framing efforts.

Thaksin and his supporters countered the Thaksin is Evil Frame by focusing on the

ousted leader's record of helping the poor through his economic and social policies.

In one rally in late 2007, 25,000 supporters listened as leaders from the new People's

Power Party (PPP) vowed that if elected they would continue Thaksin's social policies.[296] The frame of double standard was also touched upon in counter-framing efforts. The PPP leaders drew attention to the Democrat's main criticism of Thaksin for corrupting democracy, counter-framing that the Democrat Party had raised more than 11 million baht in a single fundraising event. Thaksin supporters also counter-framed the claim that Thaksin was anti-monarchy with the message that Thaksin honored and protect the royal institution.[297] Yet another counter-frame focused on the characterization of Thaksin as corrupt by claiming that he made his money honestly through business and was the victim of jealously.[298]

5.7 THAKSIN SYSTEM FRAME

While the media focused on Thaksin as an individual and charges of corruption as the underlying rationale for the coup, the CNS, interim government, and its supporters did not limit their framing of the problem to Thaksin alone. Instead, they emphasized the Thaksin System Frame (ระบอบทักษิณ: Rapbob Thaksin) to explain that it was not only Thaksin who was to blame for the country's problems, but the entire system that he created. This characterization of Thaksin's politics first emerged in 2004.[299] The CNS was concerned that this system was robust enough to continue dominating politics

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[296] The PPP was established following the dissolution of the TRT Party by the Constitutional Tribune for election violations during the 2006 election. The PPP was comprised almost entirely of former TRT members.

[297] "Democrat, PPP rivalry heats up." *Bangkok Post*. November 27, 2007. In this article, the People's Power PPP candidate Chalerm Yubamrung defended Thaksin as loyal to the Thai Monarchy and lashed out at the CNS and their rationale for carrying out the coup.

[298] "Division worries PPP." *Bangkok Post*. November 24, 2007. Deputy PPP Leader Yongyuth Tiyapairat counter-framed that Thaksin is being unjustly accused of corruption and that he earned his money legitimately.

[299] Chermsak Pinthong was a noted Thai intellectual and contributed to a volume of articles critical of Thaksin published in 2004 in which he coined the term Thaksin System to criticize Thaksin's leadership and administrative style. See: McCargo, Duncan; Patthamanan, Ukrit. *The Thaksinization of Thailand*. NIAS Press, 2005. Pages 198 – 204.

even in Thaksin's absence. The Thaksin System Frame described a system of corrupt, imperious, governance under Thaksin that created a corrosive system of vote buying that exploited uneducated people and undermined democracy. It was a system that could not easily be destroyed because of the dominance of the Thai Rak Thai Party. This system could only be cured by dismantling the old political structures and replacing them with new structures.[300]

Figure 5.7-1 illustrates that while the Evil Thaksin Frame was prominent in government framing efforts, there was also considerable focus on the Thaksin System.

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[300] During the study period, the label Thaksin System was mentioned repeatedly in the press by the CNS and its supporters. The Thaksin System became a label used to describe anything that Thaksin opponents disliked about his regime. Academic and political activist Pramote Nakornthap said that the Thaksin System was the populist policy structures that allowed him to curry favor with large segments of the population. Chaiwat Sinsuwong said of the Thaksin System that it was like a cancer in the second stage that is hard to cure. He said that the Thaksin System had weakened other important governance systems. Somkid Lertpaitoon, secretary of the CDC said that the CNS's role was to, "fix the Thaksin System." See: "Somkid opens up about the mission of the constitution drafters." *Khaosod*. July 14, 2007. The Thaksin System Frame resurfaced during the PDRC campaign to oust the Yingluck administration. See: "Thai Demonstrators Seek to End Thaksin's Political Dominance." *Bloomberg News*. November 26, 2013. In this article, Suthep Thaugsuban, leader of the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) in encouraging government officials to join him in protest against the Yingluck government, stated, "If they have no ministries or officials to work for them, this government will crumble….If nobody comes out to protest, we will become slaves of the Thaksin system forever."
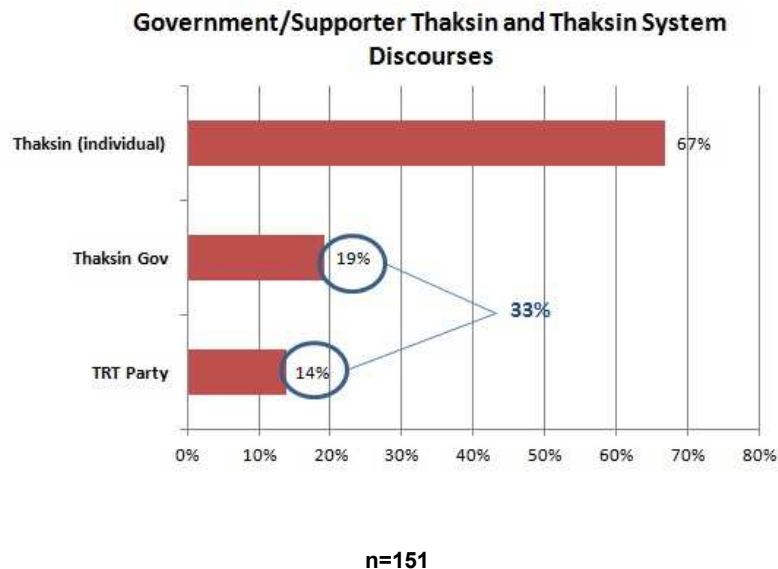
Figure 5.7-1. One in three frames of Thaksin focused specifically on the system of government.

The Thaksin System Frame allowed for the receiver to think of solutions in terms of radical change to the system of government. The CNS and interim government, as well as their supporters, were concerned that even though Thaksin had been removed from power, fresh elections would lead to continued political domination by the Thai Rak Thai Party. Breaking his power and the power of his party required a frame that depicted a political system in need of systemic reform. While the diagnostic frame was clear, how to fix the problem was widely debated within the government. Figure 5.7-2 depicts the contours of the Thaksin System Frame.
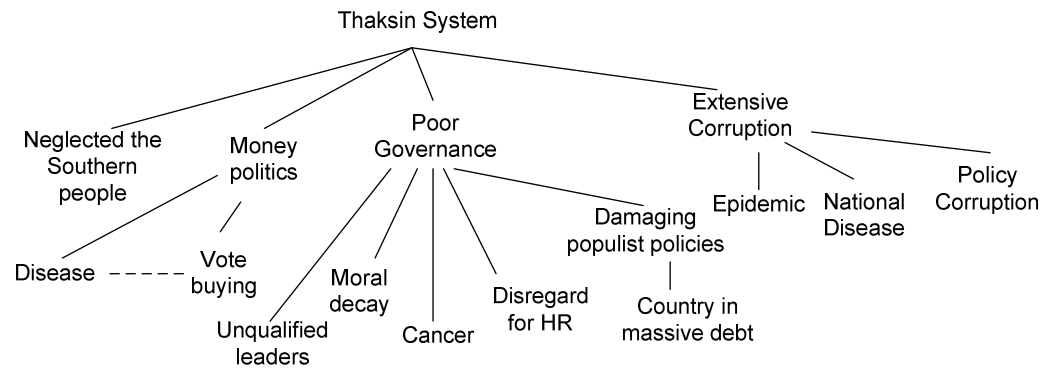
Figure 5.7-2. Thaksin System Frame.

This frame allowed for the possibility of prognostic frames that temporarily moved

the country away from democracy in order to provide the necessary cure for systemic

failure. In this way, the Thaksin System Frame widened the discourse on Thai

politics, inviting options of undemocratic solutions to Thailand's political crisis. One

week after the coup, Abhisit Veejajiva, Democrat Party leader said about the Thaksin

System that it, "Nearly destroyed the idea of democracy. It is very dangerous for the

country and the monarchy."[301]

Money Politics
The frame of money politics was used regularly by the CNS and interim government

to explain the influence of money under the Thaksin system. It described a vote-

buying system that allowed corrupt leaders to maintain control of the government.[302]

The argument was that money was the only bond between the TRT Party and its

constituencies and if you took that away, voters would withdraw their support.

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[301] "Mark said a coup is a coup." *Khaosod.* September 26, 2006.
[302] The theme of money politics had been central to the political reform discourse since the early 1990s.

Chaiwat Sinsuwong said of this system that it was a cancer in the second stage that was hard to cure.[303] This message was communicated frequently in the months following the coup and was discussed widely in conferences and panels set up by media organizations and universities.[304] The implication was that even with Thaksin removed from power, the money politics system, and its corrosive influence, would remain. The money politics sub-frame engendered a two-pronged solution. The first was a re-education of rural people about the responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy, and the negative effects of vote-buying. A second more radical proposal detailed a restructuring of the representative system of government to weaken its majoritarian character by requiring a large number of parliamentarians be appointed rather than elected.

Poor Governance
The Thaksin System Frame focused on three areas of governance. The first area entailed the qualification of officials within the Thaksin government. Framers claimed that Thaksin and other leaders were unfit because they had no knowledge of public administration, were selfish opportunists, and fed off of the system like a cancer.[305] These incapable and insincere politicians were said to be the root of moral decay in Thailand. Thaksin was also attacked for perceived human rights abuses.

The second area of the poor governance sub-frame was that Thaksin's populist policies should be discontinued because they caused the country to incur massive

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[303] Chaiwat Sinsuwong was the leader of a PAD branch called the Assembly of Isaan People.
[304] "Call for 'truly Thai charter". *Bangkok Post*. Oct 12, 2006.
[305] "Abhisit confident in Party's Future." *Bangkok Post*. April 7, 2007. In the article, Abhisit Vejjajiva is quoted as saying that the country should be run by career politicians, not amateurs.

debt.[306] This sub-frame did not surface regularly because many in the anti-Thaksin camp felt that it was politically unwise to attack his populist policies because they were widely supported by the poor.[307] There was considerable disagreement within the interim government and the CNS over how to frame Thaksin's anti-poverty policies and his relationship with the poor. Several voices in the Surayud Chulanont government acknowledged that his bond with the rural poor in the north and northeast was genuine, and that his policies were indeed helpful to that segment of the population.[308] This disagreement within the government camp weakened the Evil Thaksin and Thaksin System frames. The positive experiences that poor Thais had with these populist policies seemed to undercut an important element of the Thaksin System Frame, which attacked these policies as ineffective.

Corruption was also a major line of attack of the Thaksin System Frame. When more than one month following the coup there were still no charges against Thaksin or anyone in his administration, the corruption dimension of the Thaksin System Frame began to lose credibility. This made the coup rationale of a "corruption epidemic" harder to sell to domestic and international audiences. If the Thaksin System was indeed as corrupt as the CNS and interim government claimed, then there must be abundant evidence. Many government supporters were displeased with the slow pace

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[306] "Surayud advised to boost political savvy." *Bangkok Post*. Dec 29, 2006.

[307] "Call for 'truly Thai charter". *Bangkok Post*. October 12, 2006. In this article, social critic Thirayuth Boonmi says that the structure of governance under Thaksin was a disease and needed to be cured. Interestingly, in the same article, Boonmi says that Thaksin's populist policies (and those specifically helping the poor) as should be continued under the new government.

[308] This frame of Thaksin was at odds with the anti-Thaksin frame within the government, which claimed that Thaksin's policies were either unacceptable or irrelevant because they exploited the ignorance of the poor as a political weapon.

of investigation.[309] These groups demanded immediate charges against Thaksin and

his senior officials and began to openly call the legitimacy of the coup into question.

The Thaksin System frame followed a similar pattern of frequency as the Evil

Thaksin Frame over the study period, as illustrated in Figure 5.7-3.

Thaksin and System Discourse Mentions over Study Period

n=151
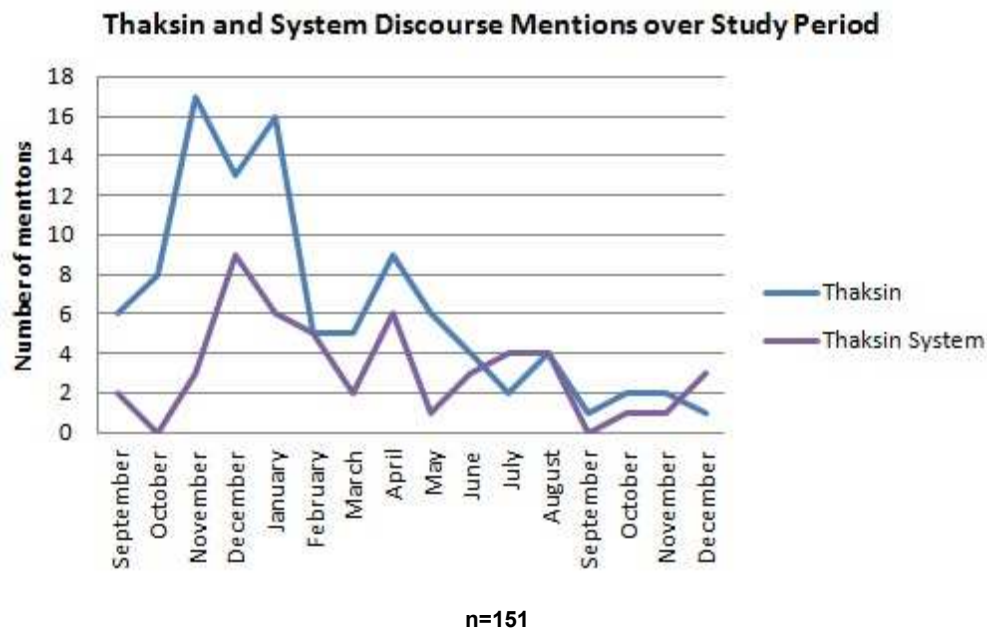
Figure 5.7-3. Thaksin System Frame Trajectory. While much less frequently mentioned, the Thaksin System Frame was referenced heavily during the debate over the new constitution, particularly to argue for the necessity of undemocratic amendments.

Although it was mentioned much less frequently in 2007, overall, mentions of the

Evil Thaksin Frame outnumbered the Thaksin System Frame by a ratio of 3:1. The

only time period that the Thaksin System Frame outnumbered the Evil Thaksin Frame

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[309] Pro-democracy groups, the PAD movement, and interest groups/NGOs were the most vocal of the government supporters regarding their displeasure with the slow pace of investigation into corruption under the Thaksin administration.

was during the period of June through August, 2007. This is significant as it was during this period that the debate over the new constitution was raging and there were many proposed amendments that would have strengthened the military and led to the retreat of democracy. These proposals were said to be necessary because of the dangerous and corrosive Thaksin System of government.[310] The evidence suggests that shift in frame from Thaksin to Thaksin System was a conscious effort on the part of Thaksin opponents to dismantle the power structure that allowed Thaksin to win elections and control the government.

5.8   BUILDING THE DREAM SOCIETY

> *"The good intention of the CNS and government to build the dream society will be successful only when they receive cooperation from every part of society. The question is, are the poor ready to cooperate in building the new dream society or not. The answer seems to be that they are only speaking, not doing...The solution is the dream society of cohesion, equality, self-sufficiency, and morality."—Editorial, Khaosod [311]*

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[310] Even in recent news we see discussion of the Thaksin System Frame. It is still present in the anti-Thaksin discourse, albeit under a different name. In early August of 2013, the Thai parliament was debating a bill that would provide amnesty to individuals who broke the law during political protests over the past several years. Anti-government groups took to the street in protest of the bill claiming that its principle aim was to secure amnesty for Thaksin. The protest leaders talked of "Thaksinism", a system of popular government that allowed his party to continue to win majorities in the parliament and carry out Thaksin's corrupt agenda.

[311] "Dream Society." *Khaosod*. December 31, 2006.

Whereas the Evil Thaksin and Thaksin System Frames diagnosed the problems that the country faced, the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame described the interim government- and CNS-proposed solution that Thailand should be governed by leaders with strong morals and ethics. Through this type of leadership, they argued, Thailand could create a dream society of morality and cohesion. Under the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame, one or a few good, just and moral leaders could rule the country and protect that national interest without necessarily enjoying popular consent. The country could trust the purity of the moral and ethical leader because he had the trust and confidence of the royal institution. The concept had enjoyed a rich history in Thailand and had its roots in Buddhist notions of morality and also in the Thai monarchy. Thailand's King Bhumibol is believed to be inviolate; he is a paragon of virtue, morality and ethics.

Since the Thai monarch was the perfect example of morality, ethics and virtue, and if he was able to act unbiased and put the national interest first, and he was also a human being, then by logical reasoning, it was possible for other human beings to maintain a high level of virtue. This logic was important because during the era in which the monarchy was in power, in many areas of life, the King depended on senior staff to implement his policies and directives. These people needed to also be viewed as moral and ethical, otherwise, it would call into question the moral authority of the institution itself.

This is the underlying argument for the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame as both a solution to the Thaksin System Frame, and in more radical circles, as an alternative to democratic government.   Figure 5.8-1 outlines the Moral and Ethical Leadership

Frame, while Figure 5.8-2 shows the frequency with which the frame appeared in the

Bangkok Post and Khaosod over the study period.
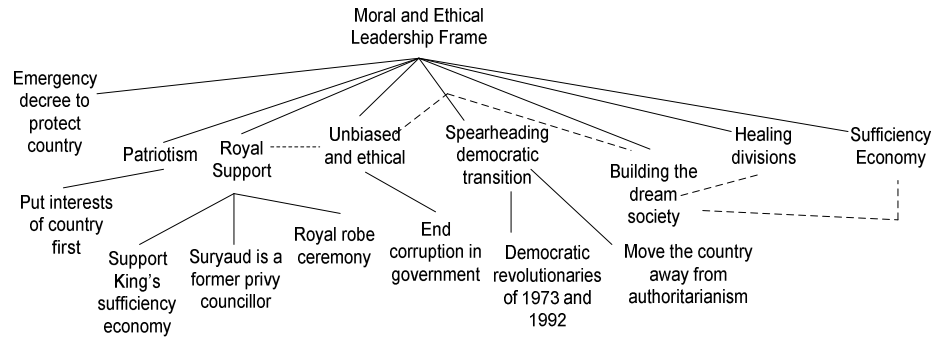
Figure 5.8-1. Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame.
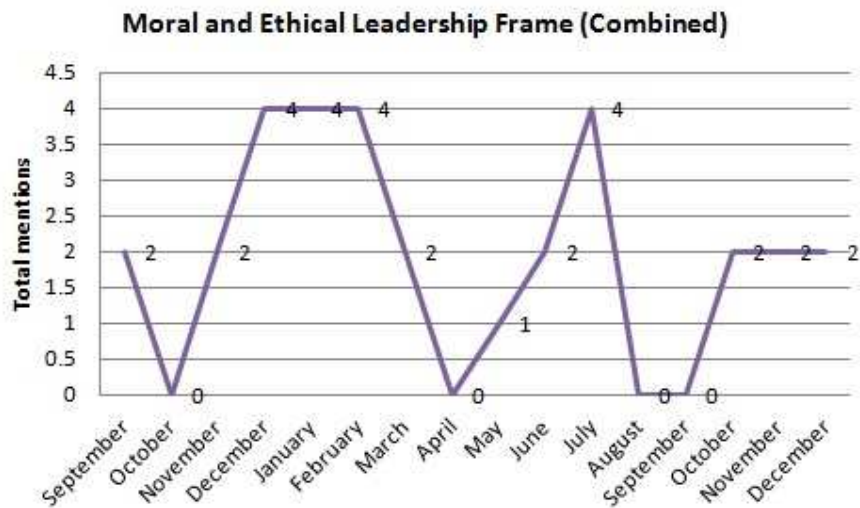
n=31

Figure 5.8-2. The Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame. This frame appeared most frequently during the constitutional drafting and referendum periods.312

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312 IV Interim Government/Military/CNS; DV Discourse Mentions: Morality, Hero, National Security, National Interest, Good Governance, Justice, Human Rights, War on Drugs, and Sufficiency Economy.

The King of Thailand possesses moral authority as the head of the monarchy. He has intervened in the past during periods of crisis to avert bloodshed and restore stability. This moral authority comes not only from his position as the King of Thailand, but also from his immense personal stature.

Past dictators also claimed moral authority, drawing upon the support they receive from the monarchy to justify their claims to power. The military has been particularly adept at harnessing the frame of Moral and Ethical Leadership. Previous dictators have used corruption as a pretext for coups and claimed that their replacement regimes would restore morality and ethics by stamping out corruption. These dictators argued that they should be trusted because they were the protectors of the monarchy and had the institution's support.

The Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame took center stage in the period following the coup during the debate over different proposed amendments to the constitution. One proposal concerned the creation of a crisis council to give the military more power to step in during periods of political crisis.[313] Another proposal along similar lines would have put in place a provision for an appointed prime minister and even a partially appointed parliament. The appointments would come from trusted people in the government and monarchy.

The Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame argues that leadership does not necessarily come from consent of the people. The rational was that the people had elected Thaksin twice and were not able to see his weak moral character. The framers

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[313] "Parkit Security Council Parliament." *Khaosod.* June 20, 2007.

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advocated for a return to a traditional form of leadership—one that had existed under the days of the absolute monarchy. The moral leader was honest, above politics, could distinguish between good and evil, and put the interests of the country first. This leadership derived from good deeds and character and was not necessarily the result of a democratic electoral process. The Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame presented moral leadership as an alternative to the electoral process, which the framers felt had brought into power leaders who lacked morality and ethics. The moral leader put the nation and national interest first whereas politicians were described as only interested in advancing their own interests.

The Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame drew on Thai history, the idea of strong leadership to guide the country, and the concept of moral authority derived from the King in ways that were familiar and comfortable.[314] The proposals put forward during the constitutional drafting process and the frame of Moral and Ethical Leadership for a new, dream society was a strategic attempt to negate the electoral power of the rural population in the north and northeast and prevent a return to power of Thaksin or the TRT Party. To strengthen this frame and political alternative, democracy had to be discredited. Social critic Thirayuth Boonmi, the most outspoken proponent of an alternative political system, said that Thai democracy should not wholeheartedly adopt a Western version of democracy because they always backfire. One reason he

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[314] "Democracy depends on politicians." *Bangkok Post.* April 4, 2007. This was taken from a Thai Rath editorial, which said that Thailand faced a crisis of unethical leadership and was in desperate need of good politicians. These politicians must put the country before their own interest and must be good and honest. This argument referenced the discourse on Thaksin, labeling it as endemically corrupt.

gave for this was that the Western notion of democracy does not mesh with Thai culture.[315]

Royal Support

The frame of Moral and Ethical Leadership derived credibility from the support of the monarchy. Interim Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont was formally privy councilor to the King, and Prem Tinsulanonda, the King's Chief Privy Counsellor, was an outspoken supporter of the CNS and interim government.[316] Since the King hand-selected these individuals to be his closest advisors, they must be moral and ethical, unbiased, and above politics. Furthermore, this support lent credibility to the idea that moral and ethical leadership was a viable alternative to democratic government as a way out of Thailand's recent political crisis.

Sufficiency Economy

Sufficiency Economy was an economic philosophy first introduced by King Bhumibol in the late 1990s in response to the 1997 Southeast Asian Financial Crisis. The philosophy promotes the idea of living within ones means and restraining consumption. At the societal level, Sufficiency Economy advocates for the development of local capacity and industries to protect the country from global economic shocks.[317] Following the coup, Sufficiency Economy was adopted by the government and its supporters and framed as an alternative to Thaksin's system of "international capitalism", which was described as exploitative, predatory and

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[315] "Call for truly Thai charter." *Bangkok Post*. Oct 12, 2006.

[316] The King formally endorsed the interim government and Privy Council head Prem Tinsulanonda and invited the coup and interim government leaders to his home as a show of support.

[317] Piboolsravut, Priyanut. *Thailand: Economic Challenges and the Road Ahead*. ASEAN Economic Bulletin Vol. 21, No. 1, (April 2004), pp. 127-134.

reckless. Defense Minister Boonrawd Somtas claimed that sufficiency economy would stop bad people from taking over the country.[318]

Sufficiency Economy was treated by the government and its supporters as an extension of the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame, and as a counterpoint to Thaksinomics.[319] It was said to be part of Thailand's efforts to become a moral society. The fact that this philosophy came from the King and that the interim government and CNS promoted it as an alternative to Thaksin's economic policies, framed the deposed leader in direct opposition to the King. The interim government and CNS took steps to accentuate that these philosophies were in opposition. They discarded OTOP, Thaksin's community economic development program and began promoting programs said to promote Sufficiency Economy. When the Interim Government hired Thaksin's chief economic advisor Somkid Jatusripitak, there was considerable criticism within the government supporter camp over the appointment. The main argument was that Somkid represented the capitalism philosophy that they believed damaged the country.[320] However, the government's official defense of the hiring of Somkid was that the country could ill afford to abandon capitalism and that both capitalism and sufficiency economy were needed.[321] Consequently, in the 2007 Constitution, sufficiency economy was included as the country's main economic orientation, together with the market economy.

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[318] "Not worried about protest: Try to ignore." *Khaosod*. July 8, 2007.
[319] "Dream Society." *Khaosod*. December 31, 2006.
[320] "Soap after the News." *Khaosod*. February 17, 2007. Also see: "Ad creates a bad feeling in society." *Khaosod*. February 17, 2007.
[321] Ibid.

Patriotism

Following the coup, the CNS and interim government tapped many people to serve as consultants, including coup opponents. When several people declined the offered positions, the interim government and its supporters labeled them as "unthai", saying that real Thais should be happy to serve their country. The new government was framed as part of a national effort similar to that experienced during war time. The expectation was that when called upon, Thais should put aside their own feelings and support the government.[322] The CNS and interim government leadership said that this was the reason that they decided to manage the country through this period.

Moral Deficiency

The CNS and interim government argued that moral leadership was the missing ingredient in the Thai political system. It was essential to have morality and ethics as a leader so that the rule of law worked.[323] One early initiative by the interim government was to make morality and ethics an essential part of a reformed school curriculum, reinforcing that there was a cultural deficiency or retreat in ethics and morality under Thaksin. The new education minister announced that he was elevating moral integrity above the quest for knowledge in terms of importance in the national school curriculum. This was a departure from the past in which both were given equal emphasis. The problem was defined as moral decay of past governments. The solution was to place a greater emphasis on moral integrity so that people understood its importance and, by extension, the shortcomings of the previous administration.[324]

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[322] "CDR advisers not told of appointments." *Bangkok Post*. Sept 27, 2006.

[323] "Abhisit Sees Election Fraud Trails as Mirror of Wider Problems." *Bangkok Post.* May 19, 2007.

[324] "Wijit: Moral integrity first, knowledge next." *Bangkok Post*. Oct 12, 2006.

Spearheading Democratic Transition

The interim government framed itself as a movement highly committed to democratic ideals. Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont compared the current transition away from the Thaksin system to the popular democratic transitions of 1973 and 1992. The present period was framed as one in a line of democratic transitions away from authoritarianism. This had the effect of providing a historical context for the current struggle, as well as a way to easily view the main actors.[325] Democracy had been under attack during the Thaksin administration. Both Thaksin and the Thai Rak Thai Party were blamed for corrupting the checks and balances carefully built into the 1997 constitution, thereby creating a semi-dictatorship. Many Thaksin critics argued that all constitutional means to fix the government had been exhausted and that the courts and anti-corruption agency could not perform the checks and balances critical in a democracy. The CNS was portrayed as a benevolent watchdog agency, breaking the corruption and cronyism of the Thaksin administration that had weakened democracy.

5.9 CONTEST TO FRAME THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND CNS

There were three main frames of the interim government and CNS over the study period. Immediately following the coup, the interim government and its supporters introduced the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame to describe the character of the new administration as unbiased, moral and inclusive. They juxtaposed this with the ascribed selfishness and narrow interests of the Thaksin administration.

The second frame that came later was an attack on this frame from within the ranks of government's supporters. This frame, which we call here the Inept Administration

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[325] "2007 – The Year of Great Reforms." *Bangkok Post*. January 27, 2007.

Frame, claimed that the interim government was too slow in bringing Thaksin to justice, was selling out the county to foreign interests, and was indecisive and suspicious in its statements and actions regarding the previous administration. The first appearance of the Inept Administration Frame came from the People's Alliance for Democracy. The group of interim government critics eventually grew to include an array of voices from both the government supporter and pro-Thaksin camps.

The last of the three major frames of the interim government was the Dictator Frame, which claimed that Thailand under the CNS and interim government was an authoritarian dictatorship. This frame appeared extensively in the months following the coup, as well as during the lead-up to the December 2007 election. Figure 5.9-1 maps the trajectory of these frames during the study period.
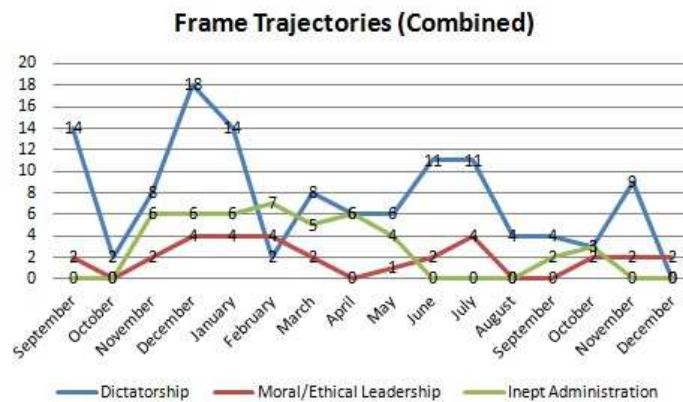
Figure 5.9-1. Trajectory of Frames of the Interim Government and CNS. This covers the period following the Thaksin coup in September of 2006, until the general election in December of 2007.[326]

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[326] **The Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame** consisted of the (IV) Interim Government/Military/CNS (DV) Discourse Mentions: Morality, Hero, National Security, National

Moral and Ethical Leadership

The framing of the interim government following the coup was almost entirely

influenced by coup supporters. This frame is outlined in depth in Section 5.11. The

interim government was framed as a moral and ethical organization comprise of loyal,

unbiased, Thai citizens who served the country first, and not narrow interests.[327]

Shortly following the coup, a Thai Rath editorial said that the new cabinet could be

trusted and was pure because it was not affiliated with any party. The interim

government's high moral character was announced as the start of a new culture of

politics that would stress morality and ethics. The prognostic frame tied the need for

morality and ethics with the gross moral deficiencies of the previous

administration.[328]

The message of moral and ethical leadership of the interim government was not

without challenge from groups within the power coalition, as well as those opposed to

it. While criticism of the CNS was that it was trying to influence the constitutional

drafting process to extend the power of the military, framers countered that

involvement of the CNS in the process was done with the interests of the nation in

mind and aimed at ending corruption.

Interest, Good Governance, Justice, Human Rights, War on Drugs, and Sufficiency Economy. n=31.
The Dictatorship Frame consisted of (IV) Interim Government, Military, CNS, Monarchy, Sonthi, Saprang, and Surayud. (DV) Discourse Mentions: Democracy, Justice, Media, Dictatorship, Coup, Thai politics, The People, and Poor. n=120. **The Inept Administration Frame** consists of (IV) CNS, Interim Government (DV). Economic Administration, Thai Politics. n=45.

[327] "Thaksin's enforcers not running the country." Letter to the Editor. *Bangkok Post*. November 29, 2006. In this article, the author (unnamed) says that the interim government is sincerely trying to improve things.

[328] "PM seeks way to resolve injustice in South." *Bangkok Post*. December 14, 2006. In this article, Prime Minister Surayud referenced the discourse of the previous administration and its issues managing the southern conflict. He apologized for the heavy-handed approach under Thaksin and said he would use a different strategy.

Inept Administration

After several months in office, led by dissatisfaction among certain ally groups,

cracks and fissures began to form in the framing of the interim government. The

criticism centered on the perception that the interim government displayed ineptitude

and lack of will to dismantle the Thaksin system. Criticism also came from coup

opponents, including Thaksin supporters and the TRT Party. Figure 5.9-2 outlines the

Inept Administration Frame.
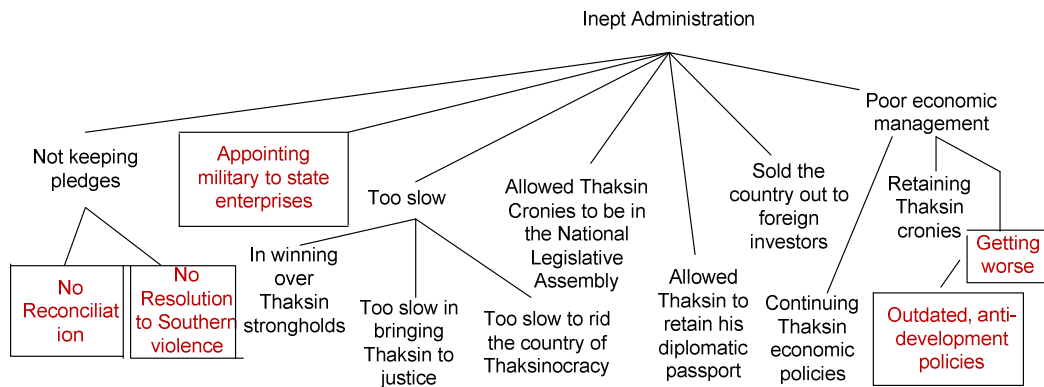
Figure 5.9-2. Inept Administration Frame. Frame components with boxes around them were also present in anti-government frames of inept administration.

Both Thaksin and government supporters blamed the interim government for poor

leadership on a range of issues, including economic administration and lack of

progress in reconciliation of the southern conflict.[329] One of the main lines of attack

of the coup was that the interim government did not understand economics and its

policies were outdated. In an interview from exile, Thaksin argued that the interim

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[329] "Cabinet needs overhauling." *Bangkok Post*. April 19, 2007.

government's economic philosophy was anti-development and ran against the world trend.

One of the first signs that government supporters were unhappy with the interim government's performance came from Suriyasai Katasila, of the Campaign for Popular Democracy, an organization closely allied with the anti-Thaksin People's Alliance for Democracy. Suriyasai announced that the CNS has failed because it had not held Thaksin accountable and had generally mishandled the Thaksin situation.[330]

The government was also blamed as inept for its policy decisions. Critics decried that the Surayud Chulanont government signed Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with several countries.[331] They claimed that one of the reasons they supported the coup was because Thaksin had sold the country to foreigners. This was a major frame of the PAD movement during the anti-Thaksin protests of 2005 and 2006. When the new government signed several FTAs, it blurred the distinction between the Thaksin and the Surayud governments, and weakened the credibility of the Evil Thaksin Frame among the group of interim government supporters.

The inability of the interim government to find a solution to the southern crisis was also a major component of the Inept Administration Frame. Social critic and Tammasat lecturer Thirayuth Boonmi said that the Surayud government was performing poorly. Among other criticisms, Thirayuth argued that the interim

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[330] "Suriyasai says CNS has not passed test." *Bangkok Post*. November 20, 2006. Suriyasai criticized that the anti-corruption team has been too slow in bringing Thaksin to justice and that it had failed to properly address the security situation posed by Thaksin, as well as the security situation in southern Thailand. Suriyasai also intimated that the CNS had erred in appointing some of Thaksin's cronies to the National Legislative Assembly.
[331] Critics were also unhappy that the interim government allowed Thaksin to continue holding his diplomatic passport.

government had not kept its pledge to fix the situation in the south.[332] The Prime

Minister himself was also a target of criticism. He was labeled as being honest, but

slow and ineffective; a hermit taking care of turtles.[333]

The main promulgators of the Inept Administration Frame were government

supporters. They expressed their displeasure with the government's performance

across the board, and demanded that they act more decisively to hold the previous

administration accountable, to manage the economy more effectively, and to take

steps to implement Sufficiency Economy. In a way, however, critics of the

government were worried that the interim government's weak performance would

strengthen Thaksin and the TRT Party, giving them an advantage in the upcoming

election.

Dictatorship

> *"Sonthi wants to get power. He is a dictator who changed species. You took power, threw out the constitution, and changed the rules to give power to yourself. If you want to find out what people think of you, you should apply for office in Roi Et. I am sure he will fail in the election as people are unsatisfied with the CNS and the work of the government."[334]*—
> Jaturon Chaisaeng, Interim Leader of the TRT Party

The third major frame of the interim government was the Dictator Frame, which was

mentioned most frequently during the study period. The Dictatorship Frame depicted

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[332] "People Losing Hope in Government's Capability." *Bangkok Post*. March 8, 2007. Also see, "Keeping people in the dark won't solve problems." *Bangkok Post*. March 7, 2007. In this Siam Rath editorial, the author criticized the current government for lack of transparency, and for not keeping its pledge to help improve the situation in the south. The author argues that in many areas, the country's situation was worsening.

[333] A hermit raising turtles meant that the leadership of the government was slow and inactive. Another label was Old Ginger Cabinet, which was meant to describe a retired and ineffective government cabinet.

[334] "TRT sarcastic if Sonthi joins politics, he will fail." *Khaosod*. July 11, 2007.

the CNS and interim government as advancing an undemocratic agenda and imposing

its will on the media and the constitutional drafting process.[335] The frame spiked

several times during the study period, including immediately following the coup and

during the mobilization of anti-coup supporters that occurred a few months after the

coup. This mobilization was in response to widening criticism of the interim

government's performance and a loosing of controls by the CNS over public

assembly and anti-government speech. The frame also spiked again during the debate

over proposals to the new constitution and yet again in the lead-up to the election.

Figure 5.9-3 outlines the dictatorship frame.
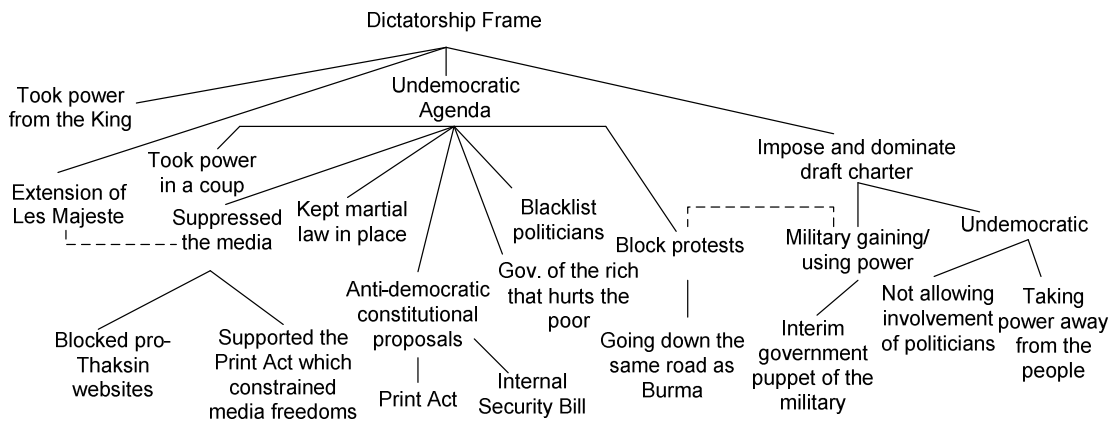
Figure 5.9-3. Dictatorship Frame.

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[335] "CNS urged to relax freedom of expression. If the CNS wishes to create a democratic nation, it must create a democratic atmosphere and allow expression –even of those that are anti-coup." *Bangkok Post.* December 17, 2006. In this article, which appears to take a neutral view of the political conflict, the author (unnamed) says that there have been many worrying signs that the CNS is not truly committed to building a democratic nation, including blocking protests and blacklisting TRT candidates as enemies of the regime. The author says that the people have democratic consciousness and will not accept coups.

Impose and Dominate Draft Charter. The Dictatorship Frame claimed that the military was influencing the constitutional drafting process to extend its power under the new constitution. The interim government was labeled as a puppet of the military and interested only in helping the country remain under military control.[336] One area of criticism was that the continuation of martial law prevented parties and individuals from assembling to discuss the constitution.[337] The framers argued that several proposals introduced by government supporters during the drafting process were undemocratic and revealed the CNS and interim government's true intention to roll back democracy. The CNS responded repeatedly that that they were not influencing the process, but there was significant evidence to suggest otherwise. Following the narrow passage of the referendum, former TRT leaders claimed that the constitution never would have passed if the CNS had not pressured people.[338]

Undemocratic Agenda. Proponents of the Dictatorship Frame claimed that the people were largely shut out of the constitutional drafting process. They were not given enough representation in the Constitutional Drafting Assembly, which was tasked with creating the constitution, nor enough time to review the constitution once it was completed.[339] The counter-frame to a moral and ethical government, the Dictatorship Frame depicted the CNS and interim government as continuing a policy aimed at weakening democracy. The attempt to reintroduce the Print Act and the amendment to allow an appointed prime minister supported this frame. In addition to

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[336] "Military busy cementing power." *Bangkok Post.* March 14, 2007.
[337] Another area of criticism was that the government did not give enough time for deliberation prior to the referendum.
[338] "TRT has goal to be government again." *Khaosod.* August 21, 2007.
[339] "The Threat to Media Freedom." *Bangkok Post.* May 13, 2007.

these proposed amendments, actions by the interim government further reinforced this in ways that were much clearer and easier for the general public to grasp. Early in the interim government's tenure, several pro-Thaksin websites were blocked. This action was reported widely and the media expressed concern that censorship would widen. The second action was that high ranking members of the interim government came out in support of a proposed amendment that would have allowed an unelected prime minister. The backlash against the interim government was significant, even when several reports emerged explaining that the proposal was not anti-democratic and that such systems of indirect election for the executive existed in many democracies. This proposal fueled an increase in mentions of the Dictatorship Frame in the Bangkok Post and Khaosod.

The continuation of martial law under the CNS lent credibility to the Dictatorship Frame. Even the government's supporters began to call publically for an end to martial law. Nearly one year following the coup, and with the constitutional referendum and elections fast approaching, the CNS had still not lifted bans on public assembly across many provinces.[340] The CNS defended the decision to continue the martial law policy, claiming that it was not political but instead existed to stop rampant drug and human trafficking.[341] Sonthi seemed to contradict Surayud, who in several interviews explained that martial law was still in place because of the dangers

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[340] "Emergency Decree." *Khaosod*. December 1, 2006. Author was clearly anti-Thaksin but said about the emergency law that, "…It is bad for human rights and the freedom of the people. Other countries do not accept this law. It causes the country to go back to the canal [old way]."

[341] "Martial law is not political." *Bangkok Post*. September 22, 2007. The interim Prime Minister Surayud said that he did not believe that the presence of martial law was a political issue, refuting the claims of political parties and academics who were urging the CNS to lift martial law. He maintained that it was not political and not harmful to preparation for the upcoming election

posed by Thaksin and the former government, as well as to stop protestors from entering and disrupting Bangkok. These contradictory messages affected the credibility of government claims makers.

Extension of Lèse Majesté Law. A final component of the Dictatorship Frame was that the interim government and CNS advocated the extension of the Lèse Majesté law to cover royal children and privy counsellors.[342] Jon Ungphakorn, founder of the progressive online newspaper Prachatai, criticized the interim government's motives, saying that, "The problem with our Lèse Majesté laws is that it has become a weapon used by powerful political groups to discredit their opponents."[343] To anti-coup supporters and many in the media, the bill appeared designed to stifle criticism against General Prem Tinsulanonda and raise the status of privy councilors to the rank or royalty.

5.10   FRAMING THE NEW CONSTITUTION

The content of the draft charter and the process to assemble it was highly contested by a variety of groups. Before the drafting process began, there was extensive discussion and disagreement regarding whether to continue with the 1997 Constitution or to adopt a new constitution. When the interim government and CNS announced that there would be a new constitution, they talked about the need to restore morality and ethics by fixing loopholes in the previous constitution to protect against future corrupt politicians, who would use the country for private gain. They also claimed that the

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[342] The Lèse Majesté Law in Thailand makes it illegal to criticize any member of the Thai royal family or the royal institution. Convictions for Lèse-majesté can carry prison sentences of up to 20 years, making it one of the world's strictest laws protecting royalty.
[343] "Another nail in the coffin of Thai democracy." *Bangkok Post*. October 10, 2007.

new charter would provide further protection to the monarchy. We can describe this government and CNS project to build support for a new constitution as the Moral Thai Charter Frame.

The TRT quickly voiced its opposition, claiming that a new constitution would only perpetuate the power of the CNS. The TRT called for its supporters to cast a "no" vote during the referendum on the new constitution and announced that they would establish a shadow constitutional assembly because they argued that the current process did not represent the people's needs. The TRT and other opponents to the new constitution created the frame of Undemocratic Charter and Process. Figure 5.10-1 depicts the evolution of these frames during the study period.

Framing the Draft Constitution and Process

Undemocratic Charter n=56; Moral Thai Charter and Process n=28
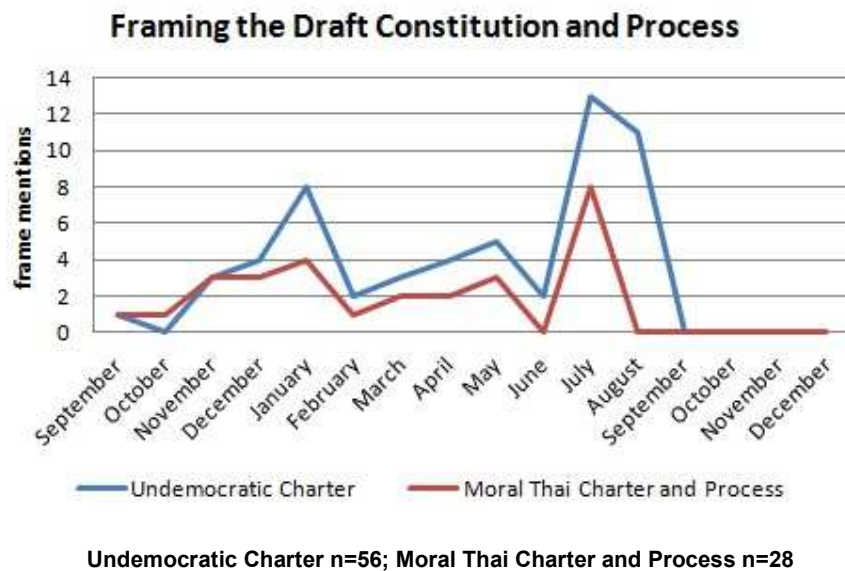
Figure 5.10-1. Frames of the New Constitution. The frequency of both frames peaked during the selection of the members of the drafting assembly in January and February, as well as during the lead-up to the constitutional referendum in August.

Undemocratic Charter and Process

During the constitutional drafting process, several proposals introduced by CNS and interim government supporters were labelled undemocratic. These proposals were rejected by many government allies, who still felt that the new constitution was needed, but grew increasingly skeptical about the attitude of the interim government and CNS towards democracy. This skepticism was further reinforced by CNS refusals to lift the ban on public assembly in many provinces so that groups could hold public forums on the draft charter.

Opponents of the charter drafting process saw the new constitution as a pretext by the CNS and its supporters to roll back freedom of expression, extend the power of the military, and disenfranchise the rural poor by weakening representative government. They also criticized that the process was undertaken too rapidly and was closed off from the public. Some opponents claimed that the process was illegitimate because it resulted from a coup government and appointments to the drafting assembly were heavily influenced by the CNS. These opponents promulgated a frame of Undemocratic Charter and Process. Early on the frame only found support from within the pro-Thaksin and anti-coup camp, but the group of charter opponents grew to include many politicians, NGOs and members of the media who had previously been interim government and CNS supporters.

Figure 5.10-2 outlines the Undemocratic Charter and Process Frame.

Undemocratic Charter and Process

- Content
  - Hurts the poor
  - Military has specific agenda
    - Poorly written (ambiguous)
  - Undemocratic proposals
    - Print Act
    - Security Council
    - Unelected PM
  - Attempt to extend the power of the military
- 1997 constitution more democratic
- Process
  - Excludes public and politicians
    - CNS silences criticism of the draft charter
    - Continuation of martial law during charter process
  - Illegitimate constitution because of coup
    - Baby conceived through rape which should be aborted

Figure 5.10-2. Undemocratic Charter Frame.

The proposals regarding the Print Act and unelected prime minister were framed by opponents as disenfranchising the poor, extending the power and control of the military and monarchy, and rolling back democracy. There were also claims by both anti-coup groups and by neutral or previous government supporters that the new charter was poorly and hastily written. One example included the proposal for a Crisis council led by politicians, bureaucrats and senior members of the military, in which little detail was provided on how such a council would operate. This ambiguity was said to leave the door open to interpretation and ultimately abuse by the military. There were also claims that the charter lacked clarity and an overarching philosophy, and that it enhanced the power of the judiciary, the military, and bureaucrats, and reduced the power of elected politicians.[344] Labels of "pasted-up thesis paper",

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[344]"Charter Pelted with Criticism." *Bangkok Post*. April 22, 2007. A movement called the Anti-Coup Alliance said that the draft constitution was an unborn baby conceived through rape which should be aborted. The Alliance urged people to reject the constitution because it would cause a continuation of the coup maker's ideology.

"unborn baby conceived through rape", and "highly flawed document" were assigned to the draft charter.[345]

There was also significant criticism that the process excluded career politicians, as well as the general public. Although the document was widely distributed, there were only a matter of weeks before the referendum to review the charter and there were no public assemblies held. Assemblies were banned under martial law, which at the time of the drafting process still existed in 35 provinces, many of them Thaksin electoral strongholds. Voices from across the political spectrum were unsuccessful in their pleas to the CNS to lift the ban so that assemblies could be held to discuss the draft charter.[346]

Criticism also focused on the claim that the new constitution hurt the poor. A social movement of poor farmers called The Assembly of the Poor came to Bangkok to rally against the new constitution, drawing more than 1,000 protestors. Several academics speaking before the crowd said that the new constitution would hurt the poor and that the 1997 Constitution was better.[347] This claim brought in a class component. It was also argued that the charter would weaken the influence of the NGO community, which had gained a significant role in the government under the 1997 Constitution.

Opponents of the new constitution claimed that the charter drafting process was illegitimate and undemocratic because it was initiated by a coup, and the coup group heavily influenced (rather than the public) the members of the NLA. They claimed

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[345] *Ibid.*
[346] "No lifting martial law yet, reiterates Surayud." *Bangkok Post*. October 12, 2006.
[347] "New Charter Renders Poor Powerless to Challenge the State." *Khaosod*. May 28, 2007.

that the military overstepped its bounds in imposing a new constitution and restricting

freedoms and that as a result the planned charter could not be called a people's

constitution.**348** Furthermore, the interim government and CNS spent public funds to

promote the constitution, which was viewed as blatantly biased by many in the media

and academia. In further accusations of double standard, the CNS was said to be

selectively constraining some voices and positions, while allowing others free reign.

The CNS strongly denied that it was influencing the draft charter or promoting it in

any way. On July 27, the TRT Party shifted their stance against the constitution from

boycott to support. This was probably because the TRT Party was confident that they

would regain control of the government once elections were held. Opponents of the

new constitution supported a continuation of the 1997 Constitution. They felt that the

new constitution was unnecessary because the 1997 Constitution was the most

democratic in the country's history and one of the most representative ever created. It

was framed as an exceptional document that had been "killed" by the military.[349]

The abrogation of the 1997 Constitution was treated by its supporters as a funeral. In

one early protest act, participants associated with the September 19 Network, a pro-

Thaksin group, showed up to a popular shopping district wearing all black as a

symbol of mourning for the dead constitution.[350] Many Thaksin opponents also

supported the continuation of the 1997 Constitution. One writer opined that Thaksin

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[348] "TRT starts campaign." *Khaosod*. July 11, 2007.

[349] The Campaign for Popular Media Reform (CPMR), an anti-coup organization, talked about the major accomplishment of the 1997 Constitution and how that was now dead due to the power of the army. Another organization closely associated with deposed leader Thaksin Shinawatra demanded a reinstatement of the 1997 constitution and the removal of the military from politics.

[350] The translation of mourning in Thai is เศร้าโศก which means sadness เศร้า and then the addition of โศก makes is more like the loss of someone close.

was the problem, not the 1997 constitution. This group argued that a new constitution

was largely unnecessary because with some minor tweaking or better leadership, the

1997 Constitution was still the best that could be expected.

One important aspect of the Undemocratic Charter Frame was that it was much more

prevalent early on in the Khaosod than in the Bangkok Post. Figure 5.10-3 shows the

frequency of frame mentions over the study period. During the period from December

2006 to February 2007, the Undemocratic Charter Frame was mentioned very

frequently in the Khaosod but was virtually absent from the Bangkok Post. It was

during this period that the members of the National Legislative Assembly were being

selected. Interestingly, later in 2007 the mentions of this frame critical of the new

constitution were nearly equal across both publications. This provides evidence that

the Bangkok Post may have been bias in its early reporting of the charter process.
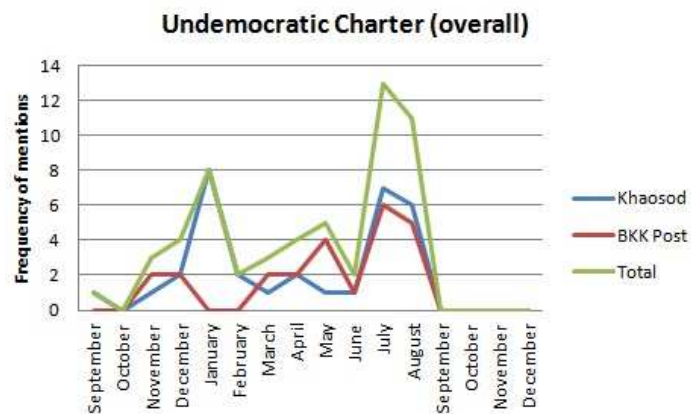
n=56

*Figure 5.10-3. Frame Trajectory in Bangkok Post and Khaosod. When looking
at the differences between the Bangkok Post and Khaosod newspapers, there
was a period during the selection of the constitutional assembly in which
Khaosod published critical views of the new constitution that were all but
absent in the Bangkok Post.*

Moral Thai Charter and Process

Proponents of the constitution saw the draft charter and process as a way to dismantle

Thaksin's populist policy structure, correct significant weaknesses in the 1997

Constitution that allowed Thaksin to abuse power, and introduce a constitution that

was a better fit for Thai culture.[351] The CNS and interim government created the

frame of Moral Thai Charter to argue that a new charter was needed and to defend the

process undertaken to draft it. The Moral Thai Charter Frame described a charter and

process that would reflect strong morals and ethics; not be influenced by, or based on,

models from the West; remove the risk of another Thaksin; promote the monarchy;

and crush political corruption. Figure 5.10-4 illustrates the components of the Moral
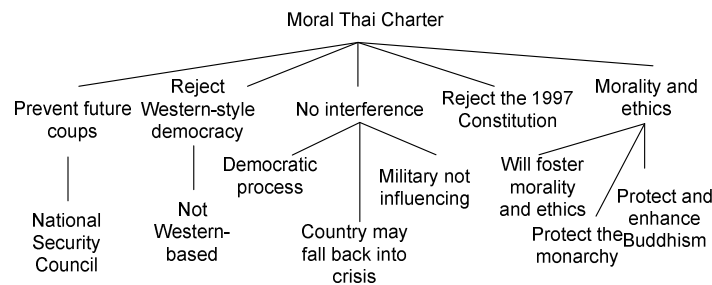
Thai Charter Frame.

Figure 5.10-4. Components of the Moral Thai Charter Frame.

The new constitution would also foster greater morality and ethics in politics. The

new charter was said to prevent corrupt leaders like Thaksin from rising to power

again by putting additional safeguards in place. The 1997 Constitution was viewed as

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[351] "Call for 'truly Thai charter" *Bangkok Post*. October 12, 2006. Some proponents of the new constitution claimed that democracy was not the best route for Thailand and that Thais shouldn't wholeheartedly adopt a Western version of democracy because this form always backfired when placed in a non-Western context.

flawed because it allowed corrupt leaders to accrete power and compromised the work of government watchdogs. Underlying this frame was the assertion by the CNS and interim government that the country could draft a corruption-proof constitution while maintaining the constitution's democratic character. Another component of the Moral Thai Charter and Process Frame was that the new constitution would protect the monarchy by proposing stricter Lèse majesté laws.

One charter drafter, Sodsri Sattayatham, tried to push for a greater role for the military in the constitution by advocating for the creation of a crisis council on which several heads of the armed forces would sit along with elected officials. Sodsri said that this would provide a solution to future political conflict. These arguments for the new constitution reflected a moderate stance. A more radical view by some proponents of the new constitution was that it should deviate from the popular democratic character of the 1997 Constitution. This group framed the drafting of the charter as a move away from democracy towards a more "Asian way" and "Thai way". According to this vision, the new political system would resemble a semi-democracy in which a large number of representatives would be selected by the monarchy as a way to ensure moral, selfless leadership.[352] The true aim was to negate the electoral power of the rural populations in the North and Northeast.

As the draft charter came under increasing criticism, many proponents of the new constitution implored the CNS and interim government to do more to convince people

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[352] *Ibid.*
"Constitution is the best but it depends who uses it." *Khaosod.* November 10, 2006. In this article, National Legislative Assembly chairman Meechai Ruchuphan said that the 1997 constitution was based on Germany but that Thailand was different. "Thailand is a group system whereas Germany is an individual system." He went on to say that the 1997 constitution does not fit the Thai system.

that a new constitution was needed. Others were unhappy with the charter but felt that it was acceptable, or necessary, to avert a crisis.[353] Thais were warned not to boycott the constitution or else the country might fall back into crisis. Proponents of the charter process also counter-framed that the charter process was democratic as it included a national assembly and that the CNS was not interfering in the process.[354]

5.11   FRAMING THE RED SHIRTS MOVEMENT

Some of the most intense framing efforts between the period following the coup in 2006 and the first post-coup election in December of 2007 came from the movement that evolved to oppose the CNS and interim government. While it was influenced largely by deposed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. During the study period, the Red Shirts developed a frame defining themselves as a pro-democracy movement comprised mainly of the poor, fighting against dictatorship (diagnostic frame) and calling for a return to democracy (prognostic frame). The frame of pro-democracy movement strengthened over time, drawing support not only from Thaksin loyalists, but also from pro-democracy groups, NGOs, and the media.

The interim government and its supporters also focused considerable attention on framing the Red Shirts movement, labelling them as violent savages and paid Thaksin political thugs, who represented Thaksin (not democracy), were ultimate rejected by

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[353] "Call for charter to protect the monarchy." *Bangkok Post*. April 28, 2007.
[354]Jatart Suwamala, Dean of the Political Science faculty at Chulalongkorn University said that the CNS did not wish to get involved in politics and that the members of the drafting committee want to do what is in the best interest of the country. Jatart was later an advisor to Suthep during anti-Thaksin protests in late 2013 and early 2014.Leader of the People's Alliance for Democracy, Suraysai said that the constitutional draft committee was even more representative than the committee that drafted the 1997 constitution and rejected claims that the committee was influenced by the CNS.

the people, and were attempting to destroy the monarchy. Figure 5.11-1 outlines the

cognitive structures of these competing frames.
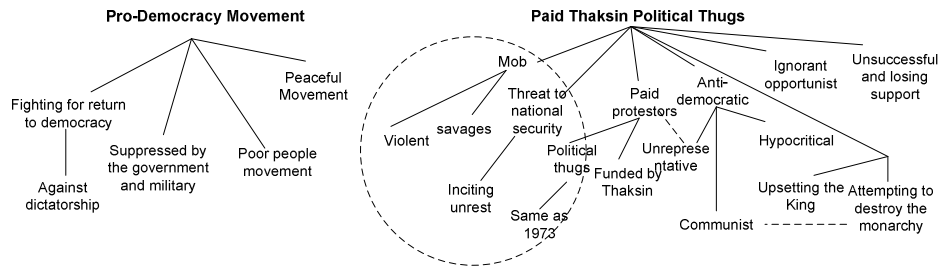
Figure 5.11-1. Framing the Red Shirt Movement. Within the Paid Thaksin Political Thug Frame, there is a section of the cognitive structure that depicts the movement as a security threat. This area is delineated with the dotted-line circle.

Both the Red Shirts and the interim government and their supporters disseminated

these frames through the media to influence opinion and ideas about the Red Shirt

movement. Figure 5.11-2 depicts the evolution of these frames over the study period.

Framing the Red Shirts (combined Khaosod and Bangkok Post)

n=52
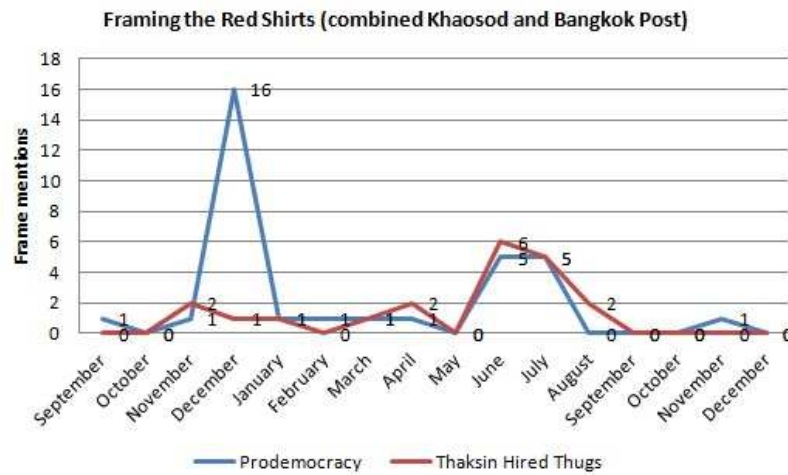
Figure 5.11-2. Pro-democracy and Thaksin Hired Thugs Frames. The huge spike in mentions of the pro-democracy frame during the months of November 2006 through January 2007 coincide with several large protests that drew extensive media attention, as well as with a partial loosing of controls on assembly and speech by the CNS.

Paid Thaksin Political Thugs

One frequent critique of the Red Shirts by military and government sources was that

they were paid by Thaksin Shinawatra and were not protesting because of their own

beliefs. This assertion was linked to the claim that the movement itself was

unrepresentative. The first such claim of paid protestors found in the analysis

occurred on December 2, 2006.[355] On this day, the Caravan of the Poor came to

Bangkok to protest a dam project. During the protest, Red Shirt leaders took to the

stage to denounce the CNS and interim government. Assistant Army Chief Saprang

Kalayanamitr labeled those in attendance as bullies and thugs and said they had

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[355] "TRT allegedly bankrolling rally: Former MPs accused of paying protesters." *Bangkok Post*. December 2, 2006. There were also claims that the TRT paid 10 million baht to finance the mob that was due to come to Bangkok on December 10. In the article, Democrat Party spokesperson Ongut Kramphibon said that the mob admitted that they get money to come and protest.

alternative motives other than democracy.[356] The government and media sent people

undercover to movement rallies and they returned with what they claimed was

evidence that the movement was paying protestors. This reinforced the frame that the

movement was specifically for Thaksin Shinawatra. In an interview with then acting

leader of the UDD Thida Thavornseth, there was a ready admission that during this

period paying protestors was commonplace. She argued that this was necessary

because protestors were poor, came to Bangkok from far away, and needed to pay for

their transport and food during the rallies.[357]

There were inconsistencies in the government frames of the Red Shirts. Sometimes

government leaders framed Red Shirt leaders as hired thugs and the rank-and-file

protestors as ignorant victims who were there for money. At other times, even CNS

leader Sonthi Boonyalakarin openly conceded that many protestors struggled with

poverty and had real grievances.[358]

Anti-democratic. Opponents of the Red Shirts labelled the movement as anti-

democratic, arguing that any movement that supported Thaksin could not possibly be

democratic since Thaksin was an undemocratic leader.[359] Sonthi Boonyaratglin

labelled the Red Shirts' a fringe group that did not represent the majority of Thai

people.[360] Following the protest at General Prem's house in which 20,000 UDD

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[356] *Ibid.*

[357] Author interview with Tida Tawornseth, UDD interim leader [at the time]. February, 2011.

[358] "Hope to block the mob that will attack." *Khaosod*. February 14, 2007. In the article, Sonthi says that, "If people are unsatisfied and struggle and they come to protest, we want to go to them and help solve their problems. This is a quicker way to do it."

[359] "Thaksin's empty words for national reconciliation." *Bangkok Post*. June 18, 2007.

[360] "Sonthi: Many people upset with DAAD want to rally." *Bangkok Post*. July 3, 2007. In this article Sonthi claimed that most people do not support the DAAD's demand for Privy Council head Prem

supporters demanded he step down as Privy Councillor, leading to clashes with police and injuries, the Bangkok Post and government officials framed the movement as a mob, and the protestors as uncivilized savages.[361] A Bangkok Post editorial on July 24, 2007 claimed that the movement was anti-democratic.[362] Government supports also claimed that the protesters were communists. This label was possibly meant to discredit and paint as a fringe group, or, perhaps, because of the history of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), to condone or encourage tougher action against them.

Unsuccessful and Losing Support. In the wake of the protests at Prem's residence, pro-establishment groups claimed that the movement was losing steam, citing as evidence its apparent failure to mobilize the critical support of the Bangkok middle class. One author suggested that the UDD has been unsuccessful not only because of the road blocks preventing protestors from coming from the provinces to protest in Bangkok, but also because of the success of the government's anti-Thaksin public relations campaign.[363] Another author claimed that the movement had lost support because its leaders had resorted to violence.**[364]** The movement was also referred to as a fringe group. In addition to specific instances in which the pro-government camp took aim at the movement, there was a common trend in statements by the CNS and interim government to downplay the movement's size and momentum. Government

Tinsulanonda to step down and that many have wanted to come out in protest against the DAAD but he has asked them not to.

[361] Nostitz, Nick. *Red vs. Yellow: Volume 1: Thailand's Crisis of Idenity*. White Lotus Press. 2009. Page 14. Nick was at the protest and reported that roughly 20,000 protesters were in attendance and that 4,000 remained in the "early evening."

[362] "Send a message back to the mob." *Bangkok Post*. July 24, 2007.

[363] "Mob violence turning Bangkokians away." *Bangkok Post*. July 27, 2007.

[364] *Ibid.*

spokespeople and leaders routinely said that the movement was not a major threat, was unrepresentative, or would not achieve its turnout goals. PAD coordinator Suriyasai Kataskila attributed this supposed loss of movement support to an awakening of the people to the fact that Thaksin was corrupt and that the movement was only for his benefit.[365]

Attempting to Destroy the Monarchy. A critical sub-frame used to describe the opposition movement was that they were attempting to overthrow the monarchy. This claim began as part of the Thaksin is Evil Frame. By linking the movement to Thaksin and claiming that it was controlled by him, framers could also characterize the anti-government movement as trying to overthrow the monarchy. Other subcomponents of the frame supported this, such as the labeling of the movement as communist. The movement's targeting of General Prem Tinsulanonda, Chief Privy Councillor and closest aid to the King of Thailand also lent credibility to the frame that the movement was anti-monarchy. The protest at Prem's home was framed as an attack on the monarchy.

Threat to National Security. The movement was also framed as a violent mob. On September 20, one day following the coup, the interim Minister of Defense warned people to beware of violent protest that might damage the country and threaten national security.[366] The author drew on the history of pro-democracy movements in Thailand, framing the anti-Thaksin Yellow Shirts as a pro-democracy movement, while labelling the Red Shirts as a dictator's mob that incited violence against

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[365] "Anti-coup protest fizzles out." *Bangkok Post*. June 24, 2007.
[366] "Thai politics. Why so messy?" *Khaosod*. September 20, 2006.

protestors just as similar mobs had during previous political conflicts. This was a strong label as these mobs had intimidated and killed university students in violent crackdowns in 1976 and 1992. The violence perpetrated by these mobs remains vivid in the minds of Thai people.

Pro-democracy Movement

There was significant counter-framing by the Red Shirts against the official frame that the movement was for Thaksin only and that it needed to pay for support. Thaksin's legal advisor Noppadon Pattama struck back at claims that Thaksin was financing protests, saying that he had not funded nor directed the movement and that protestors were genuine people who rejected the CNS and interim government. Red Shirt leaders cultivated the image of Red Shirt protestors defending democracy. Weng Tojirakarn of the Confederation for Democracy, and one of seven leaders of the DAAD said that the movement's goal was to return the country to democracy, not to reinstate Thaksin.[367] Following the avalanche of criticism of the DAAD for their protest at Prem's house, The movement tried to counter-frame that they were not a mob or savages, but in fact a pro-democracy movement that had been suppressed by the government.

The pro-democracy frame also established the image of the movement as peaceful, not barbaric, as the official frame claimed. This image of peaceful protestors against tyranny was aimed at potential supporters in Thailand's northern rural areas. This is particularly evident in the tying of the movement with past pro-democracy movements. The current movement group was portrayed as the next chapter of the

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[367] "Veteran democracy fighters strongly deny backing Thaksin." *Bangkok Post*. June 12, 2007.

long fight for democracy. During the protest at Prem's house, CDs that talked about the 1970s fight for democracy were distributed to those in attendance.[368]

5.12   FRAME ANALYSIS AND POST-COUP TRANSITION

Following the coup against Thaksin, the CNS underestimated the strength of opposition to the coup and also the strength of Thaksin's support base. The interim government that they selected was weak, performed poorly and was heavily criticized by coup opponents and supporters alike. Partially because of that poor performance, the CNS vision of a new political system in which moral leadership legitimized an alternative source of power to electoral systems, and their attempt to create a constitution that would help to realize that vision and weaken democracy was rejected. How did the CNS so clearly misinterpret the mood of the Thai population and the international community, and why were they ultimately unsuccessful in imposing a new vision of politics on Thai society? What can the frames promulgated by the CNS and its supporters, as well as by Thaksin and pro-democracy supporters tell us about the events and reactions during this important period?

Firstly, the resonance of the Good Coup Frame depended on the credibility of arguments that the corruption of Thaksin was as devastating and dangerous to the country as the CNS claimed, and that Thaksin was a viable threat to democracy. While there was significant framing of Thaksin, The CNS did not make a convincing link between Thaksin and the erosion of democracy. The Thaksin Corruption frame was problematic because it did not appeal to an audience outside of the middle class in Bangkok and the southern part of the country. Thais in the north and northeast did

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[368] "Protest lively almost 10,000." *Khaosod*. June 20, 2007.

view corruption in politics as seriously as the middle class. The view outside of the middle class was that corruption had not affected the economy and that the amount of corruption under Thaksin was no worse than under previous regimes.

While it was debatable whether Thaksin had caused democracy in Thailand to decay, the resulting coup was clearly and indefensibly undemocratic, so framing Thaksin in this way would only highlight the undemocratic character of the CNS and interim government and lead to unfavorable comparisons. Instead, the discussion was that Thaksin had corrupted institutions and that an undemocratic solution was necessary to restore democracy to working order.

As was seen in later months, the frame of Thaksin is Evil evolved into a frame of the evils of the Thaksin system. This shift in focus to the Thaksin System was a calculated one by the CNS and interim government supporters, who would come to find out that removing was not enough to break the support base he had developed.

The problem of Thaksin System created a solution of the frame Moral and Ethical Leadership. If the frame was successful, it would be seen as a viable alternative to democratic politics, borrowing some elements from it, but focusing more on strong and ethical leadership selected, rather than popularly elected. The problem was that the frame was challenged both inside and outside of the interim government. Interim Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont was quoted as saying that, "There is no one impeccable, not even myself. I am aware that I am not in any way better than others. I have flaws and there's nothing unusual about that. It's the same with the cabinet. No

one is 100% pure and clean."[369] This quote expressed the idea that leaders are fallible, which ran counter to the CNS frame of unbiased, incorruptibility and commitment to the national interest. The Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame had a weak impact. Its proposal for a new, largely undemocratic political system stretched beyond the Thai political culture. Furthermore, the reality of the poor performance of the interim government didn't inspire confidence that an unelected government could properly lead the country. These two factors caused even critics of Thaksin to look forward to an election even though it seemed clear that Thaksin's group would regain control, because the alternative was widely viewed as unacceptable.

Findings from public opinion polls during the period show that the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame lost resonance over time. A Gallup Poll of Thailand conducted in July of 2007 found that, "The prevailing opinion among Thais seems to be that the military may not give up power that easily."[370] Only 34% thought that the interim government was doing enough to restore democracy, while 59% thought that it was not. And just 54% said that there are "very" or "somewhat" certain that fair elections would not be held later in 2007. Figure 5.12-1 shows these results in greater detail.

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[369] "Thaksin was leader deposed in a coup." *Bangkok Post.* April 27, 2007.
[370] Srinivasan, Rajesh; Crabtree, Steve. *"Thai Public Skeptical of Power Transfer."* Gallup World. November 5, 2007.

How confident are you that fair elections will be held later this year and a new government will be elected to power shortly thereafter?
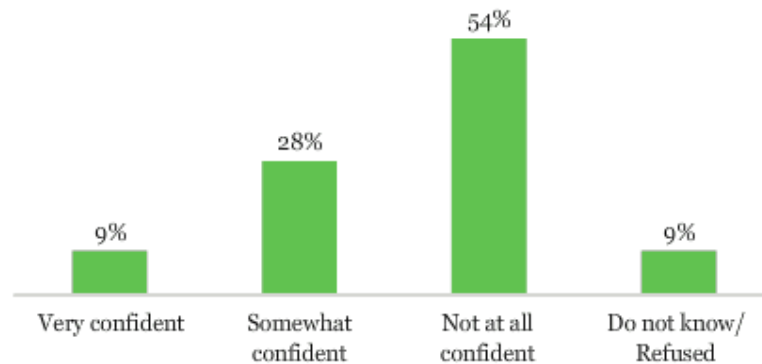
Figure 5.12-1. Findings from a Gallup Poll Regarding Opinion about Likelihood of Interim Government Holding Elections in 2007.[371]

In addition to opinions about the interim government's support for democracy or their timetable for holding new elections, overall, support for the interim government fell dramatically during the study period, as illustrated in Figure 5.12-2. Reasons given for this fall in support included lack of commitment to democracy, an inability to solve the nationwide political crisis, an inability to bring Thaksin to justice, and an inability to solve the crisis with the Muslim population in Southern Thailand.

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[371] This graph was taken from Gallup World. Website: http://www.gallup.com/poll/102535/thai-public-skeptical-power-transfer.aspx

Popularity of Interim Government
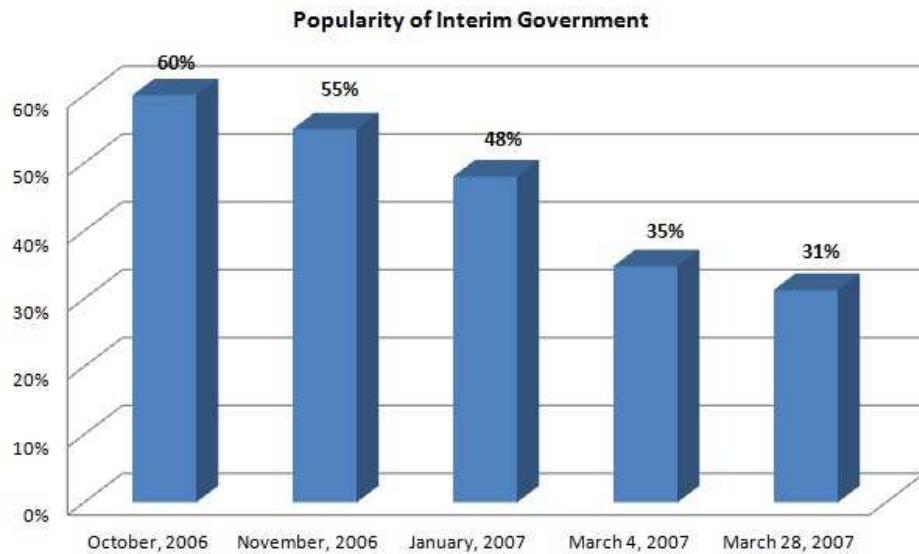
Figure 5.12-2. The Popularity of the Interim Government. The government's popularity fell precipitously during the first six months of the interim government's administration. In continued to hover around 25-30% up to the December 2007 elections.[372]

There was also evidence in the general public that the Inept Administration Frame was successful in weakening support for the interim government. An ABAC poll conducted in January of 2007 showed that support for the interim Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont had dropped precipitously from November of 2006. In less than three months, the interim prime minister's support fell from 70.5% to 48.2%. The report cited the reason as the interim government's inability to direct successful prosecutions of Thaksin or to solve the conflict in the south.[373]

In addition, the frames of Moral and Ethical Leadership to describe the interim government surfaced much less regularly than negative frames of Inept Administration and Dictatorship as time passed, as outlined in Figure 5.9-1.

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[372] *Ibid.*
[373] "PM's popularity drops as Thaksin's increases." *Bangkok Post*. Feb. 5, 2007.

Moreover, the draft charter process frame of moral and ethical charter were overshadowed by those opposed to the process, who framed it is undemocratic and too heavily influenced by the military.

The data showed that the media and even some CNS supporters rejected the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame and the draft charter process. They continued to believe that democracy was preferable to selecting leadership and drafting the constitution. This was the case not only among media frames, but the actual charter referendum showed deep pockets of resistance in some parts of the country. The referendum vote was held on August 19, 2007, and the constitution passed. The next day, CNS chairman Sonthi remarked that the outcome of the referendum in the Northeast was troubling and that the CNS faced major challenges in connecting with voters in the northern regions. General Sonthi admitted that the reason so many voted against the referendum in certain parts of the country had to do with disappointment over the military's handling of national affairs after Thaksin. [374]

Figure 5.12-3 shows the vote by specific region. Despite TRT supporters abandoning their formal "no" vote opposition, despite the continuation of the emergency decree, which forbad public gatherings and greatly constrained public debate, and despite widespread promotion by the CNS and interim government, the referendum did not pass by a wide margin. Nationally, the vote was 58.5% in favor of the constitution and 41.5 against it. In northeast and northern Thailand, Thais voted in large numbers against the constitution.

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[374] "Sonthi: Next army boss must win public trust." *Bangkok Post*. August 23, 2007.

This research poses the question of why so many rejected the Moral Thai Charter Frame. Many in the government camp believed that the draft charter was less democratic than its predecessor. The proposals to the constitution that would have weakened press freedom caused the media to withdraw their support of the charter and caused NGOs and pro-democracy advocates to question the CNS and interim government's original argument for the new charter.
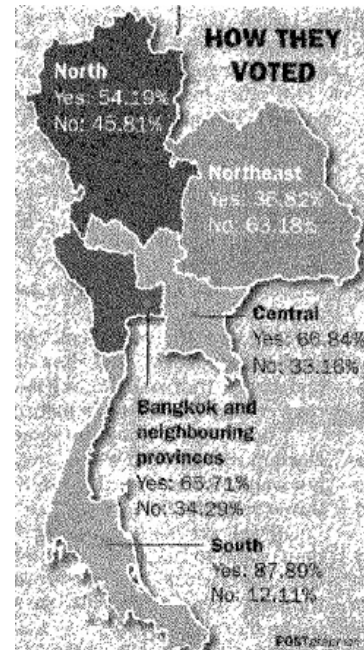
Figure 5.12-3. Referendum vote by region.

Moreover, there is significant evidence to suggest that the counter-frame of Undemocratic Charter Frame gained support from the period when the charter process first began, which included the selection of drafters, until the actual creation of the charter and the vote held on it in the latter part of 2007. In early 2007, only the more progressive Khaosod aired the frame of Undemocratic Charter often, while it was largely absent from the pages of the more conservative Bangkok Post. Early opponents of the new charter were highly critical of the influence of the CNS over appointments to the NLA, believing that politicians from the TRT and others who had been linked with Thaksin were purposely blocked from participating on the assembly.

Later in the new charter process, criticisms emerged from an increasing number of government allies. There were also criticisms of the charter a referendum procedure

and particularly the lack of ability to hold public meetings and debates because of the continuation of martial law. These events and actions lent more credibility to the frame that this was a dictator's constitution. We can chart the growing concern of conservative elements with the new charter by watching how the undemocratic charter got mentioned much more frequently later in the charter process. This, along with the words of Abhisit, Suryasai, Surayuad and others suggests that there was major disagreement over the content and process of the draft charter. This disagreement was noted in the words of government allies during the period and its existence is reinforced by trends in the mention of the Undemocratic Charter in the Bangkok Post.

The flaw of the CNS was that while electoral and democratic systems were subverted by informal, traditional sources of power, the idea that these sources could be made formal was not supported by the majority of the Thai people, and even by those who supported the coup and interim government. Moreover, the interim government was a glaring example of the limits moral and ethical leadership, which ended up severely damaging the frame's credibility. While most coup supporters wanted an end to Thaksin's influence on Thai politics, they could not build a persuasive enough frame to in influence rural people to abandon their support for Thaksin.

The Evil Thaksin and Thaksin System Frames had little impact and this should have been apparent to the CNS as the corruption sub-frames that underpinned both was not a new message in Thai politics. In the past they had also been highlighted, but only found true support among the Bangkok middle class and elites. Most elites and the middle class strongly disliked Thaksin, but removing his influence meant rolling back

democracy, and they were not ready for that. Maybe it was because of the failure of the interim government both politically and in economic terms. But these groups were not yet willing to abandon democracy even if it meant Thaksin's return.

The other question that needs to be answered is why the Evil Thaksin and Thaksin System Frames failed to resonate in the populous northern and northeastern provinces as a diagnosis of the problem that the country faced? Did the framers realistically believe that this frame could influence rural Thais who had been supporters of Thaksin? Or was this frame only really targeting the Bangkok middle class and elite with its message of excessive corruption under Thaksin? The evidence seems to suggest that the framers hoped that their frames would have more influence outside of the middle class in Bangkok. This evidence is from the words of CNS leaders, who spoke in the coup's aftermath of the need to explain to rural people about the Thaksin regime's excesses and abuse of power. They also made several trips to the Northeast to make their case. They even reacted with surprise when polls and charter referendum showed continued strong support for Thaksin.

CHAPTER 6   THE FLOW OF EVENTS

6.1   A LOOK BACK AT THE MILITARY COUP GOVERNMENT

During the period following the September 19, 2006 coup, until the middle of 2007,

significant cracks and fissures formed in the government coalition, undermining its

legitimacy, and providing the coup group's opponents with the political opportunity

to widen their base of support and push for a return to democratic politics. These

cracks and fissures surfaced mainly during the constitutional drafting process around

reforms proposed by the PAD and its allies in the Constitutional Drafting Assembly.

These reforms called for a parliament partially appointed by royalists and other elites,

a clause that in times of crisis would allow the appointment of a prime minister

without an election, and a more significant role for the military in politics.[375] These

proposals and criticism over the interim government's administration caused internal

disagreements that weakened the government-supporter coalition. Drawing on a

strong democratic culture that had emerged in Thailand over previous decades, The

Red Shirts deployed frames of Dictatorship, Return to Democracy, and Inequality,

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[375] "Agree to open gate for outsider." *Khaosod*. March 13, 2007. CNS secretary-general General Winai
Phattiyakul remarked about the proposal of a prime minister from outside the system that, "There
should be a choice, otherwise the country will face this same issue again." Also see: "Sodsri pushes for
top brass role in crisis council." *Bangkok Post*. May 4, 2007. Charter drafter Sodsri Sattayatham tried
to push for a greater role for the military in the constitution by creating a National Crisis Council on
which several heads of the armed forces would sit along with elected officials. She said that this would
prevent future coups by giving the military a more active political role that was equal to that of elected
leaders. The proposal for a National Crisis Council was evently omitted from the 2007 constitution due
to significant backlash. See: Muntarbhorn, Vitit. "Deconstructing the 2007 Constitution." In *Divided
over Thaksin: Thailand's Coup and Problematic Transition*. N John Funston, eds.

that capitalized on the weakening elite coalition and center-periphery tensions, and mobilized rural and urban poor and middle income peasants.

One factor weakening the interim government stemmed from disagreements regarding how best to ensure that Thaksin would no longer dominate Thai politics. Some groups believed that the political system should be reformed to allow a government that could be more closely guided by elites through a system in which parliamentarians and even the prime minister could be selected rather than popularly elected.[376] However, these reformers were the minority within the government camp at the time. Most interim government supporters argued that Thailand should remain democratic.[377] They believed that measures could be put in place to ensure that the power of elected leaders was constrained by vesting power in unelected institutions with royalist allegiances, such as the courts and the military. They also believed that Thaksin's support base could be weakened by educating people in provincial communities about Thaksin's wrongdoings and the evils of corruption and vote buying.[378] They spoke of commitment to democracy and the preservation of the

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[376] This is a key component of the New Politics proposal advanced by the PAD. While this frame would surface during anti-government PAD protests in 2008, some of the frame's components were promoted by PAD members and supporters in the CDA as early as the first half of 2007. See:

[377] "PM should be elected." *Khaosod*. November 7, 2006. Teepethai, spokesperson for the Democrat Party remarked that an appointed PM would be a step back for the country. "The new PM should come from a direct election." Also see: "Against appointing the Senate. If we cannot elect them, it is better not to have them at all." *Khaosod*. January 3, 2007. In one editorial appearing in the Bangkok Post on December 17, 2006, entitled, "Keeping things democratic", in reference to proposals that would reverse democratic government in Thailand, the editor stated that, "Certain NLA members are trying to further an agenda that is bad for the country." He remarked that democracy is demanded by the people and is a major part of the culture and that is should be a part of Thailand's political scene. He concluded by saying that, "An unelected PM has no place in a democracy."

[378] *"Sonthi orders poll crusade."* Bangkok Post. Oct 13, 2007. Deputy Prime Minister (and coup leader) Sonthi Boonyaratkalin said that the government must educate people before the election on the negative consequences of vote buying and who and how to vote for good people to prevent the vicious cycle of electing corrupt politicians. Also see: *"Keeping the Torch of Democracy Alight."* Bangkok Post. Oct. 6, 2006. In this article, Poldej Pinprateep, the deputy social development and human security

character of the 1997 Constitution. This fracture in elite beliefs about, and commitment to, democracy gave the Red Shirts frame of Dictatorship and Return to Democracy more cultural resonance. It was part of the cultural opportunity structure that allowed Red Shirts to find sympathizers in unlikely places and among groups that were fervently anti-Thaksin. Whether purposely or inadvertently, democracy and commitment to democratic ideals within a large part of the interim government coalition and in the general public bridged the anti-Thaksin and pro-Thaksin divide.[379]

6.2   2008 - 2009: POLITICAL UPHEAVAL

Thai politics entered a more tumultuous phase in 2008. In the aftermath of the 2007 election, moderates within the interim government coalition were surprised at the resilience of Thaksin's rural support base, his hold over his own party, and the lack of receptivity of the rural masses to the coup government's anti-Thaksin frames. During this period, scholars of Thai politics spoke increasingly of the cultural, geographic and demographic divide between Bangkok and the rest of the country.[380] They spoke of the conflict between the growing power base in the provinces, and resurgent, traditional institutions in Bangkok eager to re-establish dominance in Thai politics.[381]

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minister under the Sonthi coup government says Thai people must be educated about the role and importance of citizens in a democracy because their actions and behaviors are crushing democracy.

[379]Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejevija and key academics and NGOs, that had been fierce opponents of Thaksin, still supported a return to representative democracy, despite widespread belief that an election would likely lead to a win by pro-Thaksin forces.

[380] Albritton, Robert B; Thawilwadee Bureekul. (2007) Public Opinion and Political Power in Thailand. Asia Barometer Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development. Working Paper Series: No. 34. Also See: Rojanaphruk, Pravit. "Rural Thais are no longer ignorant: Klausner." *The Nation*. August 22, 2010. In this article, famous anthropologist William J. Klausner remarked that, "[the continued rural-urban divide] is probably the most burning issue [in Thai society] that needs to be addressed."

[381] Nelson, Michael H. "Looking Back Before the Election of 2011: Thailand's Constitutional Referendum and the Election of 2007." *European-Asian Journal of Law and Governance*. Page 72. Michael Nelson wrote of this period, "The referendum and the elections [in 2007] were steps to steer Thailand's politics away from the "Thaksin regime," and restore what Kasian Tejapira called, "an electocracy under royal hegemony in which the military, the monarchical network and the judiciary—

There was discussion and disagreement over which power source—the traditional, Bangkok-centric royalist network and their bureaucratic and intellectuals supporters, or regional political alignments with significant popular support, was gaining the upper hand in politics.[382] While these perspectives on Thai politics were not new, they took center-stage during this period as opposing forces in Thai politics became more confrontational.[383]

The outcome of the December 17, 2007 election was an impressive win for the newly formed People's Power Party (PPP), which won 235 seats in the parliament and the right to form the next government. The win provided a vindication of sorts for Thaksin and his policies. The leader of the PPP and new prime minister was the aggressive and combative, Thaksin-nominee Samak Sundaravej.[384] Samak campaigned that if elected he would not only continue Thaksin's policies, but also fight to bring Thaksin back to Thailand. He openly admitted at campaign rallies that he was a Thaksin stand-in, showing clearly that the CNS and interim government had failed in their goal to break Thaksin's political influence. Once elected, Samak vowed to amend several articles of the 2007 Constitution to reverse the judicialization of

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that is the unelected, virtuous, super-Thai elites—assume a behind-the-scenes guardian/corrective and arbiter/moderator role."

[382] Winichakul, Thongchai. (2008) "Toppling Democracy." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. Vol. 38, No. 1, February 2008, pp. 11–37. Thongchai argues that the monarchy had been firmly in control of politics and has stepped in to derail the evolution of democracy when they became frustrated at is populist direction.

[383] "It is a fallacy to analyze present troubles as based on class system." Thanong Khanthong. *The Nation*. December 1, 2008. Not everyone believed in the salience of the class divide regularly mentioned by academics.

[384] Samak Sundaravej was not a typical Thaksin politician. His career began as a MP in the Democrat Party and he had close ties to the monarchy. He also had strong anti-communist, right-wing credentials. During his government service, he was known to act aggressively against left-wing groups and student protestors. His involvement in brutal crackdowns against pro-democracy protestors in both 1976 and 1992 made him a controversial figure within the PPP.

Thai politics, particularly the article that made it easy for the courts to abolish political parties and ban party members from politics.[385] Samak's plan greatly upset Bangkok elites and the PAD, which mobilized and held street protests in May 2008 against the Samak government.

In this round of mobilization, The PAD tried a series of new and crippling tactics to attempt to force the government to step down. What was different about this round of protests, compared with the last PAD mobilization in 2006, was that while the military shared a similar interest in seeing the Thaksin system dismantled, they had no intention of intervening directly in politics. They had been widely criticized by supporters and opponents alike during their coup government administration in 2006-2007, and chose this time to watch from the sidelines, vowing not to interfere.[386] Additional issues intensified the political conflict between the PAD and Samak government and aided in PAD mobilization. The first of these was the issue of the land around Preah Vihear Temple site.[387] Thai Foreign Minister Noppadol Pattama agreed to a specific proposal that would establish the temple site as a UN World Heritage site and increase the Cambodian government's control of the land around the

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[385] Prasirtsuk, Kitti. (2009). "Thailand in 2008: Crises Continued." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (January/February 2009), pp. 174-184.

[386] "Suriyasai says CNS has not passed test." *Bangkok Post*, November 20, 2006. Suriyasai Katasila, who was at the time the coordinator for the PAD-allied Campaign for Popular Democracy, said that the CNS has failed because it has not held Thaksin accountable, its anti-corruption team has been too slow in bringing Thaksin to justice, and that the government had not improved the security situation. They were also blamed for appointing Thaksin cronies to the NLA. The CNS was constantly on the defensive during its coup administration, defending its decisions and record mainly against dissatisfied former government allies.

[387] Preah Vihear Temple site sits on the border of Thailand and Cambodia. In a BBC article the author described the contested border around the temple as stretching back more than a century. "Maps drawn by Cambodia's French colonial rulers and Thailand (or Siam, as it was then known) early in the 20th Century showed the temple as belonging to Cambodia, but in later decades Thailand said the maps were not official and were therefore invalid." http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12378001

temple. This agreement was strongly rejected by the PAD, which framed it as sacrificing Thai sovereignty and used it to stoke nationalist sentiment and recruit more people to the anti-government movement.[388] The Red Shirts, now formed under the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) also mobilized, holding rallies in support of the government. Samak was eventually forced to step down when the Constitutional Court ruled that he had a conflict of interest because he was receiving remuneration as the host of a cooking show. Holding other employment while in the post of Prime Minister was forbidden under the 2007 Constitution.

After Samak's forced resignation, Thaksin nominated his brother in law and former Judge Somchai Wongsawat to become prime minister. The court's decision and the choice of Wongsawat weakened the PPP and emboldened the PAD, which ramped-up its protest efforts, upping the ante in an attempt to pressure the military to intervene. On August 28, 2008 the PAD stormed and occupied the Government House compound, clashed with police, and forcing the Wongsawat government to relocate. In this and several other protest clashes in Bangkok, the military refused the government's requests for help in containing the protestors.[389]

When the occupation of Government House did not provide the response that the PAD had hoped for, in an unprecedented move, they seized and occupied Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi airports, closing them for 10 days and crippling the Thai economy. The movement ended only when a Constitutional Court ruling dissolved the

[388] Croissant, Aurel; Paul W. Chambers. "A Contested Site of Memory: The Preah Vihear Temple." In. *Cultures and Globalization: Heritage, Memory and Identity*. Eds. Helmut K Anheier, Yudhishthir taj Isar. Sage, 2011.

[389] Chambers, Paul. "Thailand on the Brink: Resurgent Military, Eroded Democracy." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (September/October 2010), pp. 835-858.

PPP on December 2, 2008, clearing the way for the Democrat Party, led by Abhisit

Vejajiva, to form the new government.

6.3   CULTURE SHIFT

During the fifty years prior to the 2006 coup, Thailand has undergone a remarkable

cultural and economic transformation. This transformation happened in two locations.

The first was in the Bangkok region, where from the 1950s through the 1970s, the

economy grew exponentially, and with it the population of educated, middle class

Thais. The Vietnam War brought large amounts of foreign aid, particularly from the

United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which spent tens of

millions of dollars promoting economic development to create a bulwark in Thailand

against the spread of communism.

Increasing exposure to the West, economic growth, and rising education and income

levels, increased urban Thais' demands for self-governance. The structural factors

were ripe for confrontation with Thailand's repressive dictatorial regimes. The early

1970s in Thailand was a period of sustained democratic government as well as

socialist movements of farmers and students. While democratic government

ultimately gave way to a re-assertive authoritarian regime and a violent right-wing

counter-movement, the seed of democracy was firmly planted. Students and activist

farmers had organized and challenged the state regarding social and economic

inequality. While the state and private actors had responded by crushing the

movement, major gains in democracy were achieved.[390] Fifteen years later, riding a

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[390] Connors, Michael. "Introduction: Thailand and the Good Coup." In Thailand's Good Coup: The
Fall of Thaksin, the Military and Democracy. *The Journal of Contemporary Asia Quarterly*. Volume
38, Number 1. Special Issue. 2008. Referring to this period, Michael K. Connors argues that politics

massive wave of economic development and further growth of the middle class, a

pro-democracy movement emerged to pressure the unpopular Suchinda government

to step down and hold elections.[391] The 1992 pro-democracy movement had a

different composition than its predecessor. While both were led by students, the 1992

movement also counted numerous academics, professionals and media organizations

within its ranks, enjoyed significant support from the newly influential middle class,

and was funded and supported by several major opposition parties.[392]

During this period, rural Thailand experienced its own transformation due mainly to

rapid economic development, which brought with it improved quality of life, and

higher literacy and education rates. After 1992, voting had an enormous impact on

rural Thailand. During the 1990s, the values and self-image of rural people began to

change. They eventually recognize their power in the democratic system. Each

election cycle brought politicians to rural communities to listen to the problems of

local people, and promise action, both financially and otherwise, in return for votes.

While this transformation was partly structural, it was also ideational. Enterprising

politicians played on regional identity, ethnic identity, and a history of strained

Bangkok-rural relations, to win the support of rural people. While vote-buying played

a critical role in provincial politics in the early period of democratic government,

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came to be more widely defined as both workers and the rural majority acquired a political voice, at
least for a time.

[391] The Suchinda regime was elected but the party Smakhi Tham that Suchinda headed was a military
elite party and when the pro-democracy movement put pressure on Suchinda, he refused to hold
elections

[392] Keyes, Charles. "Hegemony and Resistance in Northeastern Thailand. "In *Regions and National
Integration in Thailand, 1892-1992*. Volker Grabowsky, eds. Keyes says that the pro-democracy
movement was comprised mostly of the Thai Middle Class. Also see: Thai Pro-Democracy Movement
Revitalized by Suchinda Protest. *Associated Press*. May. 3, 1992.

things changed in the years immediately preceding Thaksin's rise. The confluence of

structural changes and evolution of a democratic and empowerment identity created a

rural population that had outgrown traditional Bangkok-held views of rural people as

ignorant, patronage-tied, and backwards.[393] Writing on this topic, William J.

Klausner, said:

> *"Urban Thais still see rural people as uneducated and narrow minded*
>
> *provincials. Such a view no longer represents either the social or political*
>
> *reality. Rural society had undergone a cosmic change during the past half*
>
> *century which urban dwellers often simply refuse to recognize or accept."[394]*

The changing values and understanding of rural people is also depicted in surveys

conducted by the Asia Barometer. In three waves over an eight year period beginning

in 2002, survey results showed that contrary to mainstream Bangkok ideas about

political culture in the north and northeast, support for democracy was stronger

among provincials than it was for Bangkokians.[395] Rural Thais had become much

more political, aware and informed citizens.

When Thaksin swept to power in 2001, political observers noted that Thaksin's

populist-styled policies were a brilliant, proactive strategy to garner the support of the

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[393] Keyes, Charles. "Cosmopolitan' villagers and populist democracy in Thailand." *South East Asia Research*. Volume 20, Number 3, September 2012, pp. 343-360.

[394] Klausner, William J. 2010. "William J. Klausner on Thai Politics at ISIS (Chula)."Part one October 1, 2010, part two October 2, 2010. Published on the blog of French journalist Arnaud Dubus athttp://arnodubus.blogspot.com.

[395] Albritton, Robert B; Thawilwadee Bureekul. (2004). "Developing Democracy under a New Constitution in
Thailand." *Asia Barometer Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development*. Working Paper Series: No. 28. Also see: Albritton, Robert B; Thawilwadee Bureekul. (2002). "Support for Democracy in Thailand" *Asia Barometer Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development*. Working Paper Series: No. 3.

rural poor. The dominant discourse was that the poor were passive recipients of government largess. An alternative view, which emerged in the wake of the 2006 coup, argued that the relationship between Thaksin and the rural voter was more nuanced. It depicted Thaksin as responding to the expectations and demands of the rural people for a more comprehensive social contract.[396] Michael Nelson viewed the Red Shirts as forged from rural people's quest for rights and opportunities under a democratic government.[397] Thaksin's policies and actions were said to reflect a deeper understanding of the rural voter.

Following Thaksin's ouster, the UDD (Red Shirts) was formed to pressure military leaders to return the country to democracy and vindicate Thaksin. Rural poor and middle-income peasants, who had been the beneficiaries of Thakin's policies, saw the military's complicity in the coup as evidence that they were clearly opposed to rural interests. Conversely. Bangkok elites claimed that rural people's support for Thaksin stemming from ignorance, lack of education, and rural backwardness.[398] The Red Shirts used the clear oppositional role of the military, and elite views of rural people to help frame their movement as one of poor peasants against the elite (aphichon),

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[396] Andrew Walker. (2012) *Thailand's Political Peasants: Power in the Modern Rural Economy.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

[397] Nelson, Michael H. "Some Observations on Democracy in Thailand." *German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance (*SEARC*)*, Southeast Asia Research Centre (SEARC). Not all elites viewed the rural poor in this way. In 2010, former Prime Minister, Thaksin critic, and coup supporter Anand Panyarachun remarked that the anti-government Red Shirts movement and its widespread support in large sections of the country was evidence of a mass political awakening and a necessary step in the evolution of democracy. In August 2007, following the passage of the 2007 Constitution, and the rejection of the new charter in the Northeast, then coup leader Sonthi Boonyaratglin noted that the people in these areas had spoken and that the coup government had clearly not responded effectively to the demands of the people. In both instances, Thai elites had spoken of the Red Shirts and rural people as acting rationally. This contrasted with typical elite interpretations of rural poor as ignorant and misled.

[398] *Ibid.*

who they argued were attempting to suppress the goals and aspirations of rural poor

people.

6.4 FALL OF THE PPP AND RISE OF THE DEMOCRAT PARTY

The dissolution by the Constitutional Court of the three most important political

parties in the PPP's coalition and banning of 111 former PPP MPs from holding

political office for a period of five years was followed by the defection of the PPP's

Isan power broker Newin Chidchob to the Democrats. This gave the Democrat Party

the necessary numbers in the parliament to form the government. Newin was the

leader of a faction of the PPP in Buri Ram (Isan) called "The Friends of Newin", and

former Deputy Minister of Finance under the Thaksin administration. This new

government, led by Abhisit Vejajiva, was sworn in on December 17, 2008. The PPP

and Red Shirt leadership and academics labelled the court's decision a "judicial

coup", because the courts were said to be following the direction of the military and

crown.[399] This latest decision was said by several academics to be further evidence of

the "judicialization" of Thai politics, in which the courts took on increased scope in

political matters.[400] Abhisit spoke repeatedly of the importance of rule of law in Thai

politics, which was specifically aimed at Thaksin, who was framed as corrupt and

exploiting political institutions for his own personal gain.[401] This judicialization was

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[399] Danielle Sabaï, Pierre Rousset. What is at stake in the crisis? *IV Online Magazine*: IV429 - October 2010.
Also see: Ungpakorn, Giles. Thailand: A second 'coup for the rich'. *LINKS International Journal of Socialist Renewal*. December 2, 2008. For PPP reaction, see PPP, แถลงการณ์ของกรรมการบริหารพรรคพลังประชาชน, 2 December 2008. For reaction from the UDD, see: UDD Rally Video. Bangkok Pundit. *Asian Correspondent*. December 1, 2008. Also see: Contextualizing the Pattaya Summit Debacle: Four April Days, Four Thai Pathologies. Montesano, Michael J. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (August 2009), pp. 217-248.
[400] Dressel, Björn (2010) "Judicialization of politics or politicization of the judiciary? Considerations from recent events in Thailand." *The Pacific Review*. 23: 5, 678 - 679.
[401] Hewison, Kevin. "Thaksin Shinawatra and the reshaping of Thai politics." *Contemporary Politics*

characterized as highly interventionalist because it included the banning of politicians and successful political parties, the conviction of Thaksin and his wife for corruption, and other decisions aimed at Thaksin and the PPP. While the courts took aggressive action against Thaksin, they declined to take action against groups and politicians aligned with the elite establishment, leading to claims of double standard by the UDD and Red Shirts.[402] The Red Shirts quickly re-mobilized to oppose the new government, demanding that Abhisit call fresh elections.[403] The Democrats refused, claiming that elections would not solve the problem.[404]

In April 2009, the Abhisit government hosted the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperative (APEC) Summit in Pattaya, Thailand. The Red Shirts capitalized on the opportunity to grab headlines and put pressure on the Abhisit administration. In April, more than 4,000 Red Shirt protestors stormed the Royal Cliff Beach Resort, where the summit was being held. Many visiting heads of state were forced to flee the venue by boat and helicopter. The APEC Summit protests were followed by several significant rallies in Bangkok by the Red Shirts in which they clashed with the military. In the aftermath, the Red Shirts leadership used the double standard frame to highlight perceived unfair treatment. They criticized how the previous year, the PAD had been allowed to protest with impunity, and even walk away unscathed from their crippling occupations of Bangkok's airports, while government security forces had moved

Vol. 16, No. 2, June 2010, 119–133.

[402]*Ibid.*

[403] "Thailand Bangkok Political Crisis Thaksin Abhisit Yellow Shirts Red Shirts Tourism Chaos." Edward Seah. *World Issues 360*. April 11, 2010. The Red Shirts demands for fresh elections stemmed from their belief that Abhisit came to power illegally through a judicial coup.

[404] Thai 'Red Shirts' March on Abhisit to Demand Election. *Bloomberg News*. By Daniel Ten Kate - February 24, 2009. The Red Shirts countered Abhisit's argument by claiming that his refusal to hold elections was due to the knowledge that if fresh elections were held, a pro-Thaksin party would win easily.

quickly to suppress Red Shirt protests.[405] In the wake of the Pattaya protest, and

debate over how to deal with Thaksin, those voices advocating systemic change of the

political system to root out Thaksin's influence--the very voices who had been in the

minority during the 2007 constitutional drafting process—grew louder.[406]

In the second half of 2009, cracks began to form in the Abhisit government coalition.

The newly formed Pheua Thai Party, comprised of former PPP MPs and supporters,

won handily in planned bi-elections in several constituencies. The results showed that

Thaksin was still a political force and enjoyed strong support, striking at the heart of

the government's legitimacy, and bolstering Red Shirt contentions that fresh elections

would mean a Pheua Thai victory.[407] The Yellow Shirts voiced displeasure with the

Abhisit government and the military for their handling of the Red Shirts protests,

believing that the government was too soft on protesters and unwilling to fully

dismantle the Thaksin system.[408]

There was also discontent within the Democrat Party. In order for the Democrats to

take control of the reins of government, they were forced to form a coalition with

Newin, who had been a top Thaksin lieutenant. Many Democrat supporters were

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[405] Thailand in 2009: Colored by Turbulence. Prasirtsuk, Kitti. *Asian Survey*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (January/February 2010), pp. 203-210. Also see: "Thailand on the Brink: Resurgent Military, Eroded Democracy." Paul Chambers. *Asian Survey*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (September/October 2010), pp. 835-858. Chambers remarked, "In response to each Red Shirt mobilization, government security forces either used the new Internal Security Act (ISA) to legally prohibit the protests, or forcibly quelled them."
[406] Contextualizing the Pattaya Summit Debacle: Four April Days, Four Thai Pathologies. Montesano, Michael J. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (August 2009), pp. 221-223.
[407] By-elections : another defeat for Abhisit, another slap in establishment's face. Thailand Crisis: Politics, Economy, Insurgency : Crisis Times in Thailand. Blog. http://thaicrisis.wordpress.com/2009/06/28/by-elections-another-defeat-for-abhisit-another-slap-in-establishments-face/ Published 28 June 2009.
[408] Thailand in 2009: Colored by Turbulence. Prasirtsuk, Kitti. *Asian Survey*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (January/February 2010), pp. 203-210.

critical of the alliance, not the least of which was because it came at a high cost. The Democrat Party leadership gave Newin's faction many top posts in the government, including control of the lucrative Ministry of Interior, the most coveted ministerial position due to its extensive opportunities for repaying supporters and personal enrichment. Many Democrat MPs became disgruntle as they were passed over for ministerial posts.[409]

The inclusion of Newin was also problematic from an ideological perspective. Newin was arch enemy of the Democrats as a senior TRT and then PPP leader. He had been accused several times of corruption and both government supporters and opponents argued that his inclusion in the coalition seemed to contradict the Democrat's platform of integrity, transparency and rule of law. He was, after all, one of the 111 PPP MPs to be banned for electoral misconduct. To add salt to the wound of the Democrat government, Cambodian leader Hun Sen invited Thaksin to Cambodia as his guest and consultant, ignoring the Abhisit government's request to shun the convicted former leader.[410] In response, the Abhisit government recalled their ambassador to Cambodia and relations between the two countries cooled considerably.

6.5   2010: RACHAPRASONG

In early March, 2010, tens of thousands of Red Shirts took to the streets in Bangkok to demand elections. By 2010, the Red Shirts movement had outgrown its origins as a

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[409] Author interview with a Democrat Party MP during January 2009, in Bangkok at the Democrat Party headquarters.

[410] Ganjanakhundee, Supalak. "Thaksin to be my economic advisor - Hun Sen." *The Nation.* October 29, 2009.

mob of Thaksin supporters funded mainly by Thaksin himself. It had evolved into a loose-knit, mass movement of urbanized villagers, representing mainly the lower middle class, and a broad cross-section of society.[411] The Red Shirts were not rural peasants in the traditional sense, though that is how they were framed by the elite establishment. The Bangkok Post reported protest mobilization of Red Shirts from the provinces to Bangkok as the movement of "rural hordes".[412] They were, in fact firmly connected to the global capitalist economy. While many engaged in farming, they did so only part-time, and held other jobs too, such as factory workers, maids, vendors, taxi drivers, shop owners, and government workers. The aim behind this round of UDD mobilization was to force a general election to allow the people to choose the government. On March 10th in a rare and symbolic act of political protest, the Red Shirt leadership organized the collection of nearly 300 liters of blood from approximately 70,000 protestors, which was then spilled on the grounds of Government House, the Democrat Party Headquarters, and Abhisit's home. They did so to put a curse on the Abhisit government and also to show to the world, and reaffirm to each other, that the movement was prepared to sacrifice for their belief in the importance of democracy. The government responded to this symbolism with a medical discourse that attempted to weaken the act by suggesting that those who gave

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[411] Thabchumpon, Naruemon and Duncan McCargo. "Urbanized Villagers in the 2010 Thai Redshirt Protests." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 51, No. 6 (November/December 2011), pp. 993. Naruemon and McCargo argue that some factions of the UDD pushed for violent interactions with the government. Also see: Chachavalpongpun, Pavin. (2013) "Thailand's Red Networks: From Street Forces to Eminent Civil Society Coalitions." *Occasional Paper N° 14* (April 2013).

[412] See: Farrelly, Nicholas. Bangkok Post introduces "UDD rural hordes". New Mandela Website. March 14, 2010. http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2010/03/14/bangkok-post-introduces-udd-rural-hordes/

blood were diseased and that spreading blood in that manner would lead to the spread of disease.[413]

Following this symbolic act, in April 2010 protesters camped near Phan Fah Bridge. Government security forces attempted unsuccessfully to remove the protestors from the bridge area, resulting in 25 deaths and scores of injuries. After several clashes, on April 10, the Red Shirts occupied the Rachaprasong section of Bangkok, which is the city's fashion and leisure center. Follow a month-long standoff between protestors and the Thai military, in which there were several significant skirmishes, on May 19, the military staged an assaulted on the Red Shirts camp with armoured trucks, troops, and sharp shooters. Ninety-two people were killed, and dozens of UDD leaders were arrested and imprisoned in mop-up operations.

There were many significant developments leading up to the violent crackdown at Rachaprasong, which weakened the Abhisit coalition. These included a disgruntled allied PAD organization, the rise in influence of the military and its increasing intervention in politics, and a stagnant economy. These developments weakened the government and opened up the political opportunity structure, creating more room to speak and more receptive audiences both internally and internationally. The government was said to be divided in how to deal with the UDD and Thaksin, with

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[413] Cohen, Erik. "Contesting discourses of blood in the 'red shirts' protests in Bangkok." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 43(2), pp 216–233 June 2012.

the moderate General Anupong on one side, and Abhisit and the more-hardline top military brass on the other.[414]

The structure and leadership of the Red Shirts and internal divisions within the movement also played a role in the onset of violence. In the 2009-2010 period of mobilization, the UDD had grown significantly. The leaders of the movement, Veera Musikapong, Jatuporn Prompan and Nuttawut Saikua, who were former PPP politicians and supporters, made up just one tier of the movement leadership.[415] Below them were a broad cross-section of lower-level leaders from a variety of subgroups and professions, from Marxists, to farmers, musicians, poets, and academics.[416] While there were definite links between the movement and its major supporter Thaksin Shinawatra, there were also growing subgroups that were not motivated or directly supported by Thaksin, but instead joined the movement for other reasons, such as the movement's stance on democracy, or because the movement offered sympathetic ground from which to oppose the power and influence of the establishment, including the monarchy.[417]

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[414] Chambers, Paul. (2010). "Thailand on the Brink: Resurgent Military, Eroded Democracy." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (September/October), pp. 835-858.

[415] Jatuporn Prompan had strong credentials as a pro-democracy and anti-dictator activist. He came from the next generation of student activists (following the 1973-1976 group of pro-democracy activists in which Tida played a major role), who in 1992 led protests that resulted in the resignation of Suchinda Kraprayoon. Following that, Jatuporn had spent some time in Chamlong Srimuang's Palang Dharma Party. The fact that he was a southerner, former insider in Chamlong's Party (Chamlong was one of the Red Shirts' main antagonists), had strong pro-democracy credentials and natural gifts of oratory and ability to speak to the lives and experiences of everyday Thais gave his claims potential credibility.

[416]Thabchumpon, Naruemon and Duncan McCargo. "Urbanized Villagers in the 2010 Thai Redshirt Protests." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 51, No. 6 (November/December 2011), pp. 993-1018.

[417] Thaksin's main link with the movement was through his former PM Office Minister Jakrapob Penkair, who was the publisher of one of the movement's mainstream publications entitled Red Siam.

During the showdown at Rachaprasong between the Red Shirts and the government, it became clear that the UDD did not speak with a single voice, but in fact was highly fragmented. Some factions within the UDD wanted to negotiate with the government, while others preferred a more confrontational approach.[418] The government moved aggressively to weaken the Red Shirts protesters, declaring a State of Emergency on April 10 in response to the Red Shirt and government clashes, and issuing arrest warrants for key Red Shirts leaders. They used a violent clash between the government security forces and protestors at Pan Fa Bridge as a pretext to cut the Red Shirt TV signal and close down Red Shirt websites to, they argued, "Stop distorted information coming from these news sources." The government ignored information coming from the PAD and government-aligned news outlets.[419] Then, on May 19, 2010, the Thai Military destroyed the Red Shirts' encampment at Rachaprasong. This attack and the clashes at Pan Fah Bridge before it resulted in the deaths of 92 people and injury to more than 1,500.[420]

During the Rachaprasong protests in 2010, the Red Shirt protestors actively counter-framed anti-Thaksin groups' description of Red Shirts as poor, uneducated rural farmers, by describing themselves as rural and urban middle class people, and independent thinkers demanding democracy. The military took charge in actions against the protestors, even using covert actions, including music, as a way to disrupt

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[418] Thabchumpon, Naruemon and Duncan McCargo. "Urbanized Villagers in the 2010 Thai Redshirt Protests." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 51, No. 6 (November/December 2011), pp. 993-1018.
[419] Askew, Marc. (2010). "The Ineffable Rightness of Conspiracy: Thailand's Democrat-ministered State and the Negation of Red Shirt Politics." In Bangkok, May 2010: Perspectives on a Divided Thailand. *Institute of Southeast Asian Studies*, 2012. Montesano, Michael J, Pavin Chachavalpongpun, Aekapol Chongvilaivan, Eds.
[420] Thabchumpon, Naruemon and Duncan McCargo. Urbanized Villagers in the 2010 Thai Redshirt Protests. *Asian Survey*, Vol. 51, No. 6 (November/December 2011), pp. 993-1018.

the movement. A special battalion of the army called the psychological operations battalion of the Thai military, called the Psychological Operations Battalion (Pdibatkan Chitwithyā), or Por Jor Wor for short played music over loud speakers, using the King's own musical scores and other music to wash out the sounds of protest leaders' speeches. This music was specifically selected to promote the idea of unity, the meaning of Thainess, and love for the King. Interestingly, the music, pacing and set up purposely tried to emulate the sounds, accents and cadence of Isan.[421]

In the aftermath of 2010's Rachaprasong crackdown, the military was said to have assumed a more powerful place in Thai politics.[422] The military's willingness to crack down on UDD protestors showed the institution's important role in maintaining Abhisit's Democrat Party in government. Writing in the aftermath of Rachaprasong, political scientist Paul Chambers interpreted events as further evidence that, "A tripartite arrangement of non-elected institutions in the monarchy, the Privy Council, and the Military still held significant sway over the direction of Thailand."[423]

6.6   CONCLUSION

The period between the election of Samak in December 2007, and the Rachaprasong crackdown in April 2010 was characterized by repeated protest mobilization by both

[421] Tausig, Benjamin. "A Division of Listening: The Sonic Broadcasts of the Thai Military at the 2010 Bangkok Political Protests". ICIRD Conference Proceedings, 2011.

[422] Overshadowed by the Armed Forces: The Current State of Democratization in Thailand. Paper presented at the 11th International Conference on Thai Studies, under the auspices of Mahidol University, July 26-28, 2011. According to Paul Chambers the military's influence in Thai politics grew following the December 2007 election of Samak Sunderavej because of the justification for security as a response to the further polarization of politics, a border dispute with Cambodia, and the continued Muslim insurrection in the south.

[423] Chambers, Paul. "Thailand on the Brink Resurgent Military, Eroded Democracy." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (September/October 2010), pp. 835-858.

[423] Thabchumpon, Naruemon and Duncan McCargo. Urbanized Villagers in the 2010 Thai Redshirt Protests. *Asian Survey*, Vol. 51, No. 6 (November/December 2011), pp. 993-1018.

the Yellow Shirts and Red Shirts movements and a significant polarization of Thai politics. The military assumed a less direct role in governance but continued to support the elite establishment. The monarchy continued its heavy involvement that began with their role in the 2006 coup by influencing the judiciary to advance their interests. Many spoke of the judicialization of Thai politics as the courts made frequent decisions that weakened Thaksin and his parties, and targeted his financial interests.[424]

During this period support for alternatives to democratic governance seemed to grow, pushed forward by the PAD movement, which later formed a political party called New Politics. Economic changes in the North and Northeast over the previous 50 years had created the conditions for a more aware, more informed citizenry, and one that overwhelmingly supported democracy. Yet, the people from these regions were still underestimated and distrusted by urban middle class and elites, who viewed them as ignorant and uneducated through an outdated lens.

The Red Shirts mobilization in the lead-up to Rachaprasong, and the subsequent government crackdown led to an expansion of the Red Shirt Movement both in terms of membership and organization. The movement grew beyond a narrow pro-Thaksin movement to become a mass movement demanding democracy. As we have seen from this chapter, this evolution was fueled by the actions of the Abhisit government, the courts and the military. During this period, significant transformations in the Red Shirt movement ideology and framing also influenced the flow of events. Movement

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[424] McCargo, Duncan. (2014). "Competing Notions of Judicialization in Thailand." *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*. Vol. 36, N. 3, December.

leaders used the actions of elites and institutions to create an identity for the Red Shirt

movement. They were a rural people movement with a shared history of

disenfranchisement and exploitation at the hands of the Bangkok elite, who had

finally forged a common identity, and must now fight against political inequality and

injustice. As McCargo and Thabchumpon point out, "Ultimately, the Red Shirt

protests were concerned with politics rather than the economy or culture. Red Shirt

frustrations with the system centered on their sense of inequality…"[425]

This became the focus of the next round of movement mass protest following the dark

period brought on by the Rachaprasong crackdown. Red Shirt leaders focused on

diagnostic frames of injustice, inequality, and double standards to encourage people to

mobilize. The next chapter explores the frames that emerged in the wake of

Rachaprasong as the Red Shirts mobilized for their biggest protests yet, expanding

their use of elite and middle class views of rural people to forge an even stronger Red

Shirt identity and demand political rights and democracy.

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[425] Urbanized Villagers in the 2010 Thai Redshirt Protests Author(s): Naruemon Thabchumpon, Mccargo Duncan. *Asian Survey*. Vol. 51, No. 6 (November/December 2011), pp. 993-1018.

CHAPTER 7 RED SHIRTS MOVEMENT, COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMES AND THE 2011 ELECTION

It is widely accepted among observers of Thai politics that the Red Shirts social movement played a significant role in the Pheua Thai Party's landslide victory at the polls on July 3, 2011. There are several possible reasons for this. One reason pins the movement's influence on the election on its ability to build a sophisticated, nationwide organization with a strong grassroots component, and education and mobilization programs that reached deep into the provinces. One could also credit the Red Shirts' development of a local and national media arm that included TV and radio stations, websites, and multiple newspapers and magazines with enabling the movement to play a major role in the election outcome. Yet another possible reason for the important role of the Red Shirts was that they developed multiple frames of the Abhisit government, their own movement, and the importance of the upcoming election in an attempt to shape peoples' perceptions regarding these topics and ultimately encourage protest mobilization. This last reason lies at the heart of this research effort, which is to understand the messages that the Red Shirts used to articulate their core grievances with the government and the political system in the lead-up to the election. It also seeks to understand the extent to which these frames resonated with a large segment of the population.

This exploration is based upon a detailed frame analysis of several issues of *Mahaprachachon* (มหาประชาชน) or "Great People", a weekly Red Shirt publication, and

one of three major publications affiliated with the Red Shirts movement.[426] This

chapter seeks to answer three questions:

1. What collective action frames were present in the red-shirt weekly

   Mahaprachachon in the lead-up to the election?

2. What were the core components of these frames and how did they treat

   different groups, histories, events, and people?

3. Did these frames resonate with their target audience?

Sociologists David Snow and Robert Benford coined the term Collective Action

Framing to explain how movements package together different experiences, idea,

values, labels and groups to influence people's beliefs and actions (1986; 2000).

Frame resonance entails the extent to which frames appeal to their target audiences.

According to Benford and Snow, "A frame is said to be resonant if potential

constituents find its interpretation and expression of grievances compelling." (2000)

This and other works in the field of frame resonance have identified several factors

that affect a frame's ability to resonate. In addition to mapping the contours of these

frames, this study seeks to identify the presence or absence of these factors in the

major frames identified.

This thesis focuses specifically on collective action frames that diagnosed (called

diagnostic frames in the literature) the core grievances that the Red Shirts had with

the Abhisit government, and more broadly, with the system of class relations.

Diagnostic frames seek to build a shared understanding of a problem or condition that

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[426] The other two publications are the Voice of Thaksin and Red News.

movement leaders believe must change, and define who or what is to blame. Figure 7-1 outlines the key diagnostic frames that were identified in this research.
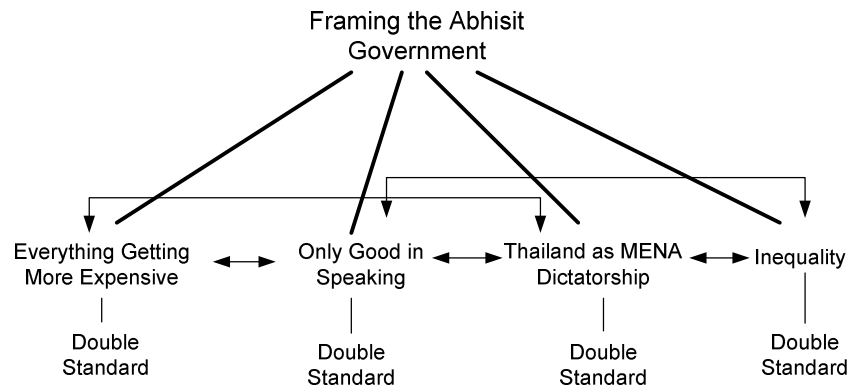
Figure 7-1. Major Diagnostic Frames Appearing in the Mahaprachachon Newspaper from January to July, 2011.

These frames generally fell under the umbrella of attacks on the Abhisit government, including its perceived poor performance, behavior, and leadership, as well as undemocratic actions. However, the inequality frame (*far right in Figure 1*) went beyond attacks on the government and focused instead on the overall socio-political environment in Thailand. Each frame drew heavily on a range of discourses and events in the broader environment, including Thai and world history, the monarchy, democracy, class, religion, international events, and everyday experience. These discourses and events are critical to understanding frame composition and resonance.

7.1   EVOLUTION OF RED SHIRT FRAMING EFFORTS IN MAHAPRACHACHON

Within the movement, and the pages of *Mahaprachachon*, January of 2011 was a pivotal month. Only two months earlier, a major event had shaken up the UDD. The selection of Tida Tawornseth on December 2, 2010 as the Acting Chairperson of the

United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), after an extended period following the government crackdown at Rachaprasong in which the movement was leaderless, set the movement on a new course.[427] Across several articles in the January issue analyzed, Tida and others urged the Red Shirts to fight with knowledge, as this was their most effective weapon against the government. She spoke about the need to shift the Red Shirts' away from the previous strategy of focusing on Thaksin, to a new strategy of democracy and justice, pointing out that focus on the latter was necessary to allow the former to occur.

There was considerable evidence from comparing the January issue to subsequent issues that the first month of 2011 was a period of introspection within the movement. Still regrouping from, and focused on, the events of May, 2010, articles in *Mahaprachachon* dealt predominantly with repression, double standards, and systemic issues of injustice, with scant attention to the government's social and economic policies. In addition to systemic issues, *Mahaprachachon* writers discussed the identity of the Red Shirt people, their common characteristics, position in Thailand's power and class structures, and their relationship to different groups. This process entailed mapping the battle lines, assigning relationships and motivations to the main actors, and introducing labels. That the newspaper was so focused on issues of systemic inequality, repression, and identity instead of on policies is unsurprising

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[427]The main message of the movement changed from "Bring Thaksin home" to "justice, human rights, and democracy" and distanced itself from the former leader to a greater degree than before the April 2010 protest and crackdown (*Mahaprachachon*, January 20-27, 2011: p. 3). This change is message probably came as a result of the framing opportunities created by the government crackdown and subsequent Arab Spring revolutions. http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2010/12/07/national/Reds-struggling-under-charter-New-chief-30143899.html

given that in January it was still unclear whether there would be an election later in the year. The predominant view within the pages of *Mahaprachachon* at the time was that even if an election had been announced, it would likely be aborted by a coup or rigged by opponents of the Red Shirts. *Mahaprachachon* writers still seemed to take the stance that change would not come from within the system but that a Tunisia-style revolution was necessary. Another interesting topic in the January issue was UDD leader Veeragan Muksikapong. Questions surfaced about his reduced profile as a leader in the Red Shirts movement, and there was some criticism that he had abandoned the movement at an important time in the struggle.

Beginning in the February issue of *Mahaprachachon*, there was considerably greater discussion and criticism of the government. Roughly half of the articles focus on systemic issues of inequality and repression (what we label collectively as "government bad behavior"), while in marked contrast to the previous month's issue, the other half of the articles criticized the government's poor performance. One popular criticism in the February issue analyzed was the government's backfired policy of selling eggs by the kilogram (further discussed in Section 5 below). Systemic issues of inequality, access to power, and abuse of power were still dominant frames. Labels and explanations such as invisible hand, dark power, dictatorship, and concepts such as the New Thai State also surfaced in this issue. Additionally, there was continued discussion of the Red Shirts' identity, with specific focus on the fault lines in Thai society between what writers described as the poor, prai, farmers and the urban, lord, dirty politicians and dictators. There were also references in writers' framing efforts to international events, such as the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt.

From February to March, there was major shift away from systemic issues and towards criticism of the government's policies and performance. The major theme in the March issue was the growing confidence that an election was imminent. Across numerous articles, UDD leaders Tida Tawornseth, Veeragan Musikapong, poet Weesa Kantap, and *Mahaprachachon* editor Prasak Musikapong repeated the idea of turning Red Shirt workers into voters for the Pheua Thai Party. The cover story of the March edition detailed this strategic shift. The idea of turning workers for the movement into voters for Pheua Thai not only signaled a strategic shift for Red Shirt mobilization from the streets to the polling booths, but also represented a shift in Red Shirt identity, away from "fighters for democracy" attacking the system from the outside, towards an identity of participants in a democratic process and operating from within the system.

The frame of khao yak mak phaeng, (ข้าวยากหมากแพง) "Everything Getting More Expensive" emerged on the pages of *Mahaprachachon* during this period and became a popular phrase in this and subsequent issues. This term aligned perceived government administrative and behavioral failures to peoples' everyday experiences through a historical phrase first used by commoners during the days of Thailand's absolute monarchy to label periods of crisis, and used frequently thereafter. There was a clear expression of some doubt over whether the announced elections would actually be held or would be fair. The Quiet Coup frame emerged during this time to describe a potential scenario in which fair elections would be thwarted. This frame drew upon the notion of Dark Hand and the discourse on the military to suggest that powers outside of the constitution and public view could interfere in the workings of

political institutions to have the Pheua Thai Party dissolved. The March issue also included significant attacks on the Abhisit government and on Abhisit personally. Finally, some writers' messages were clearly aimed at factions within the Red Shirts movement to minimize conflict between the newer, younger leaders and the old guard.

Extensive criticism of Abhisit's leadership and the government's performance were the major themes of the April issue of *Mahaprachachon*. One of the most common frames used to describe Abhisit was *di tae phut* (ดีแต่พูด) "Only Good in Speaking." This frame was linked to failed government policies, perceived inaction, and the continuation of systemic inequality and injustice. Articles with the explicit goal of attacking Abhisit more than doubled from March to April from 4 to 9. While in earlier issues, Abhisit was depicted as someone firmly in control of the government and responsible for the events at Rachaprasong, in April, several articles depicted Abhisit as someone controlled by powers behind the scene. The frame of double standard also figured prominently in articles in the April issue, as did the economic dimension of class inequality. There was also continued emphasis on the identity of the Red Shirts.

The May issue of *Mahaprachachon* was very important because not only did it go to print shortly after the one year anniversary of the Rachaprasong crackdown, it was also the first issue following the announcement of Yingluck as the Pheua Thai candidate for prime minister. These events were dominant themes in the issue, which simultaneously looked back solemnly on the events at Rachaprasong, while at the same time looking forward eagerly to the forthcoming election. These two events were often linked in articles to express the salience of the election to those within the

movement and also as a warning to the movement's opponents of the consequences if they compromised the election.

Unsurprisingly, the June issue of *Mahaprachachon* focused intensely on the upcoming election. Many writers and Red Shirt leaders encouraged people to vote by highlighting the differences between the performance and composition of Pheua Thai Party and the Democrat Party. They often pointed to the stakes of the election, using contrasts such as "devil versus the woman saviour on a white horse," the "Stone Age versus progress," "falling down versus moving forward." What was less expected was the way in which writers framed the 1932 transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional government, and their decision to talk about the monarchy, even if indirectly, just days before the election.

In several articles, writers repeated the assertion that Pridi Banomyong, a key civilian leader of the revolution against absolute rule in 1932 and one of Thailand's first democracy advocates, was well-intentioned and did not topple the monarchy but in fact worked with King Prajadhipok to voluntarily transition power to constitutional government. That this was such a major focus was evidenced by the fact that it was the cover story one week before the election. The writers framed the Red Shirts movement as a continuation of the 1932 mission of bringing lasting democracy to Thailand. While the motivation and timing for this emphasis is still unclear, *Mahaprachachon* writers may have been responding to negative characterizations of Pridi and the 1932 transition by opponents of the Red Shirts and Pheua Thai Party. There were several references to CDs distributed to the public by "shadowy" people that also connected the Red Shirts to Pridi and the transition period, but framed the

revolutionaries and past and present events as an attempt to destroy the monarchy.

The June issue reveals a perceptual battleground as both the Red Shirts and their

opponents provided competing frames attempting to tie the identity and motivations

of current actors to a highly contested past. There was also significant discussion in

the June issue of the unexpected travel abroad of two of the three members of the

Election Commission a few weeks before the election. Writers in *Mahaprachachon*

were wary of this action and linked it to the possibility of a coup or illegal

campaigning by the Democrats. Finally, the Thai military was singled out in several

articles, probably due to the perceived threat of their interference in the election.

7.2 FRAMING THE ABHISIT GOVERNMENT

Unsurprisingly, the Abhisit government was a central story line in *Mahaprachachon*

during the study period, particularly from February onwards. Five frames animated

this story line and were the foci of *Mahaprachachon* writers in the lead-up to the

election. Figure 7.2-1 outlines each frame's perceptual components and relationships.
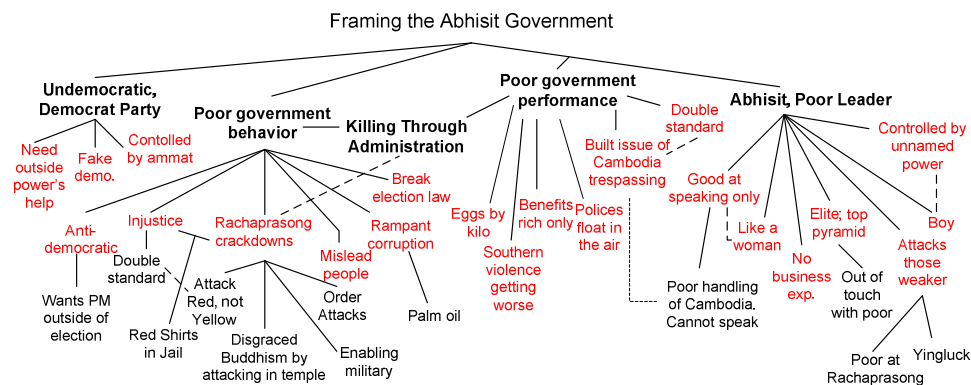
Figure 7.2-1. Map of Abhisit Government Frame

The first frame was *The Poor Behavior of the Current Government.* In multiple articles, the government was attacked for, among other things, untrustworthiness, perpetuating an environment of injustice, corruption, dictatorial tendencies, ordering the crackdown at Rachaprasong, and enabling cruel actions by the military. Government scandals were referenced repeatedly, especially the palm oil scandal, in which a company close to Deputy Prime Minister Sutep Tuaksuban was accused of cornering the market on palm oil, creating a shortage, and then increasing the price. In one article the palm oil crisis was linked to class inequality. "You always tell us that the economy is getting better but village people are dying because costs are going up and they are not able to cook rice [due to the palm oil price increase]. It's different for rich people" (*Mahaprachachon*, Jan. 20-27, 2011: p. 21)

The second frame used by *Mahaprachachon* writers to criticize the government was the *Poor Performance of the Current Government*. Several articles focused on the "eggs by the kilo policy" in which the government announced that they would mandate the sale of eggs by kilogram instead of by number (The Nation, Feb 2, 2011). This policy triggered intense criticism and was quickly scrapped. The poor handling of the Thai-Cambodia trespassing incident was also referenced. Bridging the poor government behavior and performance frames was the frame of *Government Killing People through Administration*. This frame linked the anger and imagery of the government crackdown at Rachaprasong with policy and economic critiques of the Abhisit administration, enabling the potency of the former to spill over and sharpen the impact of the latter. The poor performance of the current government and

its leaders was also juxtaposed with the success and capability of Thaksin Shinawatra, Yingluck Shinawatra, and the Pheua Thai Party. *Mahaprachachon* writers asserted that everything Thaksin touches became successful, that the Pheua Thai Party is the only real democratic party, and that Yingluck is a doer.

The third frame used to attack the government was *Abhisit Vejjajiva, Poor Leader*. In numerous articles across the issues analyzed, writers attacked Abhisit for poor management of the government, moral and ethical deficiencies, lack of capability, displaying woman-like characteristics, and being controlled by powerful people outside of the constitution. While there were no specific discussions of Abhisit in the January issue, in later months, there was a consistent increase in the number and severity of attacks on Abhisit. One of the most enduring and widely repeated phrases used to describe Abhisit was that he was *Good in Speaking Only*. This frame brought together criticisms of his performance, behavior, and leadership and was often referenced in the context of broader events, such as explaining the Cambodia incident. Critiques of Abhisit vacillated between contradictory portrayals of him as wielding power aggressively and cruelly towards the people on the one hand, and on the other hand as an unsuccessful, boy-like, front-man and mouth piece for the Dark Power.

The fourth frame was the *Undemocratic, Democrat Party*. In the early months of 2011, writers in *Mahaprachachon* paid little attention to the Democrat Party, preferring instead to attack the government and Abhisit. However, in the March and subsequent issues, writers increased their attacks on the Democrat Party, particularly in connection with the *Democracy Frame*. In one article, the author says, "The Democrat Party is fake (จอมปลอม). They are the party of Democracy around the world

but they are fake. They are very tricky"[428] (*Mahaprachachon* April 21-27, 2011: p. 2)

Writers also criticized democrats for advancing fake democracy (*Mahaprachachon* May 20-26, 2011: p. 33).

Table 7.2-2 highlights the significant increase in articles focused specifically on criticisms of the Abhisit government from January to February. This frequency in attacks remained consistent from February until the election in July. One explanation for the significant jump in attacks directed at the Thai government from February onwards could be the growing certainty that elections would be held in 2011 and the shift in the movement's strategy to influence voters by targeting the government's track record.

Table 7.2-2. Attacks Focused on the Thai Government.

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June
Number of mentions of the Thai Government Frame by issue in *Mahaprachachon**	2	10	8	9	12	11

*Figures represent total number of articles in which criticisms of the Thai government were the main focus. Criticisms included those along any of the five frame dimensions identified.

7.3   FRAMING THE BATTLE LINES: THE INEQUALITY FRAME

During the early months of 2011, within *Mahaprachachon*, there was a clear emphasis on framing the Red Shirts struggle and the groups involved. The Master

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[428] The point the writer made is that democrat parties around the world are supposed to stand for democracy but that the Thai Democrat Party did not care about democracy.

Frame of Inequality was crucial to contextualizing and articulating the Red Shirts'

struggle.[429] The frame and its conceptual components are illustrated in Exhibit 7.3-1.
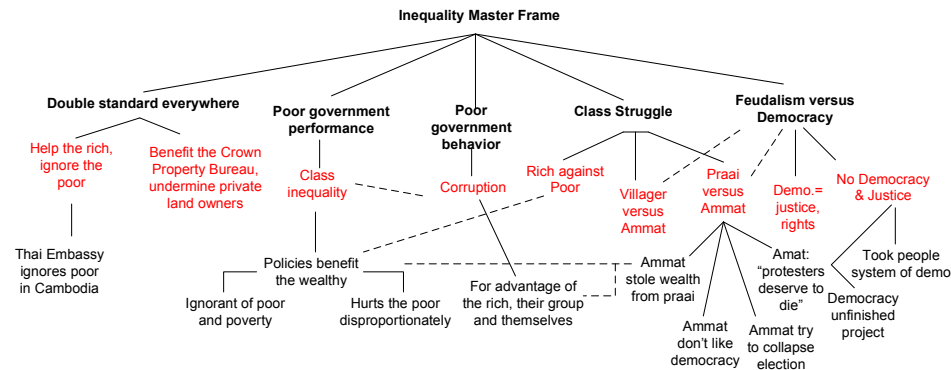
Figure 7.3-1. Map of the Inequality Master Frame.

Inequality and Poor Government Performance/Behavior

The master frame of inequality was articulated in numerous critiques of the behavior

and performance of the Abhisit government, which was blamed for poor management

of the economy, accumulating enormous debt, and rampant corruption. Writers in

Mahaprachachon framed these grievances as resulting from exploitation of the poor

by the rich, traditional elite.

Class Inequality/Struggle

The master frame of inequality was aimed specifically at traditional class inequality

over other forms. Writers in *Mahaprachachon* often framed issues and events in terms

of benefits and consequences for the traditional elite and the poor. There was little

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[429] Master frames are over-arching collective action frames used by multiple social movements over time because of their relevance to the goals of those movements, as well as their proven effectiveness. One examples of a master frame is the "Rights frame". This frame was used effectively by the Civil Rights Movement and later adopted by the feminist and disability rights movements. Another example of a master frame is the "Nationalist Frame". For more on master frames and their importance, see Johnston, Hank. Noakes, John. (2005). Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective. Rowman and Littlefield. p. 9-11.

mention of the middle class. Three sub-frames drew heavily on the inequality master frame. The first and most prevalent in discursive interpretations of class by the Red Shirts was the *Struggle of Ammat against Prai*[430] *Frame*. Categories of ammat and prai made up the traditional class structure in Thailand and included both economic and political inequality. Ammat described the rich elite and powerful, while the term prai described poor, uncouth, exploited peasants. These categories had been replaced generations ago with modern economic categories of lower, middle and upper class that encompassed economic inequality but excluded political and social inequality. The Red Shirts brought the categories of prai and ammat forward to describe the present, framing their struggle as one against a forced re-imposition of a traditional, politically and economically repressive ammat system. This struggle was mentioned in a poem written in the Letters to the Editor section by Jarasee (จรัสศรี), a jailer in

Loei Province:

Poor people are dead.
They join together, come to Bangkok.
Leave their animals in the village.
All come without fear.
They bring their clappers.
Not frightened of the powerful people.
They come to get rid of the amat, who are very bad.
 (Jerasaree, *Mahaprachachon*, Jan. 21-27, 2011: p. 4)

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[430] In pre-modern Thailand, the ammat are most often associated with the lords, and the prai with the servants or commoners. These categories connote the extreme inequality and lack of freedom and rights that existed in Thailand under absolutist monarchy. McCargo and "The phrase was a critical commentary on inequalities of social class and political power, rather than economic status per se. Asked about the term prai, informants responded that it meant grassroots people, farmers, the lower middle class, low ranking government officers, secondary and middle school graduates, sticky-rice eaters, small-traders, semi-skilled self- employed workers, people selling food from their pickup trucks, or tradersselling fresh goods at weekend markets. See: Urbanized Villagers in the 2010 Thai Redshirt Protests Author(s): Naruemon Thabchumpon, Mccargo DuncanSource: Asian Survey, Vol. 51, No. 6 (November/December 2011), pp. 993-1018

Evidence for this frame can also be found in another poem in the January issue by Wisa Khanthap[431] (วิสา คัญทัพ) entitled "Make Your Breathing as Soft as You Can" (*Mahaprachachon*, Jan. 21-27, 2011: p. 9). In this poem, the title of which conveys a feeling of fear and intimidation, Weesa describes a poor underclass that experiences significant inequality. He claims that traditional class inequality in Thailand still exists, and is protected and perpetuated by the ammat. In his work on Red Shirts in one province in Northern Thailand, Nishizaki argues that the Red Shirts in this area rejected the label of prai and the notion that the core struggle in Thai politics was one of prai versus ammat.

There is extensive use of the discursive element of "quotations" to describe the view of the ammat towards the prai. One writer describes the structure of this relationship as a *Feeding System*, or unequal clientelistic relationship between elite and poor. The writer portrays the ammat as shocked that the poor now find this traditional system intolerable. He uses quotations to demonstrate a typical member of the elite describing their shock. "I'm really good. I have a good heart. I make an effort to feed you water and rice. What else do you want? And you Red Shirt people still disobey and betray to have your own wings and legs and want to get up and request democracy." (*Mahaprachachon*, Feb. 18-24: p. 15).[432]

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[431] Wisa Khanthap is a writer, poet and lyric writer as well as a radio and television personality who has been active in radical politics since 1973 and is a regular speaker at Red Shirts rallies. He is also a member of the UDD Political Schools. **http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=50274.** Wisa was also viewed as one of the second tier of leadership within the UDD. See Urbanized Villagers in the 2010 Thai Redshirt Protests
Author(s): Naruemon Thabchumpon, Mccargo DuncanSource: Asian Survey, Vol. 51, No. 6 (November/December 2011), pp. 993-1018
[432] The author's portrayal of how those in power view the Red Shirts is similar to that described by Haberkorn in Revolution Interrupted regarding landlord-tenant relationships in northern Thailand

In another example of the use of quotations, one *Mahaprachachon* writer demonstrated an ammat angrily responding to perceived disobedience and ungratefulness of the Red Shirts by quoting, "Those Red Shirts are very stubborn. Don't those 100 [killed in the government crackdown at Rachaprasong] deserve to die?" He goes on to say that, "All of the ammat will rush right away to support a coup. They use old language that was used during the King… [This is] the outdated way."

While the frame *of Ammat against Prai* was used most frequently, the *Struggle of Rich against Poor Frame* was also used occasionally. In one example, referencing the arrest of several high-level politicians for trespassing in Cambodia, one Mahaprachachon writer pointed out that, "The seven people arrested in Cambodia are children of millionaires and are the deputy ministers and members of parliament" (*Mahaprachachon*, Jan. 21-27: p. 9). The frame was also used to reference the economic hardship experienced by many Thais. According to several writers, poor behavior and performance caused the lives of the poor to become more difficult, while the rich prospered. One author expressed it this way,

> You always tell us that the economy is getting better but villagers die soon because costs are going up and they are not able to cook rice. It's different for rich people. They get a lot of advantage. They sit up and sip wine. (Geng Don Meaung, *Mahaprachachon*, Jan. 21-27: p. 9)

during the brief window of democracy from 1973 to 1976. During this period farmer empowerment and demand for rent control challenged elite self-conceptions of beneficence and led to violent reaction by landlords.

The evidence suggests that the frame of *Struggle of Rich against Poor* was used mainly to describe the unequal economic effects of government policies and behavior. Conversely, the frame of *Struggle of Ammat against Prai* was referenced almost exclusively in discussions of the social and political dimensions of inequality.

The Frame of Ammat against Prai provided a lens through which to view the battle lines of political conflict as at core a class struggle, but not in a traditional sense. Not all rich people or landholders in general were the objects of writers' grievances, but instead a specific segment of the rich: lords, royalists and government bureaucrats. There were also several references to the frame of *Villager against Ammat*. The framing of *Ammat against Prai* and *Villager against Ammat* as the main class and geographic fault lines in Thailand, were not without challenge from the Abhisit government and other opponents of the Red Shirts, who attempted to counter-frame inequality as not coming from an ammat-prai system of relations, but in fact from rural class relations and the concentration of rural land ownership. Counter-framing is used by groups to contest and counteract the messages of their opponents within a given movement field. In this instance, the Abhisit government was contesting the Red Shirt frame of the struggle of villager versus ammat by suggesting that the real struggle should be between rural landholders and the rural poor. He claims that there is a gap between the way the Red Shirt leadership views the peasants, and the way peasants view themselves. His argument is indeed unique, but his definition of prai as poor was just one dimension in which the label was used by movement leaders. It not only described poor, but also the villager, those marginalized and blocked from power that were now empowered. Moreover, it was used in conjunction with the ammat, which was arguably more important in framing efforts, for if prai came to be one way

in which the Red Shirts described themselves, it was more about the way the ammat labeled them. The label of prai was a way for the powerless to turn a term describing domination into one of empowerment. Prai was what the ammat called the poor. One writer has contested that the ammat-prai distinction the Red Shirts forged resonated with the base. Writing about research conducted in a town in northern Thailand, Yoshinori Nishizaki contends that there are some people who are considered rural people who reject the distinction of prai and the view of themselves as poor. Nishizaki remarks that the frame was less effective because not all people view themselves as poor peasants. [433]

As Weng Tojirakan put it, "This word has been used to define who the majority of UDD supporters are and who we are not…We are a movement of exploited people and we wanted to remind the amart about it…And why are the government and the amart worried? Until we used prai, they and the media that support them called the red shirts stupid, uneducated, provincial people. We are human, not dogs."[434] The movement used the description of Red Shirts used in elite and middle class circles, and within the government against them. By using the term prai, they couched their identity very effectively in a traditional struggle in Thailand between the lords and peasants.

However, the movement had to walk a fine line. If they framed the rich in terms that were too negative, it would work against their movement. By propagating the frame

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[433] Nishizaki, Yoshinori. (2014) "Peasants and the redshirt movement in Thailand: some dissenting voices." *The Journal of Peasant Studies.*
[434] "Anti-Gov't Protesters Use Cultural Taboo as Weapon." Marwaan Macan-Markar, *Inter Press Service*, April 18, 2010.

of rural versus urban, they could shift attention away from the rural elite, and instead frame only the Bangkok elite as the objects of their grievances. The government established a committee on land restructuring which considered a rule that would have set the maximum amount of land that an individual could own at 50 rai. The Red Shirts countered using the frame of double standard to identify the source of rural inequality as stemming not from inequality in rural land ownership but inequality in access to resources, credit, and education.

This counter-frame of double standard went beyond contesting that the government misunderstood the real problem of the rural poor. The writer also used double standard to touch upon the discourse on the monarchy, claiming that it was unfair for the government to regulate and limit rural landowners while they ignored highly concentrated land ownership in Bangkok by the Crown Property Bureau, which one writer in *Mahaprachachon* claims owns one-third of all the land in Bangkok (Unno, *Mahaprachachon*, Feb.18-24: p. 8). Unno compared the government's proposed 50 rai land ownership limit rule to the lack of equality and liberties under the prai-ammat system. "Sounds like the committee is trying to tell people to go back to become prai. Because during the Ayutthaya period, the law was also written that way" (Unno, p. 8).[435]

Democracy and Justice versus Feudalism and Ammat
Similar to the prai versus ammat battle line, the *Democracy and Justice versus Feudalism and Ammat* frame described the systems represented by these two groups. Democracy, the main stated goal of the Red Shirts movement, was portrayed as

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[435] Ayutthaya was once the capital of the Siamese empire during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

giving the *prai* real power, justice and equality. Democracy was described as the key

to social and economic progress. In the pages of *Mahaprachachon*, the ammat were

framed as the opponents of democracy. Their goal was to reintroduce feudalism and

take the country backwards. As the country moved closer to the general election,

writers spoke of the current contest as a continuation of the revolution begun in 1932

to introduce "real democracy" to Thailand. Then, as now, the opponents were the

ammat, who in this current contest were said to be planning every way possible to

collapse the election.

7.4   DOUBLE STANDARD FRAME

The *Double Standard Frame* was featured prominently in *Mahaprachachon* during

the run-up to the 2011 election. Many writers encouraged readers to view issues and

events in the political environment through this lens. The double standard frame was

first introduced by the Red Shirts following the 2009 ASEAN Summit protests in

Pattaya, and subsequent Songkran protests in which the government and military

responded aggressively against Red Shirt protesters. The Red Shirts claimed that they

were treated more harshly than the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) or

Yellow Shirts during the anti-government protests against the People's Power Party

(precursor to the Pheua Thai Party) governments of Samak Sundaravej and Somchai

Wongsawat. The double standard frame was used mainly to make salient issues of

class and group identity by drawing attention to perceived mistreatment by the

government. Figure 7.4-1 illustrates the components of this frame.
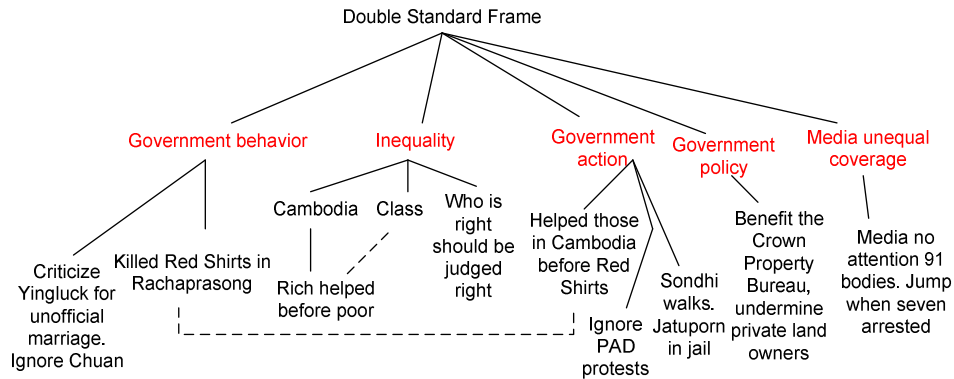
Figure 7.4-1. Conceptual Map and of the Double Standard Frame.

On December 29, 2010, seven Thai nationals were arrested for trespassing in Cambodia. Several of those arrested were current or former MPs and cabinet members. One article in *Mahaprachachon*'s January issue framed the Abhisit government's reaction on the Cambodia trespassing incident as a double standard, criticizing that the government immediately went to work to try and secure the release of these seven people while many Red Shirts leaders were still in jail (Editorial, *Mahaprachachon*, Jan. 20-27, 2011: p. 1) The double standard frame was also infused with the discourse on class. In January of 2011, the new acting leader of UDD, Tida Tawornseth, discussed the connection between class and double standard, highlighting that while the government helped the "special people" detained in Cambodia, many more poor people who go abroad for work and run into problems are ignored by the Thai government.

> Sometimes this [being arrested in a different country] is because people
> are careless. Laborers go abroad illegally to find work but the Thai
> Embassy doesn't help them...You can treat as equal those who go abroad

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to find work and those who go abroad to find problems. (Tida, *Mahaprachachon*, Jan. 20-27, 2011: p. 3).

The frame of double standard was also used to describe the government's yielding policy towards PAD protests while taking a more aggressive approach towards Red Shirt protests. There was also double standard identified in the lack of justice in the case of PAD leaders accused of forcing the closure of Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang airports. One writer pointed out that if you are rich you can slow the course of justice, while the poor receive swift justice. Furthermore, the frame of double standard was used to link the events in Cambodia and Rachaprasong as similar examples of government violence and injustice. The discourse of the media was also brought in as further reinforcement of the double standard frame. As one author mentioned, "Seven arrested in Cambodia and every media outlet jumps, but hundreds of dead bodies and the media is quiet" *Mahaprachachon* Feb 18-24, 2011: p. 15).

7.5 THAILAND AS MIDDLE EAST/NORTH AFRICA DICTATORSHIP (MENA) FRAME

In late 2010 and early 2011, events transpiring nearly a half-world away would come to play a significant role in *Mahaprachachon* writers' communications, none more so than the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. As the waves of popular uprisings swept across the Middle East and North Africa, the Red Shirts were watching closely, drawing parallels and inspiration. During this time, writers in *Mahaprachachon* emphasized the similarities between the Red Shirts movement and movements in the Middle East and North Africa. In several articles in the January issue, writers highlighted the events unfolding in the revolution in Tunisia, which began in December 2010 and led to the ousting of longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January, 2011.

Writers in *Mahaprachachon* related the Tunisian revolution and the Egypt revolution that followed to the Thai context to describe the Red Shirts and its political foes. As an example of this, one writer likened Thailand to a Tunisian-style Dictatorship (*Mahaprachachon*, Jan. 20-27, 2011: p. 23). Another described Thailand as the next domino to fall in pro-democracy revolutions (*Mahaprachachon*, Feb. 18-24, 2011: p. 3). In yet another example, a writer said that Thai politics would go the way of Tunisia and Egypt. These messages reflected a Thailand as MENA Dictatorship Frame, which is outlined in Figure 7.5-1.

Thailand as MENA Dictatorship

Freedom House says low freedom

Revolution in Tunisia and Egypt like Thailand

Attack on the innocent

Japanese cameraman

Dictatorships kill innocent people

Repression at Rachaprasong

Government corruption/ mismanagement

Thailand next to fall

Red Shirts are pro-democracy fighters

Act now!
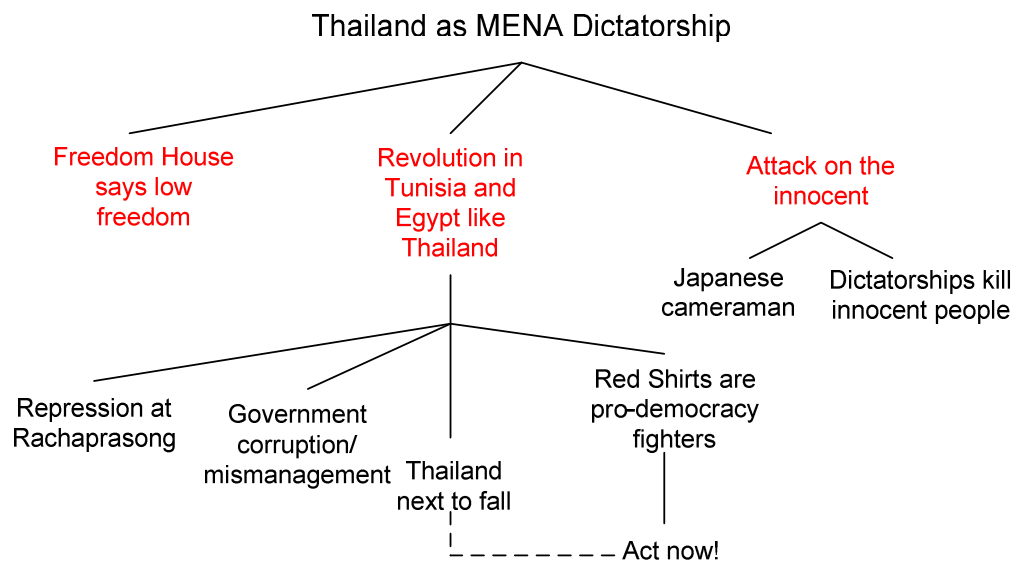
Figure 7.5-1. Map of Thailand as MENA Dictatorship Frame.

Evidence to support this frame came from several sources. There was the 2010

government crackdown in Rachaprasong, which bore similarities to, and was

compared with, the later

government crackdown

in Cairo's Tahrir Square.

There was also the

evidence of protestors

being killed. The Red

Shirts used the Japanese

cameraman killed at

Rachaprasong as a

marytr. An image in the

January issue of

Figure 7.5-2. Blended picture of the Japanese Cameraman's Funeral and a Red Shirt protest.

Mahaprachachon (depicted in Figure 7.5-2) shows a crowd at a Red Shirt rally

blended into a picture of the funeral of the Japanese cameraman (*Mahaprachachon*,

Jan. 20-27, 2011: p. 20). One could argue that the newspaper's creation of this picture

was motivated by the goal of linking the innocence of the cameraman with that of the

Red Shirts protesters, and identifying the Thai government as a dictatorship. Other

evidence for the Thailand as MENA Dictatorship frame came from Freedom House.

In one article in the January issue, the writer quotes the annual Freedom House report

on democracy around the world, ranking the most and least democratic countries

along several dimensions, noting how steeply Thailand fell since the 2006 coup,

joining the company of many countries in Sub-Sahara Africa (Editorial,

Mahaprachachon, Jan. 20-27, 2011: p. 20).

In a clear example of *frame bridging*, the writers in *Mahaprachachon* linked the Red Shirt movement's values and ideas of democracy and end to dictatorship with those of the Tunisian revolutionaries, and more importantly, aligned these values with those of the Western media and governments, which were deeply sympathetic and supportive of democratic revolutions. The frame Thailand as MENA Dictatorship provides a mental schema for thinking about Thailand on the same scale of repression and lack of freedom as experienced in Tunisia. One author noted that, "Thailand copied from Tunisia in the 'heart of the dictator'" (*Mahaprachachon*, Jan. 20-27, 2011: p. 21). This frame also encourages the drawing of parallels between the major actors in Tunisia and those in Thailand. The Red Shirts, like their Tunisian counterpart, are framed as fighters for democracy, while Abhisit Vejjajiva is casted as the dictator Ben Ali.

This frame bridging was an attempt to garner from the international media and Western countries instant recognition of, and sympathy for, the Red Shirts' situation in Thailand. Bridging the Red Shirt values and goals with those of MENA revolutions also had the benefit of taking a complex situation in Thailand and making it more comprehensible for external (and even internal audiences) by comparing it to something else that people could see in clearer terms. Most importantly, this comparison would ensure that the Red Shirts were viewed sympathetically.

While in the pages of Mahaprachachon, the primary target audience consisted of urban Thais living in Bangkok and the provinces, this frame was also communicated through many other channels including to international audiences. Looking beyond the perceived similarities between Thailand and MENA governments in terms of

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dictatorship and repression, one writer viewed the struggles in Egypt and Thailand through an economic prism, linking revolution in MENA and unrest in Thailand to economic mismanagement and corruption (*Mahaprachachon*. Feb. 18-24, 2011: p. 11). One article compared the enormous debt accumulation in Egypt with the same debt woes that Thailand faced under Abhisit, as well as the similarities in cronyism between the two countries.

The comparison made between the Red Shirts movement and MENA revolutions also offered a *motivational frame* for the Red Shirts to continue pressuring the Thai government. In a poem in the January issue of *Mahaprachachon*, Wisa Khanthap says, "If you cannot stand it any longer, there is no need to be patient. Come join the group that fights to rescue life" (*Mahaprachachon*. January 21-27, 2011. p. 8). The Red Shirts leadership emphasized similarities between their movement and those occurring in the Middle East and North Africa. One of the likely reasons for this was to motivate the rank and file of the movement to join the protests and increase their contribution and sacrifice. Writers in *Mahaprachachon* wanted readers to see that under even more difficult circumstances, MENA revolutionaries had successfully overthrown decades-long dictatorships, and that this was evidence that victory was possible, and even probable.

The final link to the Thailand as MENA Dictatorship Frame is in a multi-part story entitled "Benazir Bhutto Part 7: Strong Woman of the East". Starting in the first issue of 2011, and following for several months, the story follows the life of a strong, female, former prime minister of Pakistan and pro-democracy advocate who comes from a family of pro-democracy fighters. While there was no specific reference in the

article to the struggle in Thailand, it connects the two countries as experiencing strong democratic movements against dictatorship led by charismatic leaders. Moreover, the selection of this story, its timing, and the significant amount of space dedicated in each issue is very interesting as it comes only months before Yingluck Shinawatra was announced as the Pheua Thai candidate for prime minister. It could have been run to pave the way for Yingluck's candidacy.

While used frequently during the first four months of 2011, the Thailand as MENA Dictatorship frame was almost entirely absent from the pages of *Mahaprachachon* in May and June. The frame may have lost favor since Thailand was on a steady trajectory towards national elections. However, at times, when the frame of Quiet Coup (discussed later) surfaced, the frame of Thailand as MENA Dictatorship was again referenced, this time focusing on the role of the revolutionaries. As one writer announced in the April issue, "If Pheua Thai wins and you dissolve them, you will see the Egypt model and the Tunisia model." (*Mahaprachachon*, April 21-27, 2011. Cover Story)

7.6 EVERYTHING GETS MORE EXPENSIVE FRAME

The *Everything Gets More Expensive Frame* (ข้าวยากหมากแพง) surfaced repeatedly throughout the study period. The direct translation is, "Rice is hard to find and Mak is expensive."[436] The writers in *Mahaprachachon* borrowed this term used in shortage crises of the past and brought it forward to describe the economic climate under the Abhisit government. The Everything Gets More Expensive frame bridged the experience of the poor and that of other classes. While other frames used by writers in
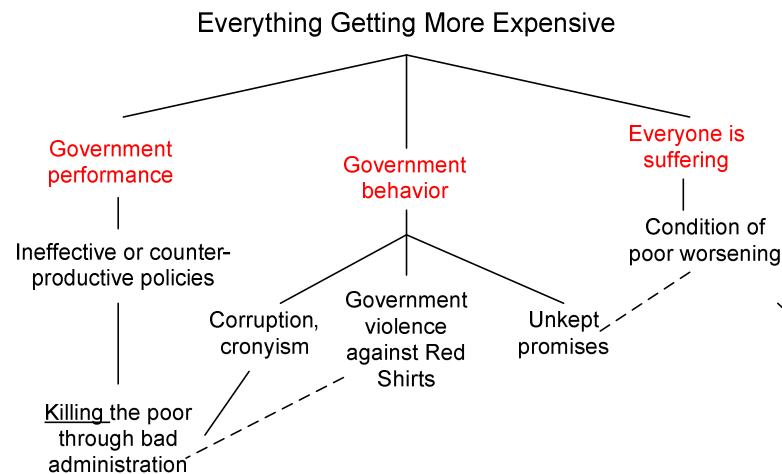
Figure 7.6-1. *Components of the Everything Getting More Expensive Frame.*

Mahaprachachon spotlighted differences in class treatment, the Everything Gets More Expensive combined these class distinctions by suggesting a shared experience.

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[436] Mak is betel nut, a red, addictive leaf and tobacco product that was widely used for hundreds of years. The phrase was probably first introduced during the Sukothai era. Mak is still used in remote areas of the country and predominately by older people.

Figure 7.6-1 includes a map of the Everything Gets More Expensive Frame. The frame's strength was that it aligned with everyday experience. Reaching back to a period of shared prai identity, and pulling that forward to frame a present of shared, cross-class, experience infused the frame with empirical and historical credibility. One writer describes that, "No matter if you are millionaires and billionaires or very poor, we all have the same destiny of things getting more expensive" (*Mahaprachachon*, Mar. 25-31, 2011: p. 31). The frame's other strength was that it lent an experiential component to the four main criticism comprising the Red Shirts' Thai Government Frame (poor performance, poor behavior, undemocratic Democrat Party, and poor leadership).

The Everything Gets More Expensive frame also drew on the discourse of the poor. Items mentioned where mainstays of the poor and the chewing of Mak was widely practiced by commoners. The expression blamed the Democrat Party and the Abhisit administration for the perceived worsening situation of the poor. *Mahaprachachon* writers cited as evidence specific acts of corruption ("cheating on every project") and a worsening overall economic situation. They also spotlighted the policies put forth by the Government as, "Floating in the air and you cannot touch them. They copied from Pheua Thai, but they still failed. There is debt, corruption, and lack of ability." (*Mahaprachachon*, May, 20-26, 2011: p. 1) The frame was also linked to manipulation and interference of the old power, and was likened to a poison (*Mahaprachachon* June 21-27, 2011. Page 28).[437]

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[437] "The poison of everything get more expensive." *Mahaprachachon* (มหาประชาชน), June 21-27, 2011. P. 28.

7.7　ONLY GOOD IN SPEAKING FRAME

There was a significant increase in attacks on Abhisit in *Mahaprachachon* from February until the eve of the election in July. A common frame used to criticize Abhisit was that he was Dee Tae Phut or "Only Good in Speaking" (*Mahaprachachon*, April. 21-27, 2011: p. 9). This frame depicts Abhisit as someone who uses words to stretch the truth, mask guilt, and hurt the weak. The frame drew on the recent history of the crackdown at Rachaprasong, and specifically the unanswered questions regarding images of soldiers firing weapons, the 91 confirmed dead, and bullets still unaccounted for. Figure 7.7-1 illustrates the components of the Only Good in Speaking Frame.
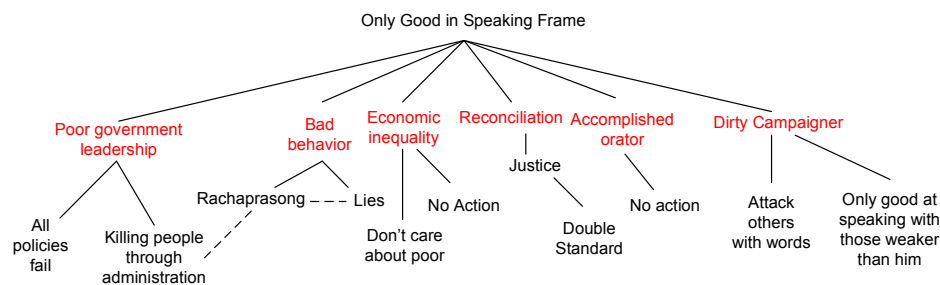
Figure 7.7-1. Concept Map of the Good in Speaking Only Frame.

The frame of Only Good in Speaking highlights Abhisit's personal qualities of physical attractiveness and articulateness, but portrays them as superficial. These qualities were framed as liabilities through contrasting them with more substantive traits which writers claim he seriously lacked. Thus, the Only Good in Speaking Frame creates the idea of lack of substance. At the heart of the Only Good in Speaking Frame was the claim that Abhisit managed the economy poorly and inadequately addressed social and economic inequality. The cover of the April issue

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of *Mahaprachachon* shows a picture of Abhisit next to newly announced candidate Yingluck Shinawatra. The caption under Abhisit says พูด (speak) and under Yingluck it says ทำ (do). Depictions of Abhisit vacillate between contradictory portrayals of someone firmly in control on the one hand, and on the other as someone controlled by the military and Privy Council.

In January and February, Abhisit was depicted as someone who wielded power confidently and independently. He was blamed for ordering the use of force against the people and was said to be the only person with the power to do so. One editorial in March claimed that he was the symbol of cruelty (*Mahaprachachon*, Mar. 25-31, 2011: p. 1). This is in marked contrast to later months, in which Abhisit is depicted as a puppet controlled by others, or as a boy raised and kept in a golden cage. The Only Good in Speaking Frame was barely referenced in the final month before the election. It was crowded out by discussions of government policies and performance.

CHAPTER 8.　　　ANALYSIS OF FRAME RESONANCE AND FAILURE

In analyzing frame resonance and failure in the Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt movements, it is critical to not only look at frame construction and interpretation, but also to integrate other theories of social movements, relevant history, and events and actions in the broader environment. It is only once we have considered all of these dimensions, that a fuller explanation can be achieved as to why some movement frames failed, while others succeeded.

An extensive literature has established that frame resonance depends on whether the actions of the movement are consistent with the frame's content; whether the frame content aligns with what the receiver is seeing and experiencing in his or her everyday life, as well as with their values and beliefs; and whether the claims-makers are seen as credible, respected authorities on the issues or demands contained within the frames.

Within the movement organization, Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt framers must contend with the risks and rewards associated with mobilization. The leadership of both movements respond to their rank and file members, consider their financial and organizational resources, and adjust to the level of repressiveness of state security forces. They also have a variety of goals, including attract potential supporters, or warning political foes. Differences in opinion and support within the leadership and

allied institutions about which frames to promote also affects frame resonance. In short, a movement's leadership is constantly making decisions on which frames to promote and how to construct or tweak those frames' content based on a variety of factors.

Frame resonance or failure also depends on actions and events in the broader environment. The actions of competing social movements, government actions, and the actions of other entities and elites in the movement field form part of the Political Opportunity Structure and can influence frame resonance. In the case of Thailand during this period, elections or calls for elections, court decisions, announcements by the military, upcoming summits, constitutional referendums, and suicides and bombings, all had an impact on different frames' appeal to various audiences. The trajectory of a frame can also be affected by culture values and general mood of the public at the time, which is referred to in the literature as the Cultural Opportunity Structure.

Figure 8-1 outlines the different factors that were explored in relation to frame resonance and failure within the Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts movements.
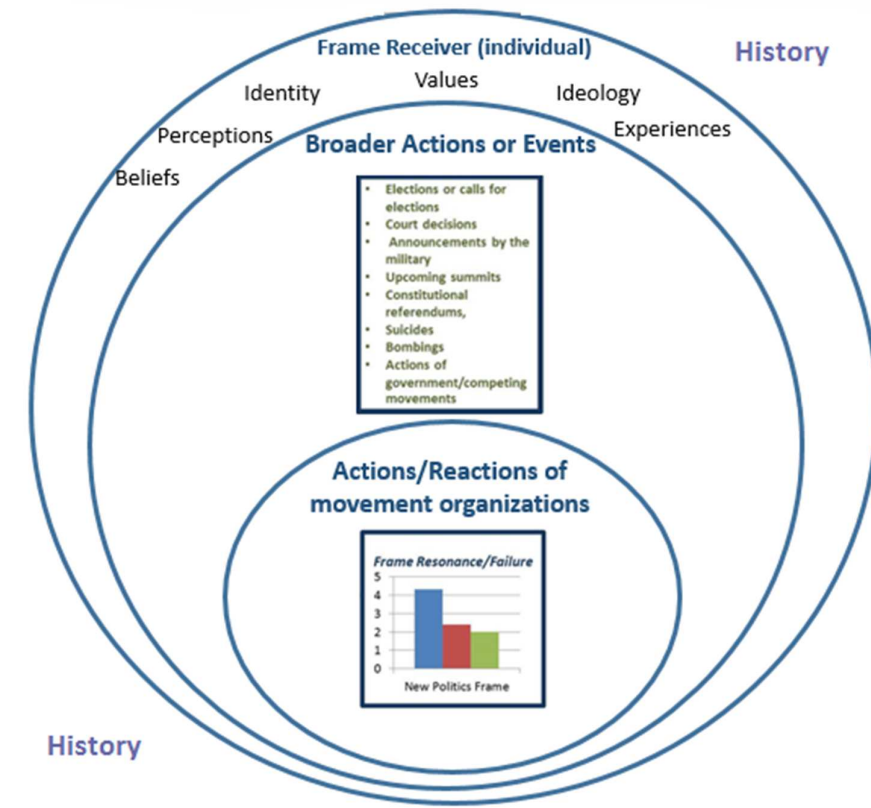
Figure 8-1. Factors influencing Framing and Resonance.

At all levels of the diagram there is two way interaction moving outward and inward and in a nonlinear fashion. History plays an important role in the analysis of frame resonance. In addition to shaping the actions and messages of movement organizations, history influences the way that frame receivers interpret both frames and events in the broader environment. History shapes their beliefs, ideas, values, aspirations, and identities. In any movement environment, there are events and actions that influence a frame's trajectory. These actions may be initiated by movements, opposition movements, government and non-government actors, foreign entities, groups of elites, or individuals. They provide a complex and uncertain set of

possibilities that could be used by movement leaders. In the inner circle is the movement organization itself, whose members compete to air different messages and those messages are influenced by the entire range of factors both in terms of the message content and the receptivity with different publics. In the center of the circle is the frame content.

8.1   ANALYSIS

This dissertation explores Red and Yellow Shirt Frames over the study period to shed light on the contributing factors to frame success or failure. The first part of this dissertation established the political and cultural historical developments that contributed to the emergence of these movements and specific frames. The next part identified and described several frames that emerged during the study period. Within that group, we then needed to identify frames that were good candidates for deeper analysis. A good candidate, from a frame success perspective, was defined as one that was mentioned frequently, coincided with success in reaching movement goals, and lived on over a long period. It was expected that a successful frame garnered widespread support within its core target audience and even support outside of that core audience, including broader publics or traditional adversaries. A frame might be said to be associated with failure if it was one that though perhaps mentioned regularly, did not receive frequent praise, had difficulty engendering positive reaction from the public or from the target group (did not garner unified support among them), had structural and cultural limitations, and disappeared—at least periodically—from the public discourse. The third part entailed an empirical analysis to uncover which frames succeeded or failed over the study period. And the final part of the process was to analyze what factors may have led to the success or failure of certain frames.

The goal of this process was twofold. First, to contribute to the social movement literature to better understand why certain frames failed while others succeeded. And second, to better understand a turbulent and unprecedented period in Thai politics.

Figure 8.1-1 illustrates the frame evolution and resonance of major Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt frames over the study period. The upper two-thirds of the area of the graph represents the universe of potential Red Shirt supporters. It is depicted here as comprising a much larger population of Thais than does the universe of potential Yellow Shirts supporters. This is based on analysis of evidence related to both movements' class and geographic composition. Following this graphic, in Figure 8.1-2, there is a deconstruction of the different frames explored along several dimensions.
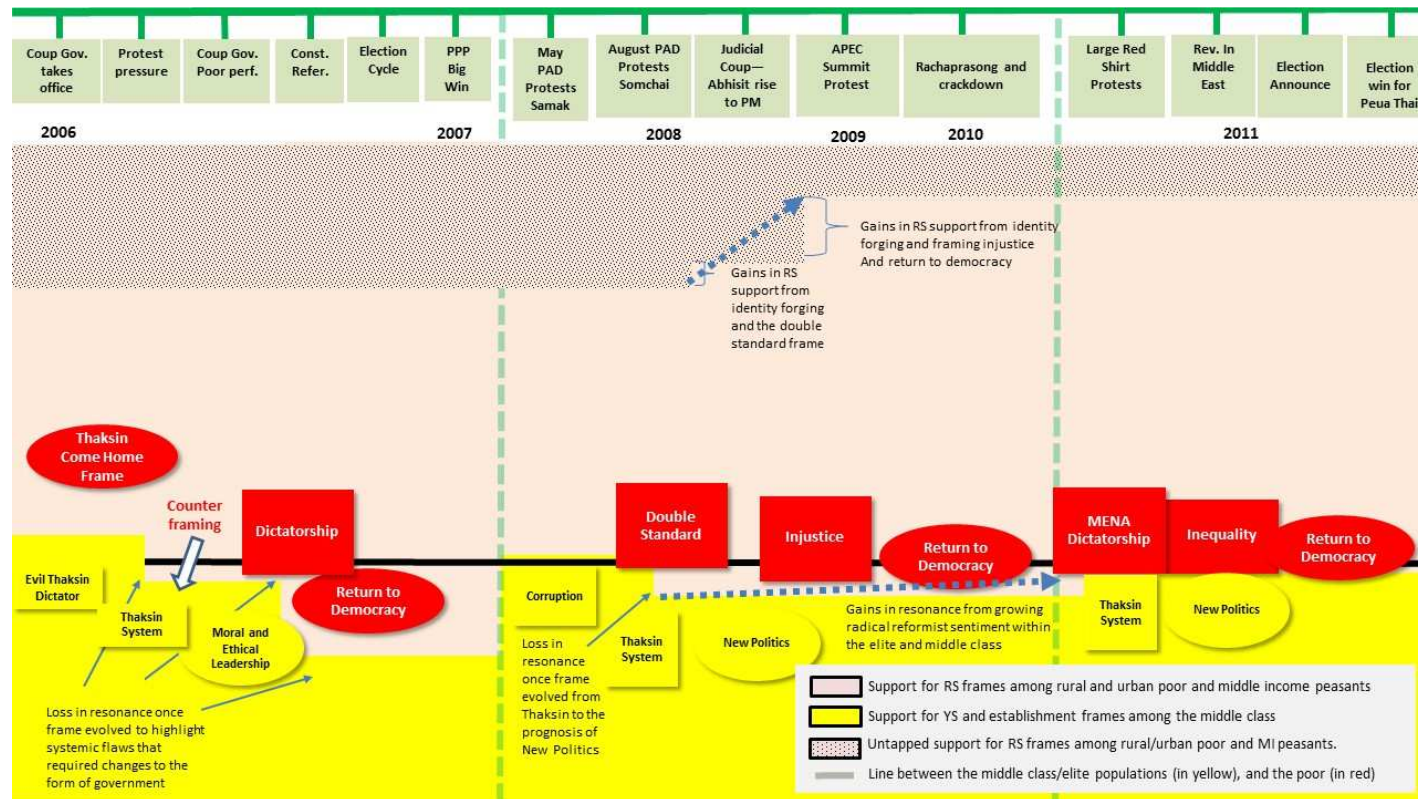
Figure 8.1-1. Evolution of Major Red and Yellow Shirt Frames During the Study Period. *Each frame's resonance in this graphic is depicted over time, against the backdrop of broader events and developments. This graphic is meant for discussion purposes only. The square boxes are diagnostic frames, while circles connote prognostic frames. The Top 2/3 of the graph represents the poor and middle income peasants, while the bottom 1/3 represents the middle class, elite, and potential Yellow Shirt supporters among poorer populations, particularly in the South and East. Both groups are divided by a black line running horizontally across the graph. The dotted part of the graph at the top of the page represents the untapped potential support and mobilization within the Red Shirts of rural/urban poor and middle income peasants.*

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8.1.1 POST COUP 2006-2007

Evil Thaksin

During the PAD movement to oust Thaksin in 2005 and 2006, one of the first frames employed by anti-Thaksin groups was the diagnostic frame of Evil Thaksin. This frame started with a modest following within the elite and middle class but its resonance grew significantly over time. To understand the frame's success, as well as its limitations, it is important to look back to around the time that Thaksin was first elected.

The origins of anti-Thaksin sentiment can be traced back to the period of Thaksin's first election as prime minister in January, 2001. There were a series of editorials in The Nation newspaper in the lead-up to the 2001 election alleging that Thaksin had falsely reported his personal wealth to the election commission. These charges threatened to derail his prime ministership before he even assumed office. Due to this and other accusations, there was a feeling among some elites that Thaksin wasn't ethical enough to be the leader of the country. This feeling represented only a small faction within the elite. However, as this study has documented, anti-Thaksin sentiment grew over time, reaching a critical point in early 2006, more than one year after Yellow Shirts protests begun calling for Thaksin's resignation.

The sale of his company Shin Satellite in 2006 to Temasek Holdings of Singapore was the tipping point in the Evil Thaksin frame's resonance. Shortly before the announcement of the sale, middle class and elite feelings about the Yellow Shirts street protests were lukewarm. A few weeks prior, The Nation published an editorial entitled "Mob Rule is Not the Answer" that, along with a similar Bangkok Post

editorial, highlighted the failure of the anti-Thaksin campaign.[438] Representing some portion of elite opinion at the time, these articles voiced that Sondhi (the leader of the Yellow Shirts) had made his point by leading the anti-Thaksin protests and should now return home. The author of The Nation editorial said that the PAD kept repeating the same accusations without any further evidence. This article appeared days before the sale of Shin Satellite.

Thaksin's sales of Shin Satellite and tax avoidance strategy that helped him save billions of baht brought about a huge explosion in anti-Thaksin sentiment, and changed the fortunes of the anti-Thaksin moment. Shortly after the sale, another editorial entitled "The War Has Just Begun" appeared in The Nation.[439] New groups came out to oppose Thaksin, including an outraged middle class. Dislike for Thaksin brought together a broad cross-section of society, unifying NGOs, journalists, academics, and other opinion leaders in opposition to Thaksin. Why was this the tipping point? Many felt that Thaksin should have set a better example as a leader of the country and that that his avoidance of paying taxes on the sale of Shin Satellite was blatantly disrespectful to the country and showed brazen disregard for the law. The sale gave significant empirical credibility to the Evil Thaksin Frame, which had argued that Thaksin was corrupt and only interested in his own personal gain.

While this was the tipping point in elite and middle class anger towards Thaksin, there was also more long-standing opposition to Thaksin among certain factions of the elite. These factions, mostly made up of royalists and certain military cliques, felt

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[438] "Crusade against PM Thaksin falters." *Bangkok Post*, January 20, 2006; "Mob rule is not the answer." The Nation. January 22, 2006.
[439] "Move to oust Thaksin: Real war has just begun." *The Nation*, February 10, 2006.

threatened by Thaksin's widespread support among the rural and urban poor in Thailand's populated North and Northeast, his arrogant administrative approach, and perceived political corruption (mainly accusations of vote buying) that they believe enabled him to win multiple electoral contests. These factions claimed that vote buying was a major threat to democracy. More damaging than all of these claims was the one levied by royalists that Thaksin sought to overshadow the prominence of King Bhumibol. Other subgroups within the elite and middle class, and even members of the international media, highlighted Thaksin's intimidation of critics, and his attempts to bring media outlets under his control, in addition to tax avoidance.

Following the September 2006 coup, the Evil Thaksin Frame was promoted widely by the CNS and the media.[440] The PAD and CNS spoke of trying to spread their frame of Evil Thaksin beyond their core support base to include people who were Thaksin supporters. However, this was ultimately unsuccessful. Most rural people in the North and Northeast, who had been Thaksin's support base prior to the coup, continued to support him. This was evidenced by widespread rejection of the coup government's 2007 constitutional referendum in Thaksin strongholds in the north and northeast, strong protest turnout among Thaksin supporters in several anti-government protests prior to the 2007 referendum, and the electoral victory of Thaksin's PPP in December 2007.

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[440] When discussing mentions in the media, this not only includes editorials and members of the media, but also Yellow Shirts leaders and those elites and institutions aligned with the Yellow Shirts. The frame of Evil Thaksin emerged again in late 2013. The Evil Thaksin Frame is extremely powerful in its ability to unite the middle class and elite. One of the largest protests in Thailand's history occurred when the Yingluck administration tried to grant amnesty to Thaksin. More than 100,000 Thais took to the streets of Bangkok to oppose the government's actions, starting an anti-government protest that culminated in the Thai military coup in May, 2014 that ousted then-Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. See "Protesters swarm Thai finance ministry." *Al Jazeera*, November 25, 2013.

Table 8.1.1-1 summarizes the empirical evidence that shows the failure of the Evil

Thaksin frame to resonate beyond the core middle class and Bangkok audience and

turn the majority of the country against the deposed leader.

Table 8.1.1.-1. Empirical evidence to support failure of Evil Thaksin Frame.

1.	Analysis of the Bangkok Post and Khaosod showed that the frame was popular during the period of 2006-2007 in term of frame mentions in the media. This is evidence of significant support within the elite and middle class
2.	Rejection of 2007 Referendum in regions that represented Thaksin strongholds.
3.	Win by Thaksin aligned party in the 2007. See Figure 8.1.1-2.
4.	PPP nominee Samak Sundaravej campaigned openly as Thaksin's mouth piece in the 2007 elections and rode that platform to victory at the polls for the newly constituted PPP.
5.	Anti-coup protest turnout during the 2006-2007. See 8.2.1-1.

The Evil Thaksin Frame has been in use by Anti-Thaksin forces since 2004 but has

not had as much impact on the outcome of national elections. Thaksin-aligned parties

have won majorities in every election over the study period. This is illustrated in

Figure 8.1.1-2.
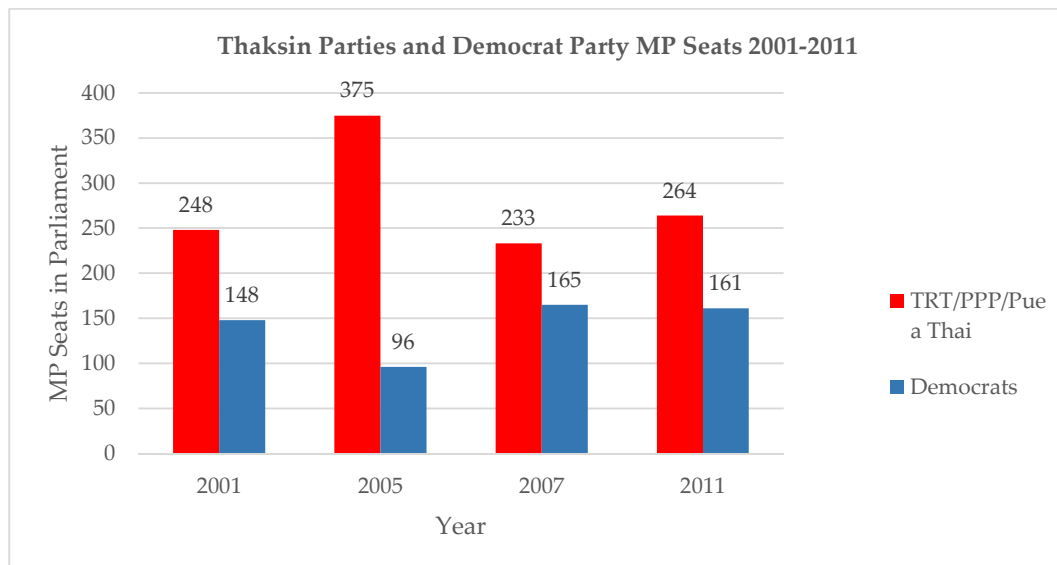
Figure 8.1.1-2. MP seat totals for the TRT/PPP/Puea Thai and Democrat Party 2001-2011.

Why did this frame fail to resonate outside of the middle class, the elite, and areas of the south that had been pro-royalist and anti-Thaksin? At the center of the Evil Thaksin Frame was a contradiction. The CNS, PAD, and allied groups claimed that Thaksin compromised democracy in Thailand; yet Thaksin won several elections that were found to be reasonably free and fair. Conversely, the new interim government installed through a coup was clearly undemocratic. Furthermore, rural and urban poor and middle income peasants had voted for Thaksin in overwhelming numbers. He was their elected representative, and they benefited from his populist policies, so the frame that he was a dictator or inherently evil lacked experiential commensurability.

Structural issues also stood in the way of the frame's ability to resonate with the majority of Thailand's poor, rural people. Thaksin and his supporters claimed to represent the rural poor, and characterized the coup government as representing the Bangkok elite establishment. The theme of center-periphery exploitation and

inequality was part of the historical worldview of rural Thais in the northeast and the north of Thailand. There was a latent and persistent distrust regarding the words and actions of the central government, particularly one controlled by the military, which was the institution historically tied to repression in these areas. These perceptions, derived from structural issues and contradictions, bolstered the pro-Thaksin forces' political categorizations and blunted the effectiveness of the Evil Thaksin Frame in the populous Northern provinces.

The important limitation of this frame was that its focus was too narrow. The frame focused too much on Thaksin. Initially, the Yellow Shirts movement concentrated their diagnosis of the problem plaguing Thai politics on Thaksin. The focus on Thaksin was helpful in uniting various factions opposed to him either politically or personally. But several months following the 2006 coup, it became clear that Thaksin still enjoyed strong support. The CNS, PAD and its supporters began focusing on other frames diagnosing the problem the country faced. They broadened the definition of the problem from not just Thaksin, but the political system he created. The shift of frame from Evil Thaksin to a more systemic focus was likely because the former had lost its usefulness as a frame given its inability to resonate with traditional Thaksin supporters as part of the CNS and PAD goal of destroying Thaksin's power base.

The final challenge that the Evil Thaksin Frame faced was the effectiveness of the Red Shirt counter-frame of Dictatorship, which, as we will see later, diagnosed the problem as Thailand was living in a dictatorship in the form of the CNS. This frame enjoyed much greater experiential commensurability than the Evil Thaksin Frame,

because many poor and middle income peasants and even some in the middle class and elite found the frame persuasive.

The strength of the Evil Thaksin Frame was that it united much of the middle class and elite. In this regard, the frame was successful. However, outside of the elite and middle class, the framers misunderstood their audience—rural people who had been Thaksin's electoral base—and the strength of their support for Thaksin. There was also a contradiction between one of the core rationales given for Thaksin's removal—that he was anti-democratic—and the government's support of anti-democratic proposals and continued martial law following Thaksin's ouster.[441] This contradiction did not go unnoticed by poor and middle income peasants, who had begun to embrace their power under Thaksin-led democratic governments. One could argue that the Evil Thaksin Frame was successful because of its uniting of the elite and middle class, but when we look at past movements, particularly ones that have a national scope, a frame's success must be measured to the extent to which it garners mainstream acceptance. The civil rights movement frames and those used by the gay and lesbian rights movement only began to change opinion and policy when they had reached far beyond their base, resonating with other groups and broader audiences who had traditionally opposed or were apathetic to these movements' causes. Using this as a measuring stick for success, the Evil Thaksin frame failed to turn the majority of the country against Thaksin.

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[441] See Figure 5.9.7-14. One of the key messages in the Evil Thaksin Frame was that Thaksin was anti-democratic.

Thaksin System Frame

The Thaksin System Frame first surfaced in the media in 2004 among a small number of reporters and academics critical of Thaksin. It was later adopted by the PAD and became an important diagnostic frame of the anti-Thaksin coalition. The frame's content expressed that it was not just Thaksin that was the problem with Thai politics, but the system that he created, including the TRT Party and its perceived corruption and vote buying. Because the existing structures had enabled Thaksin to keep a firm grip on power, the Thaksin System Frame created the need for systemic reform to remove what framer's claimed was a disease on Thai society. There was certainly evidence that pointed to significant corruption under Thaksin. Transparency International statistics showed that government corruption increased dramatically during Thaksin's reign.[442] The lynch-pin to the Thaksin System Frame was the perception by the framers that corruption had reached an intolerable level and was pervasive in the government.

The Thaksin System Frame featured prominently in the media following the 2006 coup. Its mentions in the mainstream media spiked during the constitutional drafting process, which offered the CNS and its supporters a chance to enshrine the new "rules of the game" in such a way that Thaksin could not take power again. The CNS, PAD and their supporters aimed to weaken Thaksin's impact on politics. If the Evil Thaksin Frame was put forward as a public appeal and rationale for the coup, the Thaksin System Frame was emphasized as an appeal to the constitutional drafting committee and key influencers to fear the continued influence of Thaksin.

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[442] "Is corruption in Thailand decreasing?" Bangkok Pundit. Dec 02, 2011.
http://asiancorrespondent.com/71102/is-corruption-in-thailand-decreasing/

The Thaksin System Frame failed to resonate widely outside of the traditional anti-Thaksin demographic. The reason for this was that structural factors and perceptions again intervened in the form of extensive support for Thaksin in rural areas of the north and northeast. As with the Evil Thaksin Frame, the Thaksin System Frame did not align with rural and urban poor and middle income Thais' perceptions of Thaksin. The framers also lacked credibility due to their positions as outsiders and leaders of the elite establishment, which had been viewed historically as antithetical to the rights and aspirations of rural Thais.

But the frame's main weakness was not only that it failed to resonate with rural Thais. Instead, its key failure was that it did not appeal strongly enough to the anti-Thaksin demographic. While the same misalignment of frame content and actions that dogged the Evil Thaksin Frame also affected the credibility of the Thaksin System Frame, it was the latter's inability to cause a heightened level of fear within the middle class and elite to win their support for a replacement for majoritarian democracy that was the frame's principle short-coming.

Extensive evidence suggests that many in the elite establishment were not as concerned about Thaksin's ability to sustain his political power as were the Thaksin System framers. During the constitutional drafting process, members of the NLA proposed an amendment to the constitution specifically meant to weaken Thaksin in the event that he returned to power. It would have allowed individuals outside of the electoral process to become prime minister in emergencies. This amendment and others like it were quickly attacked by several NLA members, the Democrat Party and the media, for being anti-democratic. Weakening or discarding democratic institutions

and procedures in order to weaken Thaksin was a solution unthinkable within a sizable section of the anti-Thaksin demographic. Many elites believed that Thaksin's previous supporters would reject him and that democratic institutions could recruit executives who elites favored. In May 2007, Abhisit said, "The government [CNS and interim government] should be very clear about democracy-building. Then the conditions of the protesters would decrease. The old power will not be able to do much. The most important thing is to return to democracy."[443]

Furthermore, the elite establishment still viewed the rural poor in the north and northeast through the lens of traditional patriarchy, believing them to be malleable and receptive to elite guidance. CNS campaigns in the provinces aimed to educate the people about the evils of Thaksin, the importance of morality and ethics, and the responsibilities of democratic citizenship. Elites believed that a lack of knowledge and education or desperate economic conditions, were driving support for Thaksin.[444] They were confident that Thaksin's support base in rural areas was inherently fragile.

What other evidence do we have for the lack of resonance of the Thaksin System Frame? One compelling piece of evidence is in the data on frame mentions in the Bangkok Post and Khaosod. During the period following the coup until the first post-coup election, mentions of the frame in these publications dropped precipitously from 16 in January 2007 to 5 in February and 2 in March, staying low in terms of mentions

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[443] "Terrorism phone in Bangkok." *Khaosod*. May 7, 2007.
[444] "A democracy answerable to the people." *Bangkok Post*, November 8, 2006. Also See: "Sonthi orders poll crusade." *Bangkok Post*. October 13, 2007. Sonthi Boonyaratkalin remarked, "The government must educate people before the election on the negative consequences of vote buying and who to vote for and how to vote for good people. The solution is to educate voters and prevent the vicious cycle."

throughout the rest of the study period (See Figure 5.7-3). This provides compelling

evidence that the frame lacked resonance even within the middle class and elite

establishment, whose voices where disproportionately represented in the media. The

empirical evidence for the failure of the frame is summarized in Table 8.1.1-3.

Table 8.1.1-3. Empirical evidence to support failure of Thaksin System Frame.

1.	Analysis of BKK Post and Khaosod reveals that the Thaksin System Frame was popular following the coup but that it fell dramatically in popularity over time in terms of mentions in the media. Overall it had a low mention rate.
2.	The elite and Yellow Shirt allies repeatedly coming out in support for elections and democracy (evidence that the frame had trouble uniting the elite).
3.	Rejection of 2007 Referendum in regions that represented Thaksin strongholds.
4.	Win by Thaksin PPP party in the 2007.
5.	Significant protest turnout during the 2006-2007 period. See 8.2.1-1.

What would have we expected to see had the Thaksin System Frame resonated more

deeply with its core target audience (the middle class and elite) and beyond? For one,

we might have expected more support for undemocratic proposals during the 2007

constitutional drafting process. However, at that time, democratic culture had become

deeply engrained in Thailand over two successful transitions of power and 15 years of

progress toward democratic consolidation. Even the outspoken and conservative

deputy coup leader Saprang Kalayanamitr, a champion of the more conservative wing

of the anti-Thaksin coalition, echoed elite intentions that democracy be restored. "If

you want the country to get better, you must have elections.[445] Abhisit said of the

proposal for an unelected prime minster, "We cannot solve the country's problems if

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[445] "Saprang says that CNS will leave by the escalator." *Khaosod*. June 20, 2007.

we do not have a democratic system.[446] At that point, it was unclear that Thaksin would come to dominate Thai politics again. Even though some started to believe he would, it was hard for the elite and middle class to accept that this might be the case because it challenged the conventional elite view that rural people were easily manipulated.

To see what happens if the Thaksin System Frame resonated, we only have to fast forward to 2014. In early November 2013, the ruling Pheua Thai Party announced they would amend the constitution to provide a pardon for all individuals involved in political conflict over the past eight years. This proposal would also have pardoned Thaksin. Prior to this move, the Pheua Thai Party had run the country for more than two years with few challenges. It was an unspoken fact that Thaksin was running the country through his younger sister Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, who was a political neophyte. The fact that Yingluck had won a democratic election convincing and presided over a strong economy dampened elite ambitions to challenge her government. However, when she attempted to pardon Thaksin, anti-Thaksin groups saw an opportunity to leverage middle class anger with Thaksin and exploit cracks in the Red Shirt – Phuea Thai Party alliance.[447] The Yellow Shirts again hit the streets and the Thaksin System Frame reemerged within the movement and its allies, only this time it garnered much wider support. The frame did not have the same impact in 2007. The difference was in elite and middle class perceptions about Thaksin's political strength. In 2006-2007 the believed that Thaksin's hold on politics could be

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[446] "Points to the constitution and says that it is not aligned with democracy." *Khaosod*. May 9, 2007.
[447] The Red Shirt leadership was also opposed to amnesty because they had lobbied unsuccessfully to bring to justice those responsible for the 2010 protest crackdown and subsequent deaths of nearly 100 Red Shirt protestors. See:

broken without systemic change. In 2008 and 2009 they realized that they had

underestimated Thaksin's strength and the commitment of his supporters. The graphic

in Figure 8.1-1 shows the Thaksin System Frame in 2006 and 2007 falling short of

full elite and middle class support. Ultimately, the argument in this study is that the

frame failed in 2006-2007 in part because of lack of full elite and middle class

backing that the problem of Thaksin System was so great that it required reforms that

would weaken the democratic system.

Moral and Ethical Leadership

The Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame was one of the major prognostic frames

used by the PAD and CNS during the 2006-2007 period. It a country suffering under

Thaksin's government and badly in need of moral and ethical leadership and good

governance to eradicate corruption. However, the frame did not communicate clearly

how such a leadership would work. Moral and ethical leadership was not a new

concept in Thailand. Its roots lay in the royal administration that once ruled the

country under absolute monarchy. The King was said to be the living incarnation of

Buddha and was the moral and ethical leader of the country. This gave the monarchy

the moral justification to rule. Throughout the contemporary history of Thailand from

kings to dictators, the notion was that Western-style democracy would not work in

Thailand. Thailand needed a Thai-Style democracy. The concept of Thai Style

Democracy was put forward by General Field Marshall Sarit in the late 1950s.[448] It

said that Thailand needed an autocratic leader who would determine the needs of the

people and lead and protect the country. This was deemed necessary because the

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[448] Ferrara, Fedrico. (2011) *Thailand Unhinged: The Death of Thai Style Democracy*. Equinox Publishing. P. 123.

people were not educated enough to assume the role of democratic citizens. This was consistent with the cultural stock of the time which seemed to give credence to absolute rulers for the good of the nation be they kings or individuals from other institutional backgrounds endorsed by the king.

What evidence do we have that the framers intended the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame to provide an alternative to democratic government? There are several pieces of evidence to consider. The first is that the content of the frame painted royal leadership as an important part of achieving an end to The Thaksin System. The frame claimed that royals had been the vanguard of past pro-democracy movements and that the reintroduction of royal leadership would enhance cohesion and reduce corruption. The senior leadership of the interim government was represented by appointees to the King's Privy Council. During the lead-up to the constitutional drafting process, the interim government took trips to Thaksin strongholds to promote the monarchy, sufficiency economy, and the importance of morality and ethics in government. The position of the framers, who were supporters of, or held positions within, the royal institution, as well as the actions of the interim government, reinforced the notion that the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame was being put forward as an alternative to democratic government. Moreover, the timing of the frame mentions in the media reveal the framer's intentions. The frame was promoted most frequently during the constitutional drafting process and referendum, a period in which there was fierce debate over the direction of democratic politics.

Finally, in the debate over whether the new constitution should allow for an appointed prime minister and a crisis council, two proposals widely supported by the PAD and

royalists. While it might seem that such an approach was against the tide of the times, there was a significant portion of the population who felt that the military (protectors of the monarchy) should be able to intervene if a government was deemed too corrupt. This was found to be a much wider belief among the middle class and wealthy than among poor Thais. [449]

While the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame had support within certain circles, it failed to achieve near-universal support among the middle class and elite. It also clearly did not resonate with the majority of Thais in the North and Northeast. How do we know that the frame lacked resonance with the target audience? First, the frame was one of several that surfaced regularly in the Bangkok Post and Khaosod during the period from 2006 through the end of 2007. The other competing frames of Inept Administration and Dictatorship were mentioned much more frequently, despite the fact that one of the publication studied was the pro-interim government Bangkok Post, and the government at the time put pressure on reporters to refrain from criticism of the regime.[450] We also see repeated mentions by pro-regime elites that a return to democracy (the competing frame of pro-Thaksin groups) was the best course of action. Had the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame resonated more widely, we would have expected to see less support for a quick return to democracy and greater effort put into describing the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame and outlining its

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[449] Asia Barometer Data Set 2007. One of the survey questions asked: Even if a government is democratically elected, if it is too corrupt, the military can intervene in politics. On this question, with a scale of 1 – 10, 1 being Strongly Disagree and 10 being Strongly Agree, a score of 5.2 was logged. That means that Thais averaged that they somewhat agree that such a role is warranted.
[450] See Figure 5.8-1.

governance structures. Table 8.1.1-4 outlines the significant evidence to support the
failure of the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame.

Table 8.1.1-4. Empirical evidence to support failure of Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame.

1.	The frame was not as popular during the 2006-2007 period as shown in the analysis of the Bangkok Post and Khaosoad. See Figure 5.9-1
2.	The enormous unpopularity of the interim government as shown by the results of opinion polls, even among Bangkokians. See 5.12.2.
3.	The Inept Administration Frame was a much more popular frame during the interim government period than the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame as shown by mentions in the media.
4.	The rejection of 2007 Referendum in regions that represented Thaksin strongholds.
5.	Win by Thaksin party in the 2007
6.	Protest turnout during the 2006-2007 period
7.	Yellow Shirt allies repeatedly came out in support of elections and democracy *(evidence that the frame had trouble uniting elites)*
8.	Public opinion polls showed that the interim government was not doing enough to restore democracy and a large portion of people felt that way as shown in Figure 5.12.1.

Why did the frame perform poorly as an alternative vision for Thai politics? First,
there were no details on how an alternative system of government would work. While
the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame had strong mooring in the royal institution, it
offered few details on how such a form of leadership could be translated into
government. For example, the frame did not outline a leadership royally appointed as
a real alternative to democratic government. It left important details ambiguous. This
lack of detail hurt the frame's resonance because people did not have a clear
understanding of what the frame offered as an alternative to the old system. But even
more than the lack of clarity on the frame's aim, the frame lacked resonance because
the main example of moral and ethical leadership, in the form of the interim
government, performed poorly as economic and political stewards. The PAD and

Democrat Party, key coup supporters, as well the CNS, regularly criticized the interim

government for policy indecisiveness and economic mismanagement. For these

reasons, by the middle of 2007, the frame had failed to resonate within a large

segment of the middle class and elite, as depicted in Figure 8.1-1. However it has

more recently made a comeback as more middle class and elites have feared the

spread of the Red Shirts and begun to change their attitudes about democracy as a

result.

While the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame had trouble early on and a bit more

success later in garnering support among the middle class and elite, it experienced

significant difficulty in convincing rural and urban poor living in Bangkok or in the

North and Northeast to support this alternative vision of Thai politics. The first reason

that the frame failed to resonate was that the framers were not trusted by this group as

they represented the Bangkok establishment and the history of Bangkok dictating and

exploiting the peoples of these regions. Furthermore, the frame's message was

inconsistent with the cultural stock and value placed by rural and urban poor on

democracy and their rights and expectations as citizens, which had been largely

shaped by Thaksin during his time in office.

What evidence is there that the people of these regions rejected the Moral and Ethical

Leadership Frame? The most compelling element was that a wide majority of people

in these regions re-elected Thaksin's party in the first election following the 2006

coup. Another piece of evidence is in the form of continued protest by pro-Thaksin

groups against the CNS and interim government, which embodied the leadership

framers argued was necessary for the country to move forward. Evidence of

lukewarm reception of the frame by the anti-Thaksin coalition and middle class can be found in the increased criticism of the interim government throughout 2007 and in the low opinion poll ratings of government performance, particularly within Bangkok.

Bring Thaksin Home
The lone Red Shirt Frame that failed to resonate widely was the Bring Thaksin Home Frame. While this frame was not analysed in depth as part of this research, it is important to mention as it came up in interviews with several Red Shirts leaders and sympathizers. The Thaksin Come Home Frame was used early in the post-coup period of 2006 and 2007 to communicate the framers' belief that the country depended on Thaksin's leadership. The frame highlighted that Thaksin was the country's saviour had done so much for people and yet a small political faction in the country had been able to oust him. It argued that without his leadership, the country was declining rapidly. The frame was meant to mobilize people to the anti-coup cause. In a way, the frame was strategically selected as the one bond that tied many people in the North and Northeast was their support for Thaksin and Thaksin was the face of the Thai Rak Thai Party.

The frame was effective in galvanizing support within the anti-coup and pro-democracy movement but it did not garner universal support within this demographic. Why was this the case? There were some within this demographic who were not Thaksin fans, but they were supporters of democracy. There was a certain brand of Thaksin worship among the framers, who were close Thaksin supporters that did not quite align with people's everyday experience. In CDs distributed at anti-coup rallies, songs and music videos worshipped Thaksin in a way that some felt was excessive. The movement leadership even talked about the limitations of the frame. "Half of the

Red Shirts don't think or care for Thaksin but they realize that we need a strong

leader and power to go up against the invisible hand…Most want to hear about

democracy. Thaksin is not influential among the democracy lovers."[451] Finally, as a

prognostic frame it failed to explain how to bring Thaksin home. How would that be

accomplished? The frame did not offer a blue print for how that would happen. One

thing that Tida, later leader of the UDD mentioned to the author in an interview was

that in order to bring Thaksin home they needed to have democracy. Democracy was

the first step in accomplishing that ultimate goal. She also mentioned that once core

Thaksin supporters realized this, the Return to Democracy became a much more

potent mobilizing frame because it bridged passionate Thaksin supporters with those

not interested in Thaksin but passionate about democracy and opposed to dictatorship.

Table 8.1.1-5 outlines the empirical evidence for the failure of the Thaksin Come

Home Frame.

Table 8.1.1.-5. Empirical evidence to support failure of Thaksin Come Home Frame.

1.	Interviews with Red Shirt movement activists and leaders showed that they abandoned the frame early on because it was ineffective in uniting those opposed to the coup.
2.	It was barely mentioned in the BKK and Khaosoad newspaper analysis, as opposed to the Return to Democracy Frame, which was used much more frequently.
3.	Thaksin did not win by a huge margin in 2007. The margin was much lower than it had been in 2005. See 8.1.1-2.

Dictatorship and Return to Democracy Frames
The Dictatorship Frame was a diagnostic frame promoted by Thaksin supporters and

coup opponents immediately following the coup that sought to describe in negative

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[451] Interview with Dr. Apiwan Wiriyachai, May, 2012.

terms both the coup that removed Thaksin and the new administration that assumed leadership of the country. It enjoyed enormous success as a characterization of the state of the country following the coup.[452] The frame was one of the most widely cited during the interim government period and was also successful as a mobilizing frame.[453] During this period the anti-coup group held large protests calling for an end to dictatorship and a return to democracy. These protests grew in size over the first part of 2007 until it was clear to the anti-coup group that the CNS would follow through on their promise to hold elections. Figure 8.2.1-1 shows the growth of anti-coup protests over the period.

Anti-Coup Protest Turnout 2006-2007

October 2006	Jan	Jan	May	June 2007	July	July	October
200	1,000	1,000	1,000	6,000	10,000	24,000	50,000

Figure 8.2.1-1. Protest Turnout During the Interim Government Administration. Protest turnout rose consistently during the post-coup period. Protest mobilization generally centered on opposition to dictatorship and proposals and

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[452] This characterization was very familiar, representing a re-production of the decades-old standard ideational repertoire of "democracy (elections) versus dictatorship (coup)."
[453] See Figure 5.12-1.

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actions perceived by anti-coup groups to be undemocratic.[454] There were some reports that protestors were paid to come out in the later part of 2007, and it is clear that protest turnout was also a reflection of growing organizational capability of the anti-coup movement, but taken together with other evidence, the growth in turnout strengthens the argument that the Dictatorship Frame was effective as a mobilizing frame.[455]

The majority of the public (64%) during this period was skeptical that the coup-appointed government would hold fair elections.[456] Related to the resonance of the Dictatorship Frame was Red Shirt and other groups' characterization of the constitutional drafting process. Within the establishment-leaning Bangkok Post, early in the post-coup period, the constitutional drafting process was framed as moral and ethical. As the process continued, however, mentions of this positive framing of the charter fell dramatically, and were replaced by frames of the constitutional drafting process as undemocratic.[457] The Bangkok Post editorial board had once only aired positive mentions of the charter, but changed their stance due to what they perceived as undemocratic intentions of the CNS and some CDC members. One more critical piece of evidence giving support to the success of the Dictatorship Frame was the rejection of the constitution in large parts of the country that were considered Thaksin strongholds.

All of this evidence points to a strongly resonant Dictatorship Frame. But why was this frame so successful? What was the reason for its widespread resonance not only with Thaksin supporters and anti-coup groups, but also within several pockets of the

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[454] Figures were taken from Bangkok Post and Khaosod Newspaper reports of protestor turnout at anti-coup protests.

[455] Nostitz, Nick. *Red vs. Yellow: Volume 1: Thailand's Crisis of Identity*. White Lotus Press. 2009. Page 13. Nostitz noted, "This group [UDD] was able to mobilize significant numbers of people through the old TRT networks."

[456] See Figure 5.15-1

[457] See Figure 5.13-1.

coup-supporter coalition? There are several potential explanations for this. The first is that as mentioned previously, democratic culture was very strong at the time within the middle class, causing a discomfort with clear symbols and actions of undemocratic institutions. Prolonged martial law, press censorship, lack of transparency, and proposals to weaken representative government were widely criticized by the middle class, including academics, members of the media, and members of the Civil Society and Non-governmental Organization communities. The actions of the CNS were consistent with what Thailand came to expect under a dictatorship. All of Thailand's previous dictators had been military men, and so the image of the military on the streets and on TV reinforced the idea that Thailand had again been taken over by dictators. Adding to this, the CNS maintained martial law in many parts of the country for more than a year following the coup. This experiential commensurability with past periods of dictatorship provided middle class and poor, rural and urban people with a ready reference point with to view the CNS-led government.

Another reason for the frame's resonance was its appeal with Thaksin supporters, most of whom lived in rural areas of Thailand's north and northeast. Their elected leader Thaksin was removed in a coup. But this alone does not fully explain the frame's success in mobilizing Thaksin supporters. The full story lies in the centuries' old northerner and northeasterner animosity towards the central Thai government. A history of exploitation, mistrust, and regionalism fit snuggly within the frame because the coup was said to be another example of the Thai government's attempts to thwart the peoples of these regions control over their own destinies. Despite the interim government and CNS argument that they were democratic and wanted to return the

country to democracy, in a poll conducted in the middle of 2007, just over 30% of people in Isan and the Northern regions felt that the government was doing enough to restore democracy.[458] Protestors came out to defy martial law and challenge the government partly due to Red Shirt effectiveness in linking the Dictatorship Frame with a history of mistreatment and repression. Red Shirt leaders would become even more effective at linking the present to the past in later protest cycles.

The Dictatorship Frame also resonated because of the international community's pressure on Thailand to return the country to democracy. The words and actions of the international community lent credibility to Red Shirt assertions that Thailand was not, as the generals and interim government insisted, a country led by democracy advocates who wanted to strengthen democratic institutions, but rather by generals who were implementing a dictatorial regime. The more international organizations and foreign governments pressed Thailand's government to restore democracy, the more it exposed the flaws in the official narrative that Thailand was freer and more democratic under the new regime than it was under Thaksin.

The Dictator Frame resonated with a majority of the poor and middle income peasants in the north and northeast, but there was not unity across this class/region. The dotted section at the top of the lower class spectrum (or would-be Red Shirt supporters) on Figure 8.1-1 depicts a large group of what we might call "spectators". These were people whose class and regional situation might have led them to be natural supporters of the Red Shirts/Thaksin supporter group, but who were not strong

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[458] "Thai Public Skeptical of Power Transfer." *The Gallop Poll*.
http://www.gallup.com/poll/102535/thai-public-skeptical-power-transfer.aspx November 5, 2007.

supporters during that time. The evidence for this existence of this group comes from several places. First, the protests that sprung out of the Dictator and Return to Democracy Frames started very small. Even in interviews with staff of the Red Shirt organization years later, there was an admission by one younger member that in the early days of the Thaksin supporter movement, protestors were routinely paid stipends. She then pointed out that in a later period of Red Shirt mobilization, no such payments were necessary. There was also the vote on the constitutional referendum and the general election, in which pro-Thaksin groups carried traditional Thaksin voter bastions, but not in the overwhelming numbers they had in previous elections. Why was this the case? The main reason argued in this study was that class and regional consciousness had not coalesced at this evolutionary point in the Red Shirt movement, and that the value placed on democracy was still weak. The Red Shirts were still a somewhat narrow movement of Thaksin supporters. It would later grow to represent something very different for people in these regions and classes, but in the earlier period this was not the case. Part of this missing ingredient for wider class support was a lack of grassroots movement organization. The pro-Thaksin movement that grew during this period was narrow and run mostly by party leaders and a handful of academics. While the later growth of the Red Shirts happened during a time when many new groups and individuals entered the movement.

The Return to Democracy Frame was a prognostic frame that enjoyed support from a sizable section of the elite and middle class, and widespread support within rural and urban poor and working classes in the north, northeast, and areas of Bangkok. It resonated with these group for several reasons similar to those that made the Dictator Frame so powerful. The Return to Democracy Frame was consistent with the cultural

value at the time on democracy within the middle class and elite, and the growing

value placed on democracy by the poor in both rural and urban areas. In research

conducted for an earlier study using data from the Asia Barometer, results showed

that in the 2004 and 2007 surveys, rural people were more likely to place greater

value on having a democratic system. Digging a bit deeper into the data, poor, Isan

speakers showed higher support for democracy than poor non-Isan speakers[459] This

evidence shows that there was definitely a latent support for democracy within the

pro-Thaksin base. As the interim government faltered and showed signs of weakness,

the call or a return to democracy widened because while there was widespread elite

dissatisfaction with Thaksin within the elite, the interim government could not match

the previous elected government in terms of managing the economy. Table 8.1.1-6

show the empirical evidence supporting the success of the Dictatorship and Return to

Democracy Frames.

Table 8.1.1-6. Empirical evidence to support success of Dictatorship and Return to Democracy Frames.

1.	These frames were two of the most frequently mentioned during the interim government period in analysis of Bangkok Post and Khaosoad.
2.	Growing protest turnout in 2006 and 2007 and again in the 2010-2011 period.
3.	Public opinion polls showed majority of the public believed that the government would not hold fair elections.
4.	Yellow Shirt allies expressed publically their support for quick return to democracy.
5.	Rejection of 2007 Referendum in Thaksin strongholds.

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[459] Volpe, Michael. "Voting Behavior and Support for Democracy. Analysis of 2007 Asia Barometer Dataset." Presentation at King Prajadhipok's Institute Conference. February 14, 2011.

Immediately following the coup, pro-Thaksin groups focused framing efforts on Thaksin. The Frame Thaksin Come Home was used regularly to mobilize opposition to the coup. Speaking on the Thaksin Come Home and Return to Democracy Frames years later, Red Shirt UDD leader Tida had this to say. "When we had the first protests following the 2006 coup only a few thousand showed up because we focused on Thaksin. They blame us as Thaksin followers." The Thaksin come Home Frame was a counter-frame to Evil Thaksin, but both frames suffered in part from their overly narrow focus. Conversely, the Return to Democracy Frame enjoyed much greater resonance.

8.2.2 PAD MOBILIZATION, JUDICIAL COUP AND RACHAPRASONG

In late 2007, Thaksin's newly formed PPP won the election, installing Samak Sundaravej as prime minister. His ascendency brought about a fresh round of Yellow Shirt mobilization and a fresh set of frames (not new but more appealing given the times) that resonated widely within the middle class, helping to coalesce class grievances against Thaksin and his government.

Excessive Corruption Frame
During this period, the Yellow Shirts were particularly effective in promoting the diagnostic frame of Excessive Corruption. Framers pointed to several decisions regarding government and political corruption to propel the frame to widespread support within the middle class and elite. In 2008, Thaksin and has wife Potjaman were indicted for corruption. Samak was eventually forced to step down for breaking the rules against holding another paid job in addition to his post as prime minister. The ability of Thaksin to appoint his brother-in-law as prime minister to replace Samak, and the shock of the electoral loss in December 2007 to the recently

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constituted PPP, led many elites to reject the Thaksin government, and declare as illegitimate any election that resulted in a Thaksin victory. This was not a new frame used by elites. It had been employed going back to elections in the 1980s to discredit provincial politicians and their administrations.

The frame of Excessive Corruption became the main point of attack against the elected government in an attempt to brand the PPP as unfit to rule. The frame benefited from legitimacy provided by the court's decision on December 2, 2008 to disband the PPP for violating election laws. It also shared many similarities with the Thaksin System Frame in that it highlighted the broken system of political corruption that the country faced and that it had reached an intolerable level that required immediate remedy. Some academics and Thaksin supporters argued that corruption was purposely exaggerated to provide a rationale for Thaksin's forced removal.[460] However, many elite and middle class Thais believed that corruption had hit an intolerable level.

The frame failed to resonate widely beyond the elite and middle income demographic because the framers were not seen as credible with poor rural people in the north and northeast or who had close ties to those regions. Individuals such as Democrat leader Suthep Thetsuban had been embroiled in corruption allegations before as had other member of the Democrat Party. Moreover, the frame of Double Standard used by the Red Shirts was very effective in pointing out how corruption labels and prosecutions were targeted at representatives of the people in the North and Northeast, while

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[460] Winichakul, Thongchai. (2008) "Toppling Democracy." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. Vol. 38, No. 1, February 2008. Pages 30-33.

Bangkok politicians were ignored. The framers were viewed as biased because they were part of the elite establishment and were perceived to not represent rural Thai North and Northeast poor and middle income people.

New Politics Frame

While the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame lacked important details on how an alternative to the current Thaksin system would work, the New Politics Frame more clearly articulated a system that would remove the influence of the Thaksin system. To better understand the New Politics Frame, it is important to look back at the recent history of political development in Thailand. The concept of New Politics came from a "stream of contention" that started during the 1980s as an elite and middle class response to a perceived dramatic increase in political corruption perpetrated mainly by provincial politicians. The discourse on clean politics described provincial politicians as unethical and unfit to rule and called for more traditional moral and ethical leadership.

While the elite resisted the pro-democracy movement in the early 1970s, they were split over a similar movement in 1992. Some elites and the media pushed for democracy, believing it the best way to remove dictatorship and ensure liberty.[461] However, democratic government led to an empowerment of rural people and their greater political assertiveness.

During the anti-Thaksin movement in 2005 and 2006, the PAD and their elite allies foregrounded the clean politics discourse in an attempt to reorient Thais towards traditional values and ethics. The New Politics Frame first appeared in 2008 as a

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[461]*Ibid*

stated way to achieve clean politics in government.[462] However, some believed that

the focus on New Politics was a strategy to try and reintroduce a patriarchal

relationship between the traditional lords and the peasant class, and weaken

democratic government.[463] This effort was unsuccessful as rural Thais continued to

vote for local and regional leaders on the basis of material benefits, and to be more

tolerant of political corruption than the urban middle class and elites.[464] This caused

many in the elite and middle class to form an increasingly negative view towards rural

Thais. Thaksin came to embody elite and middle class negative feelings about the

direction of democratic politics. The allegations of corruption surrounding Thaksin,

his immense popularity among rural people in the north and northeast, his arrogance,

and his electoral domination, caused some anti-Thaksin elite and middle class Thais

to become more receptive to the idea of an alternative to the democratic system. In the

period following the December 2007 election of Samak, the PAD leadership

promoted the frame of New Politics as such an alternative. The frame emerged out of

this structural conflict to advocate a government that would be led by a largely

appointed parliament, selected and managed by people of high moral and ethical

character.

Why was it the case that the frame did not break into the mainstream elite and middle

class public discourse? To answer that, we must first look at the components of the

frame and the timing of the frame's emergence. When the frame emerged, Thailand

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[462] Nelson, Michael. (2010) "Thailand's People's Alliance for Democracy: From 'New Politics' to a 'Real' Political Party?" In *Legitimacy Crisis in Thailand.* Askew, Mark, Eds. Silkworm Publishing, 2010. Pages 124-125.
[463] *Ibid.*
[464] This difference in tolerance for political corruption in Thailand between the elite and middle class on one hand, and the poor on the other, has been well documented.

had been a democracy for nearly 15 years, and as with the Thaksin System Frame, the New Politics Frame message ran counter to a strong democratic culture that had developed over the previous several decades. Within the anti-Thaksin coalition at the time, there was a strong commitment to democracy, particularly among the senior leadership of the Democrat Party. Also, a royally connected government in office at the time led by Abhisit was criticized and not getting along with the PAD.

Another important factor that blunted the resonance of the New Politics Frame was that the elite believed that it could still win by playing by the democratic rules of the game if it could only educate poor, rural Thais to make better political decisions and reject Thaksin's brand of rural populism. The elite supported democracy because they had more power in the democratic system. The Democrat Party supported democracy because they believed they could win elections. Both the elite and its allied party's misjudgment of the rural poor blunted the resonance of the New Politics Frame because there was still the belief that the "rules of the game" benefited their interests.

The solution outlined in the New Politics Frame was explained in overarching ways but never included details on how government would be selected and by whom, and how representative it would be. During the 2007 constitutional drafting process, the PAD promoted amendments that were consistent with the desired political objectives that would later form the content of the New Politics Frame, such as weakening representative government by introducing the idea of an unelected prime minister. This and other undemocratic proposals encountered significant backlash from many members of the NLA, the media, the Democrat Party, and even some senior members of the CNS. The Red Shirts also played a role in blunting the expansion of this frame

by counter-framing the Thaksin System and New Politics Frames with their own frames of Dictatorship and Return to Democracy.

The New Politics Frame emerged in September of 2008 as a set of proposals that would include a different system of selecting leaders that would deviate from a fully elected system.[465] Its mentions and overall support coincided with higher turnout at Yellow Shirt rallies and more aggressive protest tactics. It drew wide elite support from both the Democrat Party and media, as well as the monarchy.

One of the factors that led to resonance of the New Politics Frame in 2008 was that elites were surprised at the strong electoral showing of the PPP in December 2007. It challenged the elite conventional wisdom about the rural electorate that they firmly accepted their place within the patronage system and that they would not challenge elite political domination. Elites had thought that they could influence rural Thais' voting decisions through the patronage system, with its paternalistic character. The reelection of Thaksin's party showed that they had overestimated their influence. The greater support for the New Politics Frame within the elite in 2008 had to do with the outcome of structural changes that led to a more highly educated, more prosperous, and more politically engaged Northern and Northeastern population. Unable to convince the majority of Thais who lived or came from these regions to reject the former PM, it became clear in 2008 that other steps were needed to ensure elite control over the political system. The New Politics Frame gained strength throughout 2008 culminating in the Constitutional Court verdict that removed Somchai from the

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[465] Nelson, Michael. (2010) "Thailand's People's Alliance for Democracy: From 'New Politics' to a 'Real' Political Party?" In *Legitimacy Crisis in Thailand.* Askew, Mark, Eds. Silkworm Publishing, 2010. Pages 124-125.

premiership and disbanded the PPP Party, banning many of its senior members from holding office for five years.

Most anti-Thaksin groups had a low ideological orientation during the period of 2006-2007. However in 2008 there was a shift towards greater conservativism and a rise in ideological orientation in response to Thaksin's win. This change from conservative too radical in terms of reform was clear in the Democrat Party from 2005 and 2006. They made a momentous move from a parliamentary party that was completely vested in the system to one that was willing to go outside of the system using social movements, boycotting elections, support coups, and such, and abandon the idea of parliamentary democracy in order to be successful. In late 2013 and early 2014 they walked out of the parliament and started the PRDC movement. They organized it.

There were still some within the elite and middle class that were unreceptive to the New Politics Frame. These typically fell into two groups. First, those who held on to the belief that democracy was the more desirable system and should be supported regardless of the consequences, and then there were those who believed that democracy could remain because the poor who had supported Thaksin did so only because of material ties and could be educated or once that material tie was broken, that the poor would abandon Thaksin. However, in 2008 this group of elite and middle class people became much smaller than they had been previously. The New Politics Frame had united these groups.

The New Politics Frame failed to resonate widely in rural areas of the north and northeast because it represented the belief that the Thai political system was broken and needed repair and that the solution was to reverse democratic reforms. The

diagnosis and the solution was incommensurate with the everyday beliefs and values of rural north and northeast people, who saw that with democracy they had finally achieved a political voice and material benefits. Moreover, the main framers Sondhi Limthongkul and Major General Chamlong Srimuang had very little credibility with large portions of the rural poor. Sondhi was framed by the Red Shirts as an ex-Thaksin confident with a vendetta against the deposed leader, while General Chamlong had been a royalist and had a checkered past of see-sawing between leading crackdowns on pro-democracy protestors in 1976 and then less than two decades later leading pro-democracy street protests in 1992 against General Suchinda. He was close to the monarchy and as a former governor of Bangkok, and personal secretary to Prem, who later became Chief Privy Counselor, he was regarded as deeply embedded in the highest levels of the elite establishment. These two framers and leaders of the Yellow Shirts had very little sway with rural north and northeastern people.

Identity Formation in the Red Shirts Movement

During the period following the 2008 removal of Samak, major developments occurred within the Red Shirts movement. A confluence of structural changes that had begun decades before, major expansion of the Red Shirts organization, and coalescence of a shared sense of experience and empowerment brought about a massive expansion in movement mobilization and support across the North and Northeast, and those elsewhere in Thailand who were originally from those regions, and particularly the poor and middle income groups.

The Red Shirts staged large protests, used high profile and confrontational protest tactics, and expanded their organizations into the grassroots. The movement leadership established UDD schools to educate Thais in rural areas about democracy and the injustice under the current elite-led government, and to recruit people to the Red Shirt cause. They also established their own media arm, including newspapers, TV stations, a network of local and national radio stations, and magazines to communicate their message across the country. The leadership of the movement changed during this period from one comprised largely of Thaksin confidants, to a network of people and groups across the political and geographic spectrum. The frames of the movement also changed during

Figure 8.2.2-1. Man proudly displays his membership badge in the UDD. This was taken during one of several visits by the author to the UDD headquarters.

this period to focus on historical inequality and injustice perpetrated by the elite in Bangkok. Frames of Double Standard brought these historical wrongs up to the present, providing a powerful lens for regular Thai in the provinces to view the Red Shirt struggle.

This research uncovered that identity formation played an important role, particularly in drawing poor and middle income rural and urban Thais to the Red Shirt cause. Frames sometimes encourage certain groups to see themselves as united and to see both themselves and the movement's opponents in specific ways. This happened in

the Red Shirt movement in the period following the 2008 court decision to disband

the PPP. The Red Shirt identity grew stronger over time due in large part to framing

of class consciousness and use of discourses and imagery that evoked historical

inequities between Bangkok and the north and northeast regions of Thailand.[466]

Figure 8.2.2-1 shows a soldier showing their membership badge in the UDD. The

POS made class consciousness and historical issues more salient but the identity

formation was not ensured by this framing of the POS. The identity of what it means

to be a Red Shirt evolved over time from many factors. Both the POS and COS, the

repressive response of the government security forces, counter-framing by the Yellow

Shirts, historical inequities, and other factors also intervened to help bring about this

Red Shirt identity formation.

The resonance of the Double Standard, Injustice and Inequality frames, and the

construction of Red Shirt identity were helped by the actions of the elite establishment

and the Yellow Shirts. Yellow Shirt discourses characterized Red Shirt protestors as

stupid, ignorant, savages, buffalos and terrorists. They were said to be unready for the

responsibilities of democratic citizenship. Yellow Shirt leaders and some of their

government supporters advocated a discontinuation of Thaksin's populist policies

citing a perceived negative impact on the economy. The Red Shirts used these Yellow

Shirt discourses and frames to show how their message of mistreatment and

disrespect for the poor by the elite was indeed real and that the elite attack was in fact

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[466] Movement membership rolls in the Red Shirts were not available but we can look at protest turnout as a rough measure of identity formation and what we see is over time there is a large increase in turnout, peaking with more than 250,000 that turned out for a protest/festival in Khao Yaai National Park in February of 2012. This figure was by far the most Red Shirts to join any protest rally during the study period and it happened only a few months before the 2011 election. This figure was provided in the Mahaprachachon (มหาประชาชน), April 21-27, 2011.

an attack on the poor aimed at reconstituting a system of serfdom that existed under the times of absolute monarchy.

When attending Red Shirt protests in the 2008 period and beyond, movement events took on a party-like atmosphere. There was singing, dancing, and cheering, and people brought banners highlighting which local Red Shirt chapter they belonged to. Attending a Red Shirt event was akin to attending a concert. People met their friends and celebrated. Nothing was lost on the gravity of the movement, and at certain times the mood at events became serious, but being a member of the Red Shirts provide a sense of a belonging, a place to go and meet others like you. Being a Red Shirt meant being the roots of Thailand, the real Thai, the challenger, the underdog. Protests had been moderate in size during the 2006 – 2007 period, but from 2009 through 2011, the typical Red Shirt protest drew a much larger turnout. The main reason for this was the important identity formation process that took place within the movement around the meaning of being a Red Shirt, and what the Red Shirts were fighting for and against.

Part of that identity formation occurred at the grassroots and in music. There was a musical element that grew up around the Red Shirts movement. Singers across Isan recorded music using a Northeastern hip-hop country musical style called Mor Lum that was distinctly regional. They used this musical style and local language dialect to communicate issues of inequality and marginalization between the people of Isan and those in Bangkok. As one singer of mor lum said of her Red Shirt-inspired Mor Lum songs. "I communicate with my audience in Isaan," she added, referring to the local dialect used in this part of Thailand, which is closer to the language spoken in

neighbouring Laos than the mainstream Thai language common in Bangkok. "It is the language of the grassroots, the people at the bottom."[467]

A quote with Red Shirt activist and organizer Sombat Boonngamanong shows that the creation of Red Shirt identity may not have been a spontaneous bottom-up enterprise but might have also be co-constructed by the Red Shirt elite.

> *"When people see the Red Shirts they are seeing the politicians and Thaksin. The media reports what these people say. They do not show the real, regular people. So the movement looks like elite politicians and people get turned off by this. We need a new image of the Red Shirts with more focus on the people. Let the people stand in front and the politicians and other elite stand beside or behind." Interview with Red Shirt Grassroots Organizer Sombat Boonngamanong, 2011.*

Depicted in Exhibit 8.1-1 at the top in the dotted region of the graph is that beginning in 2008 the active support of the poor in the North and Northeast and the urban poor and middle income peasants began to grow. While specific data for this growth is difficult to pin down, there are many individual pieces of evidence. First, we see a growth in Red Shirt membership. Second, we see a widening variety of groups making up the Red Shirt movement mosaic. Third, we see a musical sub-movement emerge that further plays to the regionalism and underdog self-perception of Northeast (Isan) people. And fourth, we see a widening of the Red Shirt organization, particularly its media arm and grassroots recruitment and educational functions. The result of all of these developments led to a large increase in movement membership and support within key demographics that had previously not been activated.

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[467] Red Shirt Stage Offers Platform to Marginalised Culture By Marwaan Macan-Markar Inter Press Sevice News Agency. May 25, 2010.

Double Standard Frame

The Double Standard Frame fortified every major Red Shirt diagnostic frame. Red Shirt leaders often spoke of justice and rights for the poor using this frame, and the movement gave opponents little to work with in terms of using the frame against them. The true strength of the frame was in its empirical credibility. Double standard was indeed all around. Thailand's high degree of social stratification and inequality meant that the movement could deploy this frame in nearly every critique of the government. It was easy to see that the government's treatment of Yellow Shirt leaders responsible for the Suvarnabhumi and Don Meaung airport seizures was much softer than that for Red Shirt leaders at Rachaprasong, and that the government used different tactics in response to the Red Shirts protests than they did with Yellow Shirt protests. Red Shirt leaders used this frame repeatedly, as it was easily connected to everyday events.

As shown in Figure 8.1-1, the Double Standard Frame coincided with a period of dramatic expansion in Red Shirts membership. The Double Standard Frame's success was due to two factors. First, the frame highlighted special treatment for the elite, and continued mistreatment for the poor, who the Red Shirts claimed their movement represented. Second was the frame communication of an "Us-Them" mentality. This was a powerful tool in the coalescing of a Red Shirt identity. Movement leaders pointed to elite characterizations of Red Shirt protestors and actions by the government against Red Shirt supporters as evidence that the elite received special treatment at the expense of the rights and protections of the poor.

The frame also made some inroads within the middle class and elite. The resonance of the Double Standard Frame with limited pocket of the middle class, in particular,

came from the abundance of evidence that the courts, military and bureaucracy treated the Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts differently. Red Shirt leaders could point to this evidence in their frames of double standard, which were often closely tied to frames of injustice and inequality, giving the latter added strength. This perception of double standard affected some in the middle class, who far from being Red Shirt supporters, were opposed to the notion of special treatment. One important example of this was the Yellow Shirt takeover of the two major airports in Bangkok. When the lack of action in the case of the Yellow Shirt airport takeovers, was compared with the government's violent crackdown at Rachaprasong, it provided a powerful lightening rod for Red Shirt frames of Double Standard that crossed class lines.[468] The Yellow Shirts' image as a movement never fully recovered from this action, and Yellow Shirt leaders Sondhi and Chamlong did not assume vocal roles in future anti-Thaksin movement.

There is significant evidence to suggest that the Double Standard Frame had a high degree of resonance. As we have seen, there was empirical credibility in the frame and actions of the government and experiential commensurability with the lives of everyday rural Thais and some urban middle class Thais who were not traditional Red Shirt supporters. It was also one of the most frequently deployed frames at movement rallies and in movement publications, such as Mahaprachachon. The emergence of the frame also coincided with much larger protest gatherings and an explosion in Red

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[468]"Desperate times in Thailand. An anti-government mob in Bangkok goes all-out to provoke a coup." *The Economist*. November 26, 2008.

Shirt membership. Table 8.2.2-2 show the empirical evidence supporting the success of the Double Standard Frame.

Table 8.2.2-2. Empirical evidence to support success of the Double Standard Frame.

1.	Double standard was important material in nearly every frame that was present in the 2010-2011 period.
2.	One of the frequently mentioned frames in Mahaprachachon.
3.	The frame coincided with larger protest gatherings and an explosion in Red Shirt membership.
4.	Movement allies and observers of Red Shirt protests Dr. Apiwan and Nick Nostitz said in interviews that double standard was a very important if not the most important frame in the movement during the period following Rachaprasong.
5.	Significant Red Shirt protest turnout during the period.

Other factors clearly played a role in increasing movement membership and protest turnout, such as the building of a Red Shirt movement organization deep into the provinces and the development of the movement's media arm. The relationship between this development and the resonance of the Double Standard Frame is complex and it is unclear which caused the other. Furthermore, specific events, such as the "judicial coup" and disbanding of the TRT and PPP contributed to the appeal of the Double Standard Frame and gave the framers more instances in which to deploy it. The interaction of the frame, the movement organization, and events in the wider movement field made the Double Standard Frame one of the most frequently used and most effective frames of any deployed during the more than 10 years of Red and Yellow Shirt mobilization. The Double Standard Frame would continue to be used regularly within the Red Shirts movement in future protest cycles. The importance of this frame was echoed by several people interviewed for this research. Dr. Apiwan, former Deputy Speaker of the Thai House of Representatives had this to say about the

role and importance of the Double Standard Frame. "The lowest point in the movement was the Songkran time. This was when the second group [those who wanted democracy but were not necessarily supporters of Thaksin] really started to come on board as they saw the double standard and for this group this message was very hard hitting."[469] Nick Nostitz, a reporter and photographer who attended almost all of the Red Shirt protests mentioned in an interview with the author that the Double Standard Frame became an important frame of the Red Shirts movement in 2009."[470]

8.2.3 POST-RACHAPRASONG TO THE 2011 ELECTION

The Rachaprasong crackdown and events following it led to frames that focused more on systemic issues such as structural inequality (lord-serf exploitation) and dictatorship.[471] As martial law was gradually lifted, and large political gatherings began taking place, there was a major effort to describe the new landscape for the Red Shirts and diagnose the problems that the movement was facing. There was great uncertainty during this period regarding whether an election would be held. The violence and extent of the crackdown led many within the Red Shirts to believe that the problem was much deeper than they had at first though.

Thailand is a MENA Dictatorship
The MENA Dictatorship Frame resonated with a broad cross-section of Thai society. The frame was similar to previous Red Shirt frames of dictatorship, only it provided an extra experiential focal point in the form of pro-democracy movements against dictatorships in the Middle East and North Africa. This added to the frame's

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[469] Interview with Dr. Apiwan Wiriyachai, May 2012.
[470] Interview with Nick Nostitz October, 2012.
[471] This was gleaned from an analysis of issues of *Mahaprachachon* during the period.

resonance with the poor and middle class. While the wide majority of the middle class appeared to support the government crackdown, there were some limited pockets of objection to the Abhisit government's tactics, and more importantly for some, the government's delay in calling elections.

Once the elections became more likely, the Red Shirt problem definition shifted from the frame of living in an MENA dictatorship marked by major systemic issues that must be challenged from outside of the political system, to the definition of unsuccessful and corrupt government administration that must be dealt with through the system by voting it out of office. The latter problem diagnosis dominated the Mahaprachachon in the months before the election. These two phases of problem definition led to an increase in the number of frames and their selective usage. The government's Cambodia incident gave writers the opportunity to deploy the Double Standard Frame and the Frame of Ammat versus Prai to great effect. Whereas, economic issues in the lead-up to the election led writers to use frames such as Dee ther Puad, which described Prime Minister Abhisit's poor economic stewardship, and Cow Yaak Mak Pang, which detailed a worsening economic crisis.

In analyzing potential resonance, there is significant evidence that the criteria of empirical credibility was a foremost consideration as Red Shirt framers attempted to tie their vision of the problem that the movement sought to ameliorate, with rank and file protestors and mainstream interpretations of events in the real world. The Thailand as MENA Dictatorship frame was largely discarded once elections were scheduled. This is likely due to its diminished empirical credibility. After all, an openly contested election, which was announced in April, was not a hallmark of

MENA dictatorships. But as the election neared, and there were rumors that the

military might stage a coup if the Pheua Thai Party won the election, Red Shirt

leaders again deployed the MENA Dictatorship Frame, this time as a warning to its

adversaries that if they interfered with the election, what occurred in Tunisia and

Egypt would also happen in Thailand. This was an example of a frame that resonated

widely but was discarded due to events in the broader political environment.

***Inequality and Injustice
Frames***

The Red Shirts'
Inequality Frame
surfaced repeatedly
during the study
period. Its potential
resonance was in part
due to the strong
connection between its
content and the beliefs,
claims, and actions of
the movement. The
Inequality Frame

***Figure 8.2.3-1. Red Shirt Protestor Displays Sign at Street Protest
in Bangkok. The protestor's sign highlights the Red Shirts'
frustrations with the unequal power relationship between the
Bangkok Elite and the rural and urban poor, who the Red Shirts
claimed to represent.***

reflected one of the Red Shirt movement's core messages: The age-old system of

patronage and inequality was intolerable and must be replaced with a new system that

brings about equality and justice in political and social life. It described a struggle of

rich against poor, prai against ammat, elite urban against rural village, in which the

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poor had suffered for generations. The movement sought to mobilize poor villagers in different parts of the country and bring them to Bangkok to protest. The movement organization focused considerable energy on building organizations in many areas of the country through their Red Villages project, and to educate people about democracy and human rights through Red Shirt education programs.[472] Movement protest actions, organization and education, and symbols and images all reflected a composition of grassroots movement of the poor, producing a strong link between frame and movement actions. The frame supported the movement's organizational goals. The reality of inequality in Thai social, economic and political life provided numerous real-world situations from which to draw and interpret events, further bolstering the frame's resonance. Figure 8.2.3-1 shows a protestor holding a sign highlighting Red Shirt anger at perceived inequality and injustice in Thailand.

The Inequality Frame added to its empirical credibility by connecting to other diagnostic frames criticizing the government's poor performance and behavior. For example, the Everything Gets More Expensive frame claimed that things were getting more expensive because the rich, with the support of the Democrat-led government, were helping each other to become richer and creating greater hardship for the poor. The Palm Oil Crisis, rising gasoline prices, and the Cambodia trespassing incident were all used to provide real-world examples of the Inequality Frame. Connecting inequality and the Cambodia incident, Tida drew contrasts between the unequal support from the Thai government given to laborers and elites who run afoul of the law when abroad. Finally, the claims-makers of the Inequality Frame were not elites,

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[472] "Thailand's red-shirt heartland hides its strength." *Reuters*. November 29, 2013.

or businesspeople, or the aristocracy. They were portrayed as middle class and poor people, social activists, and neighbors, infusing the frame with greater credibility.

In interviews with rural poor, one study found that the perception of inequality was not only talked about at the level of the Red Shirts leadership, but that it was also present in the minds of regular people. The excerpt below is taken from interviews with rural people show the feelings of inequality felt by many rural Thai people:

> *"Naboon has confronted many difficulties since he was a child. He has been working as a farmer and feels nothing will be better. He himself believes that the rural poor have been oppressed from the aristocracy that possess the most resources and have consumed the better things all the time. "They want us to be sufficient, and why don't they be? This world must be equal. You can eat, I also can eat. Someone expend million for a meal, Thai society is very different among three classes; the grass root, the middle and the upper class."*[473]

Evidence of the Inequality Frame's resonance comes from many sources. The frequency of mentions in Red Shirt publications, such as Mahaprachachon shows that the frame was one of the main ones used by the Red Shirts during the period following Rachaprasong. The frame was also mentioned frequently by rank and file Red Shirts across numerous interviews with Red Shirt participants. The frame enjoyed empirical credibility, experiential commensurability and alignment with movement action. It was also used to pursue the organizational goals of the movement in terms of grassroots mobilization. Finally, the frame was used to support other Red Shirt movement frames that were also used frequently. For example, the inequality

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[473] Nonthakitnoppakao, Naparat. *Rural Poor's Inequalities*. Graduate Volunteer Centre, Thammasat University. ICIRD. 2013.

frame was often combined with the Double Standard Frame, to explain the structural

and historical roots for the government's treatment of the Red Shirts.

Table 8.2.3-2 show the empirical evidence supporting the success of the Injustice and

Inequality Frames.

Table 8.2.3-2. Empirical evidence to support success of the Injustice and Inequality Frames.

1.	Words of poor people in interviews talking about the impact of feelings of injustice and inequality. Nonthakitnoppakao, Naparat. *Rural Poor's Inequalities*. Graduate Volunteer Centre, Thammasat University. ICIRD. 2013.
2.	These frames were referenced numerous times in Red Shirt publications
3.	Interviews with Red Shirts movement elites pointed to the importance of injustice and inequality as mobilizing frames
4.	Significant movement protest turnout during both the 2006-2007 period and the 2010-2011 period.

The Injustice Frame bridged the Double Standard Frame and focused specifically on

the difference of treatment for Red Shirts leaders and activities and those of the

opposition. The frame pointed out how Red Shirt leaders had been incarcerated and

activists murdered, while opposition leaders were not even questioned. The events of

Rachaprasong gave extensive materials for framers to point to in making

comparisons. When I asked Dr Apiwan what was the strongest period of the Red

Shirts movement over the entire period of its existence, he pointed to a date six

months after Rachaprasong. "Six months after Rachaprasong around December of

2010 [was the strongest period of the movement]. This was because of the message of

injustice. That is the first thing. Many of my classmates at the military academy

supported the Red Shirts before but especially after. Because they saw that there was

no justice."[474]

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[474] Interview with Dr. Apiwan Wiriyachai, May 2012.

CHAPTER 9   CONCLUSION

9.1   FRAME FAILURE

Several frames of both the Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts movements during the study
period failed resonate widely. By looking at each of these frames side by side, we
might be able to better understand what common threads existed among these frames
and how their varying positions along several dimension might have contributed to
their failure to resonate. Table 9.1-1 outlines the different frames that failed to
resonate.

Table 9.1-1. Details about Frames that Failed to Resonate Widely.

	Diagnostic Frames		Prognostic Frames		
	FAILURE	FAILURE	FAILURE	FAILURE	FAILURE
FRAME TYPE	**Evil Thaksin**	**Thaksin System**	**Moral and Ethical Leadership**	**New Politics 2008-2011**	**Bring Thaksin Home**
Narrow Focus/Broad Focus	Very Narrow	Broad	Broad	Broad	Very Narrow
Emotional Versus Analytic	Emotional	Emotional	Analytic	Analytic	Emotional
Frame commensurate with everyday lives	Low	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
Message Source	Low Trust	Low Trust	Low Trust	Low Trust	Moderate Trust

Radical Versus Conservative Message	Radical	Radical	Radical	Radical	Conservative

The Evil Thaksin Frame was a very successful frame used by anti-Thaksin groups during the study period, and continues to be extremely effective in galvanizing the elite and middle class. However, it failed to unite the elite and middle class and more importantly failed to influence Thailand's large, working class and rural populations from the suburbs of Bangkok up through the North and Northeast. The frame ultimately failed due to several factors. First, this demographic did not view the framers as trusted sources. The frame also lacked experiential commensurability. When the people in the North and Northeast were bombarded with the frame describing how horrible Thaksin was and how he represented a grave threat to the country, they had trouble reconciling this with their experience that Thaksin empowered them and helped to improve their lives. Second, the actions of the framers were inconsistent with the frame content. For example, the framers talked of how Thaksin was a threat to democracy but the framers were part of the military which had removed an elected leader from power. Third, the Evil Thaksin Frame was also too narrow in its focus. The same narrow focus that helped the frame unite most of the elite and middle class elements made it impossible to reach groups that were apathetic towards Thaksin or viewed him positively. A broader focus may have meant a more pragmatic frame of Thaksin that perhaps gave voice to his important contributions while still emphasizing the intolerable situation that the country faced under his leadership. Finally, the frame was too radical. It was a diagnosis of a problem, not a solution to one, but the natural solution implied within the frame was that Thaksin

must be removed even if it meant a coup d'é tat, which was a radical departure from the democratic system, which enjoyed a strong commitment from the populous, including sections of the middle class and elite.

Another major Yellow Shirts/establishment frame that failed to resonate was the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame. It failed early on to garner the full support of the middle class and elite because it lacked detail regarding a viable alternative to representative democracy; because the frame message was inconsistent with the actions and performance of the interim government, which was an example of such leadership; and because the solution it offered was not aligned with the cultural stock at the time that viewed democracy as the best system. This study argued that in a later period, the frame's resonance with this group increased due to elite and middle class experiences with Thaksin's political endurance, and the rise of the Red Shirts and rural Thai voters as an important political block. More recently, although not in the specific time frame of this study, the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame has captured a much larger portion of the middle class and elite demographics than it did during the 2006-2007 period. The frame failed to resonate with the rural and urban northern and north eastern demographic, which was the majority of the country, because the framers lacked credibility; because the benefits of democracy were clear and thus the system widely supported; and because the frame's message of a new form of government did not dovetail with this demographics' perceptions of the Thaksin administration and Thaksin-aligned governments.

The New Politics Frame had trouble resonating with the middle class and elite in 2008, but has more recently resonated much more widely. It initial failure was

because it was too radical for the culture. It was inconsistent with the cultural stock at the time, which placed heavily emphasis on the importance of democracy. The COS was not conducive at the time the New Politics Frame first appeared. It was also detrimental to the position of political elites, and thus the POS was not right at the time. The frame failed completely to resonate outside of this demographic and particularly with people living or who came from the populous North or Northeast because the frame was not commensurate with the lived experiences and values of the peoples hailing from these regions, who placed a high importance on democracy. Moreover, as with the Excessive Corruption and Moral and Ethical Leadership Frames, the framers had very little credibility with this audience. More recently, the frame has garnered much more support within the elite and middle class. It has increased in resonance and the main evidence for this was the Yingluck coup, the abandonment of democratic institutions and procedures by the main opposition Democrat Party and the constitution currently being drafted by the Prayut administration, which has adopted many provisions of the New Politics proposal, including unelected prime minister, and weakening of political parties and elected politicians. The frame still has little appeal outside of the elite and middle class.

The Thaksin Come Home Frame failed to resonate because its focus was too narrow to unite the pro-Thaksin and pro-democracy/anti-coup demographic in the way that other frames, such as Return to Democracy did. Moreover, it did not offer extensive detail on how to bring Thaksin home. The framers' adoration of Thaksin was viewed as a bit excessive by some who were apathetic to Thaksin but inclined to support the anti-coup cause.

Looking at the table in Exhibit 9-1, most of the frames that failed were viewed at the time as radical, not just among those groups opposed to either movement, but also by some movement supporters. Radical in this instance refers to the frame messages and content representing a major misalignment with the cultural stock and the Cultural Opportunity Structure (COS) at the time. These factors ultimately affected frame resonance. We see that with the Moral and Ethical Leadership Frame. However, the COS later opened somewhat as the middle class and elite reacted to Thaksin's continued electoral dominance. It was during this time that the frames found more receptive audiences. However, they failed to resonate with the majority of the people.

None of the Yellow Shirt frames in this research were successful in uniting the middle class and elite demographic during the study period because not only did they present ideas that were inconsistent with the cultural stock, but their content was either too radical, narrow or vague. Beyond the middle class demographic, these Yellow Shirts frames failed to resonate with people living in the rural north and northeast or who came from those regions.

9.2 FRAME RESONANCE

Table 9.2-1 outlines the frames identified in the research that were found to have resonated widely.

Table 9.2-1. Details about Frames that Resonated.

	Diagnostic Frames			Prognostic Frame
	SUCCESS	SUCCESS	SUCCESS	SUCCESS
FRAME TYPE	**Dictatorship/MENA Dictatorship**	**Double Standard**	**Injustice**	**Return to Democracy**
Narrow Focus/Broad Focus	Broad	Broad	Somewhat Broad	Broad
Emotional Versus Analytic	Somewhat Emotional	Emotional	Emotional	Somewhat Emotional
Radical Versus Conservative Message	Conservative	Conservative	Conservative	Conservative
Frame commensurate with everyday lives	High	High	High	High
Message Source	Moderate Trust	Low/Moderate Trust	Low/Moderate Low Trust	High Trust

The Dictatorship and later MENA Dictatorship Frames resonated widely not just with pro-Thaksin and pro-democracy groups, but also crossed class lines and found receptive audiences within the middle class and elite who were apathetic or opposed

to Thaksin. The Dictatorship Frame and MENA Dictatorship Frames resonated because the messages contained in the frames was consistent with the cultural stock in Thailand in so far as there was deep support for democracy and opposition to dictatorship. The framers of the Dictatorship Frame bridged the anti-dictator movement in the post-Thaksin era with earlier anti-dictator movements that were widely supported by the middle class and sections of the elite. These frames also found receptive audiences internationally and as with the MENA Dictatorship Frame, the framers were able to align in people's minds the government in Thailand with the much more repressive Mubarak and Ben Ali regimes. The Dictatorship and MENA Dictatorship Frames also resonated due to the experiential commensurability with the everyday experiences of Thai people especially in the rural North and Northeast. The frame's ultimate success, however, came from its ability to cross class lines and find pockets of support within the middle class and elite.

The Double Standard Frame was the most successful frame of the Red Shirts movement over the period. Double standard reinforced every other major frame of the moment. It enjoyed significant experimental commensurability with rural people in the North and Northeast, and also to a limited extent crossed class regional lines, finding support within pockets of the middle class. Finally, the actions of various Yellow Shirt aligned government institutions provided more opportunities for the Double Standard Frame to resonate as numerous real-world examples existed to support the framer's claims.

The Inequality and Injustice Frames resonated because they had experiential commensurability with the experiences of Thai people, particularly the poor in the

North and Northeast. The evolution of class relations over time and regional

inequality between Bangkok and the provinces in the North and Northeast fuelled the

frame's resonance as did the abundant evidence and perception of double standard in

treatment of the Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts by royalist aligned governments.

The difference between these Red Shirt frames and the frames promoted by the

Yellow Shirts and their establishment allies was that these frames appealed across

class and geographic lines. They may have had varying success in cultivating a

middle class and elite audience, but all of the frames with a high degree of resonance

made an impact within this demographic. The same cannot be said for Yellow Shirt

frames. None of the Yellow Shirt Frames identified as part of this research study

resonated widely beyond the core demographic of mainly middle class and elite

Bangkokians and Southern Thais during the study period. And very few if any united

elite and middle class demographics, with the exception of perhaps the Evil Thaksin

Frame during the 2006-2007 period.

The Red Shirt frames described above took advantage of the POS in the form of

fractions within elite coalitions over support for democracy and undemocratic

reforms. The also fully leveraged the COS in bridging the frames of dictatorship,

double standard and return to democracy with earlier periods in Thailand's history

when the middle class rose up to challenge dictators. This memory was still fresh in

the minds of the middle class.

Each one of the frames identified as having resonated used frame content that evoked

emotion within their target audience, yet they did not advocate anything considered

radical. Their definition of the problem and solution were quite conservative

compared with the frames that were identified with failure to resonate. The Red Shirts abandoned the Thaksin Come Home Frame quite early on when they realized that this frame was failing to resonate across class and geographic lines. But they shied away from more radical frames. Thida, leader of the UDD in 2010 and 2011, a period of significant government repression, fought against the radical wing of the movement, which wanted to take a stronger stance against the royal institution and promoted a more radical socialist agenda, despite her agreement with at last some of the sentiment expressed by this small but vocal Red Shirt faction. The decision to promote mainstream frames that were fairly conservative ensured a high degree of resonance with some sections of the middle class and elite. When we look at the frames that failed we can see that most of the frames advocated a radical response that went against the mainstream opinion at the time. This was a major factor in the failure of these frames.

CHAPTER 10   POST SCRIPT: FRAMING AND THE 2013-2014 POLITICAL

CRISIS

In 2012, the Yingluck administration announced plans to amend the 2007

Constitution to grant amnesty to many politicians and activists who had been involved

in political conflict over the previous seven years.[475] The amnesty bill was a major

Yingluck administration priority and had been debated in several forms during her

time in office. Early versions of the bill only applied to civilians involved in conflict,

but the later version that was put up for vote by the Phuea Thai was a blanket amnesty

for all individuals involved in the conflict, including members of the military. The

blanket amnesty bill was opposed by the Democrat Party and many elites as they

perceived it to be intended to absolve Thaksin of his 2008 conviction for corruption, a

conviction that many Thaksin supporters believed was politically motivated. It was

also opposed by several groups within the Red Shirts, who felt that blanket amnesty

would ensure that enemies of the Red Shirts responsible for the killings at

Rachaprasong would escape punishment.[476]

When the bill passed the parliament, the majority of which were Pheua Thai Party

MPs or MPs from other parties that were aligned with Pheua Thai, the bill was

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[475] "Thai Ruling Party Shelves Amnesty Bills, Constitutional Changes." *Bloomberg*. August 11, 2012.
[476] "Groundhog days: The government's latest attempt to get Thaksin Shinawatra back has united almost everyone against it." *The Economist*. November 9, 2013.

rejected by the appointed Thai Senate. Following the rejection of the blanket amnesty bill, more than 150 Democrat Party MPs walked out of the parliament and threw their support behind former Democrat Party senior member Suthep Thaugsuban, who had set up the People's Democratic Reform Council or PDRC, the organizing forced behind the anti-amnesty street protests of the previous several weeks.[477] The PDRC was supported and had organizing linkages with numerous elite, royalist groups as well as drawing significant support from Southern Thai provinces. Suthep appointed himself as the head of a People's Council, which was going to be a second government that would bring together leaders and develop its own government and push through reforms to remove the Thaksin regime. Suthep said that the Yingluck government did not have the legitimacy to rule. PDRC protestors occupied government buildings and drew large numbers to rallies.

Following the resignation of Democrat Party MPs, Yingluck dissolved the parliament and called for fresh elections. Elections were held on February 2, 2014. The elections were a failure as the major opposition Democrat Party boycotted the election and the PDRC protested at polling stations and intimidated and harassed voters into staying away from the polls. The election process included several clashes between the PRDC, election supporters and the caretaker government.[478] The election results were invalidated by the Constitutional Court. On March 7, 2014, the Constitutional Court removed Yingluck, claiming that she had acted unconstitutionally in transferring

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[477] "Democrats heading for Govt House." *Bangkok Post.* December 9, 2013.
[478] "Thailand elections: Violent clashes in Bangkok over disputed poll." *The Independent.* February 2, 2014.

Thawil Pliensri, then National Security Council chief, who had been appointed by the Democrat-led administration in 2011. Yingluck denied any role in the transfer.[479]

Following the country's failure to hold an election, the military began to become more involved, scheduling meetings between the PDRC and the caretaker government that were said to be aimed at mediation. When these meetings were deemed to have failed, on May 22, 2014 Prayuth Chan-ocha, Commander of the Royal Thai Army, launched a coup that removed Yingluck from power. Prayuth established the National Council for peace and Order (NCPO), which, with Prayuth at its head, dissolved the Yingluck government and the 2007 constitution, enacted martial law throughout the country, and vested full legislative and executive power in the hands of the NCPO. Martial law remains across the country. There are bans on political meetings or protest rallies, and the junta has taken aggressive action against individuals who criticise their actions. Following the coup, Prayuth quickly promulgated an interim constitution and established a legislature that included mostly members of the military.[480] They unanimously selected Prayuth as the interim Prime Minister. In November of 2014 the junta appointed a committee to draft the new constitution.

As of February 2015 the constitutional drafting committee is still drafting the new constitution. The debate over specific amendments has been relatively open, and involve familiar and contentious topics such as whether or not the new constitution should allow for an unelected prime minister, whether the new parliament should

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[479] "Yingluck, 9 ministers removed from office." *Bangkok Post*. May 7, 2014.
[480] "A Coup Ordained? Thailand's Prospects for Stability." International Crisis Group. Asia Report N°263. December 3, 2014.

include a partially appointed senate, and whether and to what extent the constitution should weaken party influence.

Since anti-amnesty and anti-government protests began in 2013, the Thaksin System and New Politics Frames have again come to the forefront, garnering an even greater share of the middle class, elite and southern Thai support than they had previously in 2008. Why is this the case? The major reason reveals both structural and psychological roots. Structural changes in the north and northeast leading to a more highly educated, thriving, and politically assertive middle income population long deprived of political and social power concerned the elite establishment. The Thaksin System and New Politics Frames are at their core a response to this structural development. Elites and the middle class Thais saw in the Yingluck regime a stable, effective government that owed very little of its position to Bangkok voters, and which was siphoning power and control away from the capital to the provinces. But structure alone does not tell the full story of why these frames have resurfaced and galvanized the middle class and elite. The Thaksin System and New Politics Frames advocated a retreat of democracy, something that their framers would not have imagined just a few short years ago. Some of the Yellow Shirt and PDRC supporters had been student pro-democracy activists during the 1970s and 1990s. But the rise of a rural identity of empowerment and confidence was an enormous blow to elite privilege and self-conceptions of moral patronage of the poor. The combination of structural and identity developments among the North and Northeast citizenry, and the elite and middle class responses to it led to the New Politics and Thaksin System Frames becoming even more important in uniting class opposition during the period of 2013—2015.

Elites have drawn on their experiences over time and adjusted their attitudes and responses. In 2005 and 2006 they thought they could easily remove Thaksin from the political scene, and they underestimated the poor in the North and Northeast. Support for democracy continued to be high within the elite. In 2008 they saw that Thaksin's power was much more entrenched and the gap between elite supporters and opponents of representative politics widened. Yet there was still a belief that the status quo could be re-established and democracy maintained with the right institutional arrangement that weakened Thaksin's influence. From 2011 through 2013, a stable Yingluck government slowly eroded the power of the establishment. These experiences have led to the elite and their Democrat Party allies shifting to the right that began in 2005-2006. This rightward movement of the elite, with much of the middle class both in Bangkok and the south in tow, has been the major political development within the elite over the past ten years.

While the Thaksin System and New Politics Frames have found new life in the post-2013 coup period, these frames still face limitations in their ability to resonate. Anti-Thaksinism is probably the strongest it has ever been within the elite and middle class, and these groups are determined to prevent his return to politics, but democracy is still an important concept in Thai politics and even as the CDC debates amendments to the constitution, some elites, including the Democrat Party and independent CDC members, publically oppose undemocratic proposals. There is still a lack of elite unity behind the New Politics Frame. Furthermore, outside of the elite and Bangkok and South-based middle classes, these frames continue to have very little influence.

The Red Shirt frames of Return to Democracy and Dictatorship that had been so successful in previous periods of Red Shirt mobilization have not been on wide display in the 2014-2015 period, due to the high level of state repression of protest activities, as well as extensive media censorship.[481] With martial law still in force, the NCPO has outlawed any form of political expression, even that which is done silently and alone. Those that break the law are summoned by the military for a meeting and sometimes incarcerated for short periods. In this highly repressive period, these Red Shirt frames are barely visible in the media at the moment. But their appeal is still widespread within the county. As cracks start to form it the military and elite coalition, these frames will again come to the forefront as potent vehicles of anti-government sentiment and protest mobilization.

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[481] "Thailand Internet Censorship: Junta Defends Cybersecurity Laws, Orders Press Freedom Briefing Canceled." *International Business Times*. January 29, 2015.

Codebook

Collective Action Framing in the Red Shirts Movement

Michael Volpe

Section 1 Project Objective

The objective of this phase of my research is to identify and construct the collective action frames used by the Red Shirts movement.

Also of interest is the context around which the frames emerge and evolve over time, and how that context contributes to the frame content and frame changes. This context includes the counter-frames promoted by opposition groups.

SECTION 2 SOURCES

We will look at two newspaper sources. The first is the Bangkok Post (www.bangkokpost.com), an English-language newspaper. While some have accused the Bangkok Post of leaning towards negative coverage of the Red Shirts at times, the publication is not generally viewed as overly bias and is seen as fairer than The Nation, the other major English-language publication. The second newspaper will be a Thai language publication called Khaosod. It is seen to be more sympathetic to the Red Shirts than most publications and also has a mass distribution.

Source material will later be expanded to include movement publications, speeches, and signs.

SECTION 3 DEFINITIONS

Message. Messages as defined in this research are ways in which movements or their allies attempt to influence individuals or groups to think and behave in certain ways. They should have one of more of the following characteristics/aims:

- Influencing opinions or values.
- Promoting ideas.
- Promoting a vision.
- Promoting actions.
- Identifying problems.

- Placing blame.

Communications describing procedures, strategies, or steps do not qualify as messages as defined in this study and should not be coded.

Discourse. Discourse is defined here as <u>public discussion</u> on major issues in Thai politics and society. Typically, this discussion includes the promotion of a particular, normative view of the discourse topic.

For example, there is the discourse on the role of the military in Thai politics. One widely held (and communicated) view is that it is the protector of the Thai royal establishment and the nation, should be beyond the control of politicians, and has the right to intervene if elected leaders are not doing what is in the best interest of the nation. Another view is that the military should be controlled by the civilian leaders, be accountable to the people, and respect the constitution.

Individuals and groups use language and symbols, and make connections between different discourses and ideas, to encourage others to agree with or adopt their viewpoint on the discourse. These discourses may include, but will not necessarily be limited to the following:

- Role of the Monarchy.
- Role of the Military.
- Good governance.
- Democracy.
- Power distribution in Thai society.
- Thaksin.
- Local way of life.
- Citizenship.
- The people.

SECTION 4   CODING PROCEDURE

The coding will begin the day after the September 19, 2006 coup of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The coding date will end on July 3, 2011, election day in the most recent election when Pheua Thai reclaimed power in an undisputed nation-wide election.

Starting from September 20, select articles with the article date <u>every third day</u>. So starting on September 20, 2006, the next day in which to search for articles would be September 23 (skipping two days) and then September 26, and so on and so forth, covering the roughly five years, or 1,500 days between the two dates mentioned above.

Within the days selected, code all articles within the publication that come up when using the search terms provided below.

For search engines and archive searches use the search terms: "UDD or Red Shirts or Thaksin, or protest or coup or Thai Rak Thai or People Power Party"

Code each article in a separate coding sheet. The coding sheet is included in Annex A. Follow the numbering system included in Section 5 for categorical data and copy and paste text where directed.

Keep the full text of the each article in a separate file for later analysis.

On occasion, an article that mentions the Red Shirts may not have any Red Shirt or opposition messages in it. For these articles, log the date, newspaper and title and save both the coding template and a copy of the article in a file.

Quite frequently, the coder will copy the same text in several sections of the coding template. For example, the block of text that has the message may also include discussion of the discourse and labels used.

SECTION 5   CODING CATEGORIES

(1) Article Date (ArtDate): Document the date that the article was written/published.

   (1a) Day
   (1b) Month
   (1c) Year

(2) Newspaper (NewSor): Code the newspaper that the article was published in.

(3) Headline: Code the main headline of the article. No other bylines or sub-headlines should be coded.

(4) Message: This is the message communicated by groups or individuals. Copy and paste text directly from the article into the coding sheet. The message does not need to be a quote; it can be paraphrased by the author. The coder should not paraphrase. Please note that messages and their sources may not appear in the order set forth below.

(4a)Red Shirt/Ally Message (RedMes): Code the message of the Red Shirts or its supporters/allies. Use the procedure listed above in #4. If there is no Red Shirt/supporter message, code (-999).

(4a1) Red Shirt/Ally Message Goal (RedMesGL): Code the goal of the message by   placing it in one or more of the following categories. If the goal does not fit in any category, list what you think the goal is in (6).

   (1)   Announce something.
   (2)   Define the problem.
   (3)   Present a solution.
   (4)   Place blame.
   (5)   Encourage action.
   (6)   Label an individual or group
   (7)   Defend action
   (8)   Other. Please describe_____.
    (-999) Not applicable.

(4a2) Red Shirt/Ally Message Originator (RedAgnt): Code the individual communicating the message. The individual should be associated with the Red Shirts organization or be a clear ally. Document all individuals communicating the message. In addition to name, also put title (at the time of the communication) if provided or known. If the individual's name is not provided, code (-999).

(4a3) Red Shirt/Ally Organization (RedAgntOrg): Code the group to which the individual coded in (4a2) belongs. If the message is from more than one person and organization, code all organizations that apply.

   (1)   United Front Against Dictatorship (UDD).
   (2)   Pheua Thai Party. (*must be an official member of the Pheua Thai Party*)
   (3)   Academics.
   (4)   Ministries or other government entities.
   (5)   Non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
   (6)   Private citizen.
   (7)   None of the above. Please list the organization _____.
   (8)   Media
   (-999) Not applicable.

(4b)   Opposition Message (OppMes): Code the message of the opposition. Use the procedure listed above in #4. Code (-999) if none is provided.

(4b1) Opposition Message Goal (OppMesGL): Code the goal of the message by placing it in one or more of the following categories. If the goal does not fit in any category, list what you think the goal is in (6).

   (1)   Announce something.

(2)　　Define the problem.

(3)　　Present a solution.

(4)　　Place blame.

(5)　　Encourage action.

(6)　　Label an individual or group.

(7)　　Defend an actions

(8)　　Other. Please describe_____.

　(-999)　Not applicable.

(4b2)　Opposing Message Originator (OppAgnt): Code the individual communicating the message. The individual should be associated with the opposition or be a clear ally. Document all individuals communicating the message. In addition to name, also put title (at the time of the communication) if provided or known. If the individual's name is not provided, code (-999).

(4b3) Opposing Supporter Organization (OpAgntOrg): Code the group to which the individual coded in (4b2) belongs. If the message is from more than one person and organization, code all organizations that apply.

(1)　　The People's Alliance for Democracy or "Yellow Shirts".
(2)　　The Democrat Party.
(3)　　The Monarchy.
(4)　　The military.
(5)　　Academics.
(6)　　Non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
(7)　　Private citizen.
(8)　　Ministries or other government entities.
(9)　　Court
(10)　Media
(11)　None of the above. Please list the organization _____.
(-999) Not applicable.

(5)　　Discourse: Code discourses referenced in the article. Examples of discourses include hidden power (military or monarchy), the concept of democracy, Thaksin's role or character, poor people, wealthy elites, the constitution, the people, citizenship, voting, etc.)

(5a)　Discourse Referenced (DisRef): Code whether a discourse was referenced within messages communicated by either Red Shirt/supporters or opposition groups. Code (1) for yes and (0) for no. If marked as one, proceed to 5b. If no discourse was referenced, skip to 6a.

(5b)   Discourse Communicator Group (DisCommGrp): Code which group, Red Supporter or Opposition Supporter, referenced a particular discourse. Code (1) for Red Shirt Supporter and (2) for Opposition Supporter. Code both (1) and (2) for both groups.

(5c)   Red Shirt /Ally Discourse Type (RedDisType): Several discourses may be referenced in a single article. Mention of all discourses should be coded. If the discourse is not mentioned in the list below, it should be written out in Option 10.

      (1)   Role of the Monarchy
      (2)   Role of the Military
      (3)   Good governance
      (4)   Democracy
      (5)   Power distribution in Thai society
      (6)   Thaksin
      (7)   Local way of life
      (8)   Citizenship
      (9)   Thainess
      (10)   Justice
      (11)   Terrorism/terrorist
      (12)   Hero
      (13)   Corruption
      (14)
      (10)   Other _____
      (-999) Not applicable

(5c1)   Red Shirt/Ally Discourse Detail (RedDisDtl): provide at least one sentence from the article that includes explicit or implicit mention of the discourse.

(5d)   Opposition /Ally Discourse Type (OppDisType): Several discourses may be referenced in a single article. Mention of all discourses should be coded. If the discourse is not mentioned here, it should be listed in Option 10.

      (1)   Role of the Monarchy
      (2)   Role of the Military
      (3)   Good governance
      (4)   Democracy
      (5)   Power distribution in Thai society
      (6)   Thaksin
      (7)   Local way of life
      (8)   Citizenship
      (9) Thainess

(10)   Justice
(11)   Terrorism/terrorist
(12)   Hero
(13)   Corruption
 (10)   Other _____
(-99) Not applicable

(5d1)   Opposition/Ally Discourse Detail (OppDisDtl): Provide at least one sentence from the article that includes explicit or implicit mention of the discourse.

(6)   Reaction to the Message: This category captures the immediate reaction, if any, to the message from movement participants, regular people or organized audiences.

(6a)   Reaction to the Message (ReactMes): Cut no more than three sentences from the article for audience reaction. If more than one audience reacts to the message, document each audience's reaction. The audience could include people on the street or individuals speaking on behalf of organizations responding to the specific messages of the other side.

(7)   Labels or Categories (LabCat): What labels or categories are referenced in the article? It might be an invented label like Taksinization. It may also be the label elite or hidden power. Categories could be poor people, middle class, and rich, or those who love the monarchy and those who do not. These categories may be mentioned specifically or implied in some way. For example, a claim that the Red Shirts incited a riot, causing the death of 89 people, and threatening the Thai state implies that the Red Shirts are terrorists eventhough that word was not used.

(7a)   Labels or Categories Used (LabCat): Document labels and categories by assigning them to the list below. Many labels and categories are used by the movement and its opponents. As new labels and categories appear, expand the numbering system to incorporate the new terms. The label must be attributed to a Red Shirt/Supporter/ally or an opposition supporter/ally. If more than one label or category is used, please document all that apply.

     (1)   Thaksinization
     (2)   Ignorant poor
     (3)   Hidden power
     (4)   Elite
     (5)   Prai (slave)
     (6)   Poor
     (7)   Corruption

(8)   Good Thai citizens

(9)   TerroristsAristrocracy (ammat)

(10)   Hero

(11)   Provinces /provincial people

    (12)   Other _____

    (13)   (-99) Not applicable

    (14)   Peaceful

    (15)   Guardian

(7b)   <u>Label or Category Detail (LabCatDtl):</u> Provide at least one sentence from the article that includes explicit or implicit mention of the label or category.

(7c)   <u>Label Mention Source (LabMenSr):</u> Code the person and organization who used the label. If there is more than one labor or category referenced by more than one individual, list all individuals and the category or label they used in parentheses.

SECTION 6   CODING TERMS AND LABELS

Term	Label	Num
Article Date	ArtDate	1
Newspaper	NewSor	2
Headline	Headline	3
Red Shirt/Ally Message	(RedMes)	4a
Red Shirt/Ally Goal	(RedMesGL)	4a1
Red Supporter Message Originator	(RedAgnt)	4a2
Red Supporter Organization	(RedAgntOrg)	4a3
Opposition Message	(OppMes)	4b
Opposition Message Goal	(OppMesGL)	4b1
Opposing Message Originator	(OppAgnt)	4b2
Opposition Supporter Org	(OpAgntOrg)	4b3
Discourse Referenced	(DisRef)	5a
Discourse CommunicatorGrp	(DisCommGrp)	5b
Red Shirt/Ally Discourse Type	(RedDisType)	5c
Red Shirt/Ally Discourse Detail	(RedDisDtl)	5c1
Opposition Discourse Type	(OppDisType)	5d
Opposition Discourse Detail	(OppDisDtl)	5d1
Reaction to the Message	(ReactMes)	6a
Labels or Categories	(LabCat)	7a
Label Category Detail	(LabCatDtl)	7b
Label Mention Source	(LabMenSr)	7c

ANNEX A: CODING SHEET

(1) ArtDate	(1a) Day:	(1b) Year:	(1c) Year	

(2) NewSor	
(3) Headline	

(4a) Red Shirt/Ally Message (RedMes):

(4a1) Red Shirt/Ally Goal (RedMesGL):	Other:

(4a2) Red Supporter Orginator (RedAgnt):

(4a3) Red Supporter Organization (RedAgntOrg):	Other:

(4b) Opposition Message (OppMes):

(4b1) Opposition Message Goal (OppMesGL):	Other:

(4b2) Opposing Message Originator (OppAgnt):

(4b3) Opposition Supporter Organization (OpAgntOrg):	Other:

(5a) Discourse Referenced (DisRef):

(5b) Discourse Communicator Group (DisCommGrp):

(5c) Red Discourse Type (RedDisType):	Other:

(5c1) Red Discourse Detail (RedDisDtl):

Opposition Discourse Type (Opp DisType):	Other:

(5d1) Opposition Discourse Detail (OppDisDtl):

(6a) Reaction to the Message (ReactMes):

(6b) Reacting Audience (ReactAud):	

(7a) Labels or Categories (LabCat):	Other:

(7b) Label or Category Detail (LabCatDtl):	
(7b) Source of Label Mentioned(LabMenSr):	

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