
THE “RED SHIRT” MOVEMENT: PEASANT POLITICS IN THAILAND

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This paper explores the political history of Thailand, specifically as it relates to the peasant rebellion in the last decade. Thailand has fallen back under military rule following mass protests in Bangkok in 2013 and 2014. The current crisis has been portrayed as an unexpected political regression when, in fact, several signs from popular uprisings in the past ten years have indicated that the former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra’s regime was not as stable as it seemed. In short, the following will present a historical analysis of the political events that led to the 2014 coup with a focus on the development of the Red Shirt movement among rural populations in northern Thailand. It will also explain the economic impacts of the protests on the Thai economy, as well as the particular effect the regime had on ethnic minorities and refugee populations within Thai borders.

Thailand presents a unique case among the politics of developing countries. Not only has it historically never been colonized by Western powers, but it is also one of the fastest growing economies in the world.¹ What is even more striking is that Thailand’s rural population is better off economically and politically than peasants elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Figure-1 illustrates the rural population living under the national poverty line in Thailand as compared to similar countries in the region from 2000 to 2013. With the exception of Malaysia, Thailand has the lowest headcount ratio of rural poor and it has the most significant reduction in rural poverty in the last 15 years. Likewise, the Thai Rak Thai (“Thais Love Thais” or “Thais for Thais”) party led by Thaksin Shinawatra came to power at the turn of the millennium with a platform that supported largescale rural development programs.² Traditionally, both in industrialized and lower-income countries, the transition to democracy means a loss of power for rural populations. This is due either to the over-representation of urban elites in politics or to state interest in promoting economic growth in

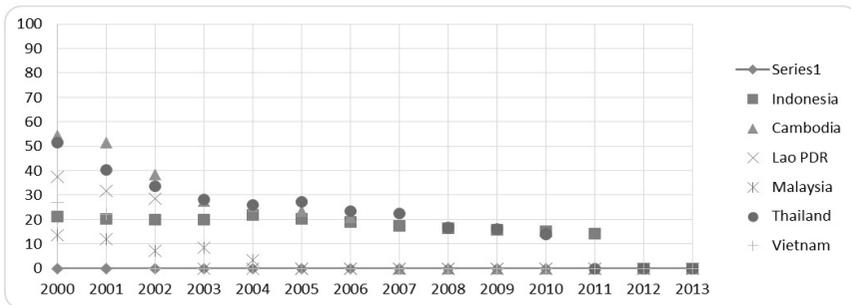
1 World Bank, “Thailand Overview,” 2017, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/thailand/overview>.

2 Duncan McCargo and Ukrist Pathmanand, *The Thaksinization of Thailand*. (Copenhagen: NIAS, 2010) 217-218.

cities based on a Western model for development.³ In post-2000 Thailand, the urban elite – located mainly in the region around the capital city of Bangkok – have found it difficult to assert dominance over the peasant population in the north of the country. In fact, the beginning of the twenty-first century saw a rise in the political power of rural peasants coupled with significant rises in income for peasant households. Figure-1 demonstrates that the percentage of rural poor dropped from 51.4 percent in 2000 to 13.9 percent in 2013. Not surprisingly, this led to ideological clashes with the urban elite who felt they were being under-represented in national politics. The uprising of the peasant class that followed from these clashes has been labeled the “Red Shirt Movement.” Protests in Bangkok in 2010 attracted international attention and in 2014 more protests forced Thailand into a state of emergency.

In this paper, I will discuss how the Red Shirt Movement emerged out of a context of rapid economic growth, rural diversification, and regime change in Thailand. I will begin by outlining Thailand’s path to democracy. Next, I will explain how rural populations came to dominate national politics under the populist leader Thaksin Shinawatra. Then, I will give a brief account of the evolution of the Red Shirt Movement from the 2010 protests to the more recent 2014 uprising. Finally, I will discuss how these protests have affected Thailand’s economic growth and minority populations.

Figure-1: Rural poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of rural population), 2000 to 2013



Source: The World Bank, "Rural poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of rural population)," <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.RUHC>.

3 Bates, Robert H. . *Markets and States in Tropical Africa the Political Basis of Agricultural Policies: Updated and Expanded with a New Preface.* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1981), 106-107. Although Bates’s study is on developing states in Africa, his theory on political marginalism applies to most developing countries. In essence, political marginalism maintains that the political voice of rural populations becomes increasingly suppressed in the process of development as agriculture becomes less important as a share of gross domestic product.

Thailand's Political History

Thailand has been a monarchy since the twelfth century and the palace still remains an important actor in national politics. Today, Thailand is bordered to the east by Laos and Cambodia, to the west by Myanmar, and to the south by Malaysia. However, these borders are highly fluid and have expanded and contracted over the last millennium.⁴ In 1932, Thailand transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy in a military coup that claimed to favor democracy. However, the elected parliament following the coup was largely a puppet government controlled by the military that aimed to suppress royal and civilian power in decision-making. Following the Second World War, the military formed an alliance with the monarchy out of necessity and awarded some broader democratic rights to citizens. For example, in 1947 political parties became legal in Thailand for the first time despite the continued military manipulation of elections.⁵ In the 1970s, inflation in Thailand made the price of staple foods including rice far too high for the average Thai household. By 1973, students and leftist activists mobilized in the streets of Bangkok and eventually overthrew the military government. Unfortunately, this civilian coup only suspended military power for three years as the army regained control in 1976. Although these protests were ultimately a failure, the 1973 protests marked the first time in modern Thailand that civilians took control of the government in an attempt to establish representative democracy.⁶

In 1992, increasing dissatisfaction with the military government led to pro-democracy demonstrations in Bangkok again. Reminiscent of the events of 1973, the Thai army violently ended these protests in what has been called "the Black May Massacre". A confirmed 52 people died and several hundred either disappeared or were severely injured. Over three thousand people were arrested and allegedly tortured by army officials.⁷ Thailand's king at the time, Bhumibol Adulyadej who passed away in late 2016,⁸ successfully ended the protests and limited the power of the military in the face of international scrutiny of the regime. Slowly, civilians gained more democratic rights as the

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- 4 James C. Scott, *The Art of not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).
- 5 Paul Chambers, "Where Agency Meets Structure: Understanding Civil-Military Relations in Contemporary Thailand," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 19, no. 3 (2011): 294, doi:10.1080/02185377.2011.628150.
- 6 Sudarat Musikawong, "Thai Democracy and the October (1973–1976) Events," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, no. 4 (December 2006): 713, doi:10.1080/14649370600983360.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 714.
- 8 Charlie Campbell, "Thailand Bids Farewell to Beloved King Bhumibol Adulyadej," *Time Magazine*, October 13, 2016, <http://time.com/4043989/thailand-king-dead-obituary-bhumibol-adulyadej/>.

military junta was broken down. In 1997 the People's Constitution of Thailand was drafted that allowed for free and fair elections and removed the direct involvement of the military in parliament.⁹ Though the monarchy has always been an important actor in Thai politics, the role of the King has been even more significant since 1992. By 1997, it seemed as if representative democracy in Thailand had finally been achieved. Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai of the Democrat Party won the 1997 election, but it was clear soon after that the Democrat Party favored the urban elite, many of whom had ties to the military.¹⁰

The Thaksin Era and the Rise of the Red Shirts

In 2001, the Thai Rak Thai party in Thailand led by populist leader Thaksin Shinawatra won the general election with large support from rural farmers in the northeastern region of the country. The Thai Rak Thai party won 55 percent of the parliamentary seats in northeastern Thailand, which accounted for 28 percent of the party's total seats in the House of Representatives.¹¹ Furthermore, Thaksin was able to capitalize on his northern roots to garner support for his party using his siblings as party representatives in the north to cement support in the region.¹² Prior to entering politics, Thaksin made a fortune as a telecommunications mogul whose primary client was the Thai government and police force. Despite making his wealth in the modern sector, Thaksin originates from the city of Chiang Mai, the capital of a province by the same name in the northwestern region of Thailand. Farmers and some ethnic minorities known as "hill-tribes" who practice subsistence farming largely populate this area and Thaksin himself comes from a family of wealthy farmers.¹³ Unlike the Democrat Party and the military, the Thai Rak Thai party won the 2001 and 2005 elections based on their interest in improving the livelihoods of peasants in the north. Some of Thaksin's most popular policies involved subsidizing small-scale farming when farmers allowed for cash crop production between four and six months of the year. He also encouraged the diversification of peasant crops giving more plots to farmers who were willing to plant more than rice on their land.¹⁴ Furthermore, Thaksin made cheap credit available in rural areas in the north and northeast allowing small-scale agriculturalists to purchase more modern farming equipment.¹⁵ The farmers

9 Chambers, "Where Agency Meets Structure," 294.

10 McGargo and Pathmanand, *Thaksinization*, 1.

11 Somchai Phatharathananunth, "The Thai Rak Thai Party and Elections in North-eastern Thailand," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 38, no. 1 (February 2008): 115, doi:10.1080/00472330701651986.

12 McGargo and Pathmanand, *Thaksinization*, 235.

13 *Ibid.*, 7.

14 Andrew Walker, *Thailand's Political Peasants: Power in the Modern Rural Economy* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 38.

15 Yoshinori Nishizaki, "Peasants and the Redshirt Movement in Thailand: Some Dissenting Voices," *The*

who benefitted from Thaksin's policies would later become the driving force behind the Red Shirt Movement.

Before discussing the Red Shirt protests, it is important to understand the economic and political situation from which modern peasant politics emerged. In the first phase of development, annual gross domestic product (GDP) in Thailand was growing at a rate of approximately seven percent annually between 1960 and 1980 due to "a 70 percent increase in the area of agricultural cultivation" fostered largely by the monarchy and who supported food production for import-substitution industrialization (ISI).¹⁶ During the second phase in the 1980s, Thailand shifted its interests from agricultural production to manufacturing and telecommunications in order to attract foreign investment making it the fastest growing economy in the world for almost a decade.¹⁷ As a result of this rapid increase in GDP, Thailand went from being among the poorest countries to being ranked among the World Bank's middle-income nations.¹⁸ But growth was by no means equal throughout the country. The urban elite benefited the most from the second phase of development, while rural farmers fell significantly behind. Urban poverty declined from 15.5 percent in 1981 to 12.1 percent in 1986; meanwhile, rural poverty increased from 43.1 percent to 56.3 proceeding the same period.¹⁹ However, with the introduction of the pro-poor policies by the Thai Rak Thai party mentioned above, peasant incomes rose dramatically. In 1960, 96 percent of the rural poor were below the poverty line.²⁰ In 2007, under 30 percent of the rural poor were below the threshold, even with better-adjusted measurements for poverty.²¹

This new class of rural dwellers is referred to as middle-income peasants as they no longer rely on their own produce for survival. This is mainly due to two recent phenomena in the rural economy. The first is that government subsidies supporting peasant farmers encouraged diversification that allowed for small-scale farms to produce crops for both personal consumption and for local and global markets. Second, new opportunities stemming from national economic growth allowed farmers to gain nonagricultural income. In 2012, only about 20 percent of rural farmers relied solely on agriculture for income.²² Some of these opportunities were gained from a new demand for goods and services

Journal of Peasant Studies 41, no. 1 (January 30, 2014): 11, doi:10.1080/03066150.2013.873409.

16 Walker, *Thailand's Political Peasants*, 37.

17 *Ibid.*

18 *Ibid.*, 36.

19 Peter Warr, "Globalization, Growth, and Poverty Reduction in Thailand," *Asean Economic Bulletin* 21, no. 1 (April 2004): 4, doi:10.1355/ae21-1a.

20 *Ibid.*, 39.

21 *Ibid.*; See Figure-1.

22 *Ibid.*, 8.

created by the rise in peasant income; others come from the rise in tourism in the northern regions of Thailand. Despite rising incomes for peasants, rural populations still experience significant relative poverty as the income of urban dwellers increases much faster.²³ During the Thaksin regime, peasants felt that they were being given the support they needed to help elevate their living standards. In fact, it has been reported that many middle-income peasants made use of credit to purchase things like televisions and cellphones, which for them was a symbol of urban modernity.²⁴

Though Thaksin was growing more and more popular among middle-income peasants, the urban middle and upper classes felt that they were being neglected by the Thai Rak Thai party. Rumors began circulating about Thaksin using his own wealth to preserve his position and about a potential plot to overthrow the King. However, it was not until 2006, shortly after his second landslide victory, that any action was taken against him. In his first term, Thaksin used a policy of appeasement in order to keep the volatile Thai military on his side. He gave prestigious government positions to retired military and granted “autonomy to soldiers in the area of internal security.”²⁵ In his second term, he reduced the armed forces budget, seemed prepared to privatize military assets such as the Royal Thai Army Radio and Television Channel 5, and increasingly sought to influence senior military promotions.²⁶

In September of 2006, the military staged a coup against the Thai Rak Thai party, claiming that they were protecting the King’s authority. With support from urban activists, known as the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) or “Yellow Shirts,” the military took control of the government following former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra’s forced exile.²⁷ In late 2007, the military allowed elections to take place in which the Democrat Party won with heavy support from the army and monarchy. The peasantry who had benefited much from Thaksin’s policies felt that the reemergence of the military in politics meant the end of state assistance in the countryside. In response, an organization called the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), popularly known as the “Red Shirts,” started garnering support in the north and northeastern regions of Thailand. Red Shirt protests started in late 2008 when thousands of peasants occupied important government buildings and the international airport in Bangkok.²⁸ These protests continued sporadically and hit a peak

23 Ibid.

24 Nishizaki, “Peasants and the Redshirt Movement,” 11.

25 Chambers, “Where Agency Meets Structure,” 298.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid. Yellow is the colour of the long-reigning King Bhumibol Adulyadej. It is used by the PAD to show their support for the monarch against the populist leadership of Thaksin Shinawatra (Nishizaki, “Peasants and the Redshirt Movement in Thailand,” 2).

28 Ibid., 299.

from April 10 to May 19, 2010 when the city of Bangkok was entirely shut down due to clashes between Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts. When the protests had finally ended, 91 people had died and over two thousand were injured.²⁹

The Reemergence of the Red Shirts

Following the events in the spring of 2010, many Thais, including the Red Shirts, hoped that nothing of the sort would happen again. But in November 2013, protests started in Bangkok.³⁰ Though the political situation was similar to what it had been in 2006, the UDD was better organized and more committed to a fully fleshed out idea of what it meant to be a Red Shirt. The rural, pro-Thaksin support base remained strong in the country and in 2011 the Pheu Thai Party won the general election under Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, Thaksin's sister.³¹ Initially, Yingluck was able to balance power between rural and urban voters, maintaining her strong support in the north while keeping Bangkok and the military in check. This quickly changed in late 2013 when the Pheu Thai Party proposed to offer amnesty to Thaksin who had been in exile since the 2006 coup. This proposition was met with mass mobilization from the Yellow Shirts in Bangkok starting on November 24, 2013.³² In January 2014, Prime Minister Yingluck called a state of emergency in the country as well as a general election to take place on February 2, 2014.³³ Despite anti-government protests at several polling stations across the country, the Red Shirts remained strong and the Pheu Thai Party won a majority again.³⁴ However, the Constitutional Court ruled in mid-March 2014 that "the election was unconstitutional because voting failed to take place on the same day around the country."³⁵ As a result, Prime Minister Yingluck was not only leading an interim government with reduced power until new elections took place, but was also subject to an anti-corruption commission initiated by the Constitutional Court.³⁶ Furthermore, anti-government protests, drive-by shootings, and random bombings continued sporadically across the country.³⁷

29 Ibid., 300.

30 Jonathan Head, "Thailand's 'Red Villages' Eye Bangkok Protests," *BBC News*, December 19, 2013, accessed September 21, 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-25426248>.

31 Nishizaki, "Peasants and the Redshirt Movement," 1.

32 "Thailand Protests: Anti-government March in Bangkok," *BBC News*, March 29, 2014, accessed September 21, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26798407>.

33 Ibid.

34 Head, "Thailand's 'Red Villages'."

35 Amy Sawitta Lefevre, "Thailand in Limbo After Election Annulled; Economy Suffering," *Reuters*, March 21, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-protest/thailand-in-limbo-after-election-annulled-economy-suffering-idUSBREA2K05520140321>.

36 Ibid.

37 Head, "Thailand's 'Red Villages.'"

Though the Red Shirts were not the driving force behind the 2014 demonstrations in Bangkok, they had an active role to play in upholding the Yingluck government. So how did the Red Shirt movement in 2014 compare to the violent and disruptive Red Shirt movement of 2010? When the UDD was founded in 2006, it was a large, disorganized group of disgruntled peasants across a vast area in Thailand's north. In later protests, the Red Shirt movement adopted a historical narrative that organized them based on a communal past. The Red Shirts established a shared history that is rooted in the pre-democratic Kingdom of Siam. Traditionally, there were two classes in Siam: the *amat* that was the aristocracy aligned with the palace and the *phrai* or the serf class that served this elite group. In the 2014 demonstrations, rural peasants wore shirts labeling them *phrai* as a symbol of continued urban-rural inequality.³⁸ The movement evolved from disorganized rebellion to a call for class struggle against Bangkok.³⁹ As a result, the Red Shirts largely remained off the streets despite several attacks on UDD activists.⁴⁰ Instead, the Red Shirts used a historical narrative of oppression and an emphasis on class struggle to keep constituent participation high.⁴¹

The Consequences of the Movement

The outcome of the 2014 protests was a military coup that has seen Thailand under army control for the last three years.⁴² Furthermore, the coup has had adverse effects on Thailand's economy and foreign investment. Thailand is the second largest economy in Southeast Asia and has generally been able to recover quickly from global recessions and national unrest.⁴³ However, the 2013 protests started in a context of slowing exports and local demand for goods in Thailand that already threatened the usually prosperous economy.⁴⁴ GDP growth rates from December 2013 to February 2014 were at only 0.6 percent compared to 2.7 percent at the same time last year.⁴⁵ The Bank of Thailand cut interest rates and predicted that growth would only decline further

38 Jim Taylor, "Remembrance and Tragedy: Understanding Thailand's "Red Shirt" Social Movement," *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 27, no. 1 (April 2012): 128, doi:10.1355/sj27-1d.

39 Nishizaki, "Peasants and the Redshirt Movement," 3.

40 Head, "Thailand's 'Red Villages.'"

41 Taylor, "Remembrance and Tragedy," 123.

42 Janjira Sombatpoonsiri, "The 2014 Military Coup in Thailand: Implications for Political Conflicts and Resolution," *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 5, no. 1 (2017): 139-140, doi:210.101.116.15.

43 Sawitta Lefevre, "Thailand in Limbo."

44 Lucy Williamson, "Thailand Protests: Economic Impact Explained," *BBC News*, November 21, 2013, accessed on September 21, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-25132556>.

45 Timothy McDonald, "Thailand Protest May Cast Cloud Over Economic Growth," *BBC News*, February 17, 2014, video, <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/business-26221371/thailand-protests-may-cast-cloud-over-economic-growth>.

as the protests continued.⁴⁶ Most importantly, investor confidence declined significantly after the protests began and military rule was enforced. Thailand's economy depends largely on private foreign investment both internationally and regionally. When the state of emergency was declared, Thailand experienced capital flight, especially from large Japanese corporations. There was a reported withdrawal of US\$3.7 billion worth in assets by foreign investors in the month of November 2014 alone.⁴⁷ Tourism has become an important part of Thailand's economy and has been growing rapidly since the 1990s, but tourism revenue declined nearly 15 percent in the months immediately following the state of emergency.⁴⁸ Fortunately, growth rates have since increased and are hovering around 3 percent annually; however, it can be expected that economic growth, local business, and tourism revenue will continue to be unpredictable until democratic rule is restored.⁴⁹

Marginalized Populations and the Red Shirt Movement

The Red Shirt movement draws its support from the north and northeastern regions where most of Thailand's ethnic minorities and refugee populations are located.⁵⁰ The extent to which these marginal populations are included in politics is dependent on how willing they are to be part of the Thai state and how assimilated they are in the dominant Thai culture. Consequently, there are three ways in which these groups can be addressed in policy making. Some may benefit directly because they have assimilated into Thai culture. Others will benefit indirectly from Thaksin's policies and any rise in income for minorities is a result of general improvement in regional income. Finally, some will remain excluded entirely from the rights and benefits awarded to rural populations under Thaksin and pro-Thaksin parties. This is usually the case for refugee populations, such as the Shan from Myanmar located in the northwestern borderlands, and for hill-tribes whose traditional lifestyles attract Western tourists.⁵¹

On Thaksin's first day as Prime Minister, he met with Thailand's Assembly of the Poor (AOP), an organization that has been arguing for environmental rights,

46 Sawitta Lefevre, "Thailand in limbo."

47 Nathan Vanderklippe, "Protests threaten to derail economic powerhouse Thailand," *The Globe and Mail*, January 10, 2014, accessed on September 20 <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/protests-threaten-to-derail-economic-powerhouse-thailand/article16287967/?page=all>.

48 Ibid.

49 "Thailand Overview," World Bank.

50 Paul Francis, "Where There Is Thunder There Should Be Rain," *Mountain Research and Development* 24, no. 2 (May 2004): 119, doi:10.1659/0276-4741(2004)024[0119:wtitts]2.0.co;2.

51 Kayoko Ishii, "The impact of ethnic tourism on hill tribes in Thailand," *Annals of Tourism Research* 39, no. 1 (January 2012): 292, doi:10.1016/j.annals.2011.05.004.

land rights, and the preservation of rural livelihoods since the 1970s.⁵² The AOP had acted as the main voice for northern Thai farmers prior to the Thaksin era and provided policy suggestions, many of which the Thai Rak Thai party implemented between 2001 and 2006.⁵³ The AOP firmly supports indigenous rights to land in rural areas and, as a result, many of Thaksin's policies included minorities and noticeably improved their livelihoods. However, interviews with local people suggest that the benefits from these policies were not equally distributed and many of the improvements in income were due to trickle-down effects of growth in the area.⁵⁴ This is especially true for the Lahu and Hmong farmers whose plots of land are much smaller than those of Thai farmers.⁵⁵

In recent years, Western tourists have become attracted to the traditional lifestyles of ethnic minorities in several Southeast Asian countries. The phenomenon has been called cultural or ethnic tourism defined as "the search for authentic encounters with other ethnicities."⁵⁶ The Thai government has capitalized on this new demand for authentic experiences by popularizing tours of hill-tribe villages located at the heart of Thaksin's support base in the province of Chiang Mai. Though tourism in these regions has improved the incomes of ethnic minorities, it has also kept villages largely underdeveloped in order to maintain authenticity.⁵⁷ As a result, these villages that arguably require the most investment in infrastructure are excluded from policies that improve agricultural production and rural livelihoods. Other times, ethnic minorities choose not to accept government help in order to remain detached from the state. Furthermore, many of them, including the large Akha and Lahu populations in the north, do not hold Thai citizenship.⁵⁸ Several regions in Chiang Mai now have large refugee populations and the numbers are only growing.⁵⁹ These minorities, namely the Shan people, do not benefit at all from pro-poor policies because they do not hold citizenship rights. In fact, Thaksin and pro-Thaksin parties have often persecuted them for trafficking illicit drugs, mainly opium, from Burma into northern Thailand.⁶⁰ The Shan have also been excluded from Assembly of the Poor efforts because they do not hold indigenous rights to land.

Conclusion

52 McGargo and Pathmanand, *Thaksinization*, 1.

53 Rungrawee Chalermripinyorat, "Politics of Representation," *Critical Asian Studies* 36, no. 4 (2004): 543, doi:10.1080/1467271042000273239.

54 Nishizaki, "Peasants and the Redshirt Movement," 12-13.

55 Ibid.

56 Van der Berghe in Ishii, "Ethnic Tourism," 291.

57 Ibid., 291-292.

58 Nishizaki, "Peasants and the redshirt movement," 16.

59 Ibid., 8.

60 Ibid., 11.

The rural-urban conflict in Thailand is ongoing and the polarizing nature of political parties in the country only exacerbates the issue. The Pheu Thai Party and other pro-Thaksin institutions cannot hope to function under a policy of improving rural livelihoods at the expense of urban representation in government. Similarly, the Red Shirt movement has proven that the Democrat Party cannot continue to overlook the relative inequality between the northern and southern regions of Thailand. With increasing civilian dissatisfaction and declining economic growth, the country is faced with limited possibilities. As we have seen from Thailand's past, military government is not sustainable. More broadly, the urban-rural divide in Thailand has overshadowed the marginalization of ethnic minorities and refugee populations in the north, whose voices have been overpowered by the UDD both regionally and nationally. The hope for Thailand is that the adverse effects and international attention drawn by popular protest and military authoritarian rule will encourage the government to work in harmony with the many voices of the poor and rich, the rural and urban, the minority and majority, in order to bring political stability and resume its status as a model for development.