

Party System in Thailand: Era of *Thai Rak Thai* and Insurgency in Southern Thailand

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Abstract

Thai political system has evolved from the early 20th century at a very gradual pace owing to the dominance of other political factors such as monarchy and military rule. This steady development impacted the process of political reformation in the country. However, in the late 1990s a new wave emerged in the socio-political sphere of Thailand giving birth to large political parties. *Thai Rak Thai* was one such party with a mass appeal through populist agendas; under the leadership of Thaksin. It changed the course of politics in the country for the coming decades. On the other hand, violence escalated in 2004 in southern provinces of the country and prolonged insurgency again emerged as a threat to the security of the country and a challenge to the newly formed Thaksin government. This article analyzes the evolution and development of the party system in Thailand with special focus on Thai Rak Thai. It investigates the influence of the populist party rule over the prolonged insurgency in the southern region of the country. Author argues that owing to the vulnerabilities of the party system in the country even the elected government failed to provide democratic solution to the insurgency in South.

Keywords: Insurgency, Thai Rak Thai, Party System, Southern Thailand

Introduction

Thailand has constitutional monarchy since 1932 with the position of Monarch as Head of the State. Country also has a bicameral National Assembly with a Prime Minister as the Head of the government. National Assembly gains its powers from the constitution of the country. However, owing to the different coups under military leadership country had witnessed several constitutions. These coups paved way for military governments to rule for many years, consequently civilian governments were weakened. In such circumstances political parties which are required to mobilize common people for the participation in government could not evolve. And politics in the country for long was considered to be an elite affair. For long the single party that existed was the Democrat Party, however, in the late 1980s few other parties also emerged. The next decade further pushed the democratic process and Thai Rak Thai emerged as the largest party. Meanwhile, the southern region of the country was suffering from the decades old insurgency, that affects mainly the provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and southern regions of Songkhla. Historical roots of the insurgency can be traced back to the early 20th century with the annexation of this region by Siam kingdom under the Anglo Siam treaty of 1909. In 1932 Thailand for the first time experienced constitutional democracy; however, change in political system could not pacify the growing insecurities in the South. And the problem intensified further when after the Second World War, the Thai government adopted integrationist policies under the rule of Marshal Phibun Songkhram and Marshal Sarit Thanarat. The liberal approach initiated by Prem Tinsulalonda (Prime Minister 1980-88) was further strengthened in the decade of 1990s. Under the government of Democrat Party in the decade of 1990s insurgency saw a period of calmness. This party ruled through coalition governments giving chance to provincial leaders from the south to participate in the government, soon the party became quite popular in the south. Thus, and comparatively number of violent activities declined. With late 2001 violence emerged with a renewed intensity in the South and violence reached new heights. It was also the period when Thaksin, leader of Thai Rak Thai was elected Prime Minister and the party changed the course of politics for the coming years.

This article tries to explore these two parallel developments in the country and investigates to what extent the rule of Thai Rak Thai influenced the insurgency in south. To understand this, the article is divided into two parts. First we shall analyze the evolution of party system in the backdrop of civil military relations in the country and emergence of Thai

Rak Thai. Secondly we shall look into the responses of Thaksin government or the rule of Thai Rak Thai towards insurgency that whether the party that mobilized masses into national politics, could provide democratic solution grievances in south.

1. Party System in the Country

Political parties, indispensable for democracy are very significant as through parties' various social groups are vested in the political process. Initial development of political parties in Thailand had been hindered by the interference of military led coups. For instance, in the post Second World War political parties emerged in the country but the coup of 1947 stopped the process. Later a common pattern could be observed where parties could evolve in the short periods of active parliamentary phases but the frequent coups and followed military rule banned the parties; in the period of Field Marshal Sarit and Prapat political parties were banned until 1969. Only organized party that existed before the 1970s was the Democrat party. However, in the decade of 1980s several political parties flourished and played a limited central role in politics. In this period as well, the parliament was characterized by the small political parties till 1988 owing to the interference of military in parliament that left less space for larger parties (Ufen 2008). The real growth of parties started with the beginning of democratization process in 1992 and onwards, nonetheless institutionalization of the parties could not happen. Okey (2003) in his study pointed out four weaknesses of political parties in Thailand; first dependency on the factions and individual candidates to establish electoral network at ground; secondly, absence of lucid policies for rural areas, thirdly; presence of quota system for coalition and fourth; patronage from above, the higher authorities. In such system hardly any political party could have a large consolidated social base. With the implementation of 1997 constitution, several provisions pushed the process of reforms, addressing the crucial issues of the party system such as corruption, vote buying and party switching. It empowered the election monitoring process and counter corruption institutions. During this time increasing size of political parties was observed; such as the emerging largest party, Thai Rak Thai that was almost double in size to the second largest party earlier. However, the size could not solve rest of the downsides of the system. Patronage and vote buying continued in different forms¹. The less institutionalized² political

¹ Rather than vote buying, prior to the start of election campaigning a trend of gifting was observed at many places with the help of election through *hua khanaen* (Okey 2003).

parties are more vulnerable to electoral volatility and political crisis (Maywaring 2005); this impact can be seen in Thai political system where civilian governments are often replaced by military rule. To understand the vulnerability of the party system, it is imperative to understand the civil military relations in the country.

1.1 Civil Military Relations

A weak political system is more vulnerable to the interference of military. Fragility of Thai political system or democracy is evidently visible in the recurring military coups. Samuel Huntington in his book 'Soldier and the State' posits that subservience of the military to the civilian government is a prerequisite for a professional military and is essential to preserve the democracy from external threats. It explains the objective control of the civilian leaders on military through the determination of policy guidelines. However, this normative belief does not reflect the complex civil military relations as delineation of military and socio-political spheres is not clear always. Sridharan (2011) explores the factors that determine the extent of influence that military exercises in a nation. These factors include nature of political system; nature of military itself and the geo political objectives of the country. These factors can help in understanding the role of military in Thai politics.

Thailand has faced twelve successful coups all led by military. The prolonged power struggle in the country had given time to time scope to military to intervene. Political struggle, dominating the political space in contemporary Thai politics has developed parallelly to the process of democratization that deepened the rift between the royal elite establishment and the newly growing political community. In the political system of Thailand, King is positioned as head of the state and Prime Minister along with his cabinet works as executive whereas judiciary and parliament provide check and balance for it. In this system King is considered above politics and military is insulated under the patronage of royal monarch and Privy Council (Chambers 2015). After the abolition of absolute monarchy for some decades military and monarchy were apart, they started sharing power and became ally after the coup of 1957 when Sarit Thanarat came to power (Chambers, 2015). Hence, the royal establishment was strengthened.

²Samual Hutington defines the institutionalization as a process that provides value and stability to any political organization or the procedure. His method to analyze the levels of institutionalization focuses on four parameters; adaptability, coherence, complexity and autonomy (Hutington 1968). While Maywaring (2005) focuses on rootedness in society, ideological base and relations between voters and party candidates which are more personalistic.

The establishment included upper middle class, urban individuals, neo royalist and the royal monarch, who now also enjoyed the loyalty of military and judiciary. Continuity of the hegemonic domination of monarch was result of charismatic personality of the king; submissive governments and widespread respect and love for the monarch by the general public (Tamada 2019). On the other hand, increasing political consciousness in the people can be seen in the backdrop of socio-economic transformation of the country during late 1980s and further found increased political space through the constitution of 1997, mobilized under the leadership of Thaksin. This intensified political struggle between network monarchy and network of Thaksin supporters resulted in further intervention of military in civilian government. Consequently, in 2006 after a long dormant period of fifteen years military interfered and toppled the elected government of TRT with the justification of subsidizing the social divisions and establishing peace and order through reform process. Thus, it can be said that absence of strong political parties and prominent role of monarchy in the country gave scope to military intervention in politics and the cycle continued further as this interference weakened the process of political reformation in the country.

1.2 Rise of Thai Rak Thai (TRT)

The rise of TRT was a significant episode in the Thai politics, it was looked as a benchmark in the political sphere of the country. From the prior formed parties, TRT was formed on a different approach which McCargo and Pathmanand (2005) described as a complex party with dual structure. In Bangkok, it worked like 'electoral professional party' where with the help of a group of professional political organizers like media and other marketing or advertising experts, the core small leadership established direct contacts with the voters whereas a network party in the countryside rural areas. Lacking any ideological basis and in that case, without any baggage of having ideological boundaries, TRT was capable in providing pragmatic solutions to all existing problems like unemployment.

The party had the leverage of ongoing political and economic changes of the late 1990s. Along with the new constitution of 1997, existing economic circumstances favoured Thaksin in gaining power. During 1997 when the Asian financial crisis occurred, Thailand's bubble economy also burst. This gave a huge impetus to the 'Thai Rak Thai' party to grow as its agenda promised faster economic recovery (Hicken 2006). The 1997 crisis had created enormous discontent among urban labourers, farmers and migrant workers who often bore the burden of unemployment and falling real incomes. However, according to McCargo

(2006), it was both the financial crisis as well as the constitution of 1997 that helped in the rise of TRT under the leadership of Thaksin. The constitution of 1997³ paved the way for many institutional reforms by addressing several shortcomings in the political and economic sectors; the crucial one properly addressed in the constitution was the weak political parties in the country (Hicken 2006). Political parties which were large in numbers, were usually very unstable, representing small regions and were conveniently formed and dissolved. Many changes in the election patterns⁴ and party-switching⁵ were introduced under the new constitution (Thanomsakchai 2018). The most significant modification was weakening the powers of conservative forces by changing the nature of the senate from an appointed body to an elected body. New reforms ensured more powers for Prime Minister as well, by giving him the right to dissolve the legislative assembly and call for new elections, making the post less vulnerable to party factionalism (Hicken 2006). Consequently, large parties outreaching many constituencies, flourished in the country and TRT was one such party with a populist agenda.

Under the post-crisis economic circumstances, populist agendas of the TRT Party attracted people from various social strata. For this purpose, internal sufficiency program was initiated where economic support of microcredit funds of one million Baht was given to every village (Montesano 2002). Besides this, the populist policies included universal health insurance and three years of debt moratorium for farmers (SIPRI report 2007). The Thaksin government promoted “strategic industries,” and focused on mainly five sectors: food, fashion, automobile, tourism, and computer graphics (Ockey 2003). Public health policies were also made reachable by providing at affordable prices.⁶ These populist agendas and promised pro-poor reforms certainly helped in gaining the support of the rural population, especially in the North and Northeast regions of the country. Convincing nature of the policies also worked in the backdrop of financial crisis as local elites were unable to provide financial assistance for the rural projects (Ockey 2003). Displaced urban population owing to the economic crisis were also attracted by the promises of TRT (Ganeshan 2004). Besides

³The constitution of 1997 held an important position in Thai politics. It was formed by an assembly whose members were elected through direct elections, making it a constitution with huge public participation. It covered issues such as human rights, decentralization and strong judiciary (SIPRI 2007).

⁴ Multi seat constituencies were now made single seated constituencies impacting the existence of many small parties incohesively active in different areas (Hicken 2006).

⁵ Party switching which was quite common in Thailand before these reforms was now restricted with new rules which required any person to be a member of any party for at least 90 days prior to elections (Hicken 2006).

⁶Under the health care facilities each person was supposed to pay only 30 baht at government funded hospitals. This scheme became very popular among all the classes mainly lower class (Funston 2002).

these populist policies, this party used old ways of buying the votes and candidates by spending money (McCargo 2006, Phatarathananuth 2008). Under the above noted political, social and economic circumstances, Thaksin Shinawatra emerged victorious in the elections of 2001 with full mandate and assumed the position of Prime minister.

2. Thaksin Government and Insurgency in South

The resurgence of insurgency in Yala, Patani and Narthiwat of Southern Thailand in 2004 had links with the changing political order at the national level. For the last two decades, relative peaceful power relations were established in the south under the leadership of Prem Tinsulalonda (prime minister of Thailand from 1980 to 1988 and president of Privy Council) and later by governments of the democrat party. Thaksin tried taking the region in his own influence abolishing the monopoly of democrat party; for that, he tried to change the established administrative, political and security set up (McCargo 2006). There were certain administrative steps and policy decisions that the government took in the name of securing the region that negatively affected the people in the South.

2.1 War on Drugs

In 2003 with the aim of eradicating the social ill of drugs from the country, the Thaksin government started “war on drugs”. The drug problem⁷ in the country was to be tackled on area basis while focusing on three strategies altogether; suppression, rehabilitation, and prevention⁸. A timeframe of three months was decided to abolish this social evil; however, these ninety days turned into a time of Police terror. Many incentives were given to the officers for their work which was, according to seize of drugs. Owing to this reward system and immense powers given to the police (shoot to kill), incidents of human rights violations were on the basis of mere suspicion and people were detained and killed. Around twenty people who were earlier insurgents and were working as informants for the military were all assassinated with the allegations of drug dealing (McDermott 2013). These Southern Provinces were identified as the important smuggling route. Therefore, they were highly affected by these anti-drug operations. Besides war on drugs that created an

⁷ Commonly consumed drug in the country during the time was methamphetamines which was locally known as ‘ya ba’.

⁸ Prevention here was to focus on the sports related incentives, competitions and other creative activities that can engage youth in a healthy lifestyle; for this purpose, budget was provided by the central government.

environment of terror in the region, many administrative changes too worsened the situations.

2.2 Administrative Actions: SBPAC

It was the decade of the 1990s when Thailand witnessed the more powerful role of the monarchy; many called it the extra-constitutional role of monarchy or network monarchy. During this time many coalition governments came into existence and in order to stabilize them monarchy usually intervened through bureaucratic and military appointments. It was Prem Tinsulalonda, (earlier Prime minister 1980-88 and president of Privy Council (1998 to 2019) resident of Songkhla province, who managed to establish a relative peace in the south by establishing his own networks and enhancing vivid support for both individual and community levels. Thaksin wanted to get rid of this intervention and started appointing his own relatives and associates at higher important positions in institutions. Thaksin replaced the network monarchy with political economic network based on “business arrangements and inside connections” (McCargo 2006).

Earlier, in the institutional spaces such as the Southern Border Province Administration Center (SBPAC), many locals were appointed. SBPAC was one of the appreciative institutions that were established during the time of Prem Tinsulanonda⁹ especially in Yala, Narathiwat and Patani provinces (Harish and Liow 2007). Its purpose was to deal with the problems of the Southern provinces by involving the local people. To the people of these areas, a direct platform was provided where they could present their problems. The deputy interior minister was to be its director, along with some local members on the board. Most of the staff in SBPAC were locals from these provinces only. Non-Malay staff was given language and communication training. Being responsible for the successful implementation of policies of the government in these areas the institution worked as an authority who would listen to the grievances about corruption including other matters and if the allegations were found correct, related officials were transferred within 24 hours. Therefore, SBPAC was working as a link between government and people. At the community level, several development projects were funded that boosted the trust among southerners. An important feature of this organization was the Justice Maintenance Centre (*Soon Damrong*

⁹SBPAC was established in 1981 by Prem Tinsulalonda. Its purpose was to increase the communication between government and Malay Muslims (Liow and Harish 2007).

Tham), a complaint mechanism where people could register their complaints regarding government or security officials, which were assigned to concerned agencies for further investigation (ICG 2008). All these efforts strengthened government's hold over the region as it got the right information about the separatists due to the increased trust by the local people in government officials and policies. These policies decreased the number of violent incidences for almost two decades (McCargo 2006).

For Thaksin, this institution was the main centre of Privy Council's or network monarchy's hold over the region. As a result, in 2002, he abolished SBPAC and CPM¹⁰ through Prime Ministerial order, saying that the low-key insurgency that prevailed in the region in the decade of 1970s and 80s had ended and the violent activities are done by mere bandits (Hariraksapitak 2007). This decision was criticized not only among central politicians but by common people as well. This major administrative change was soon realized to be improved and as a result in 2004 a new agency was created named as South Border Provinces Peace Building Command (SBPPC) to replace the earlier one. However, with the same status and functioning as of SBPAC, this agency could not get success as it lacked direct contact with the Muslim population at the grass root level.

2.3 Security Measures

The crucial step taken by the Thaksin government was shifting the responsibility of the region from military commanders to the police. The military was considered as being involved in the border smuggling and many a time alleged to promote violent incidents to prove their own presence in the region (McCargo 2006). Although the military was constitutionally assigned with the security, under martial law, Thaksin himself got involved to supervise the tasks of Police that enhanced its position as the more responsible authority. In such a scenario, Thaksin tried to centralize whole powers in his own hands by using executive orders of transfers as punishment for police officials in case of short failure. This dramatic game of transfer was played with military commanders, deputy Prime Ministers, senior police officers, and interior ministers as well (McCargo 2006). This pattern of accumulating power was destructive for the South as none of the security officials could get sufficient time to understand and control the situation. Consequently, the government lost its intelligence network at ground level.

¹⁰CPM an agency to accelerate inter-agency cooperation between police and army was once successful as the conflict between the two had impeded the conflict resolution process.

At the ground level to control the administration and government aid, a survey of 1580 villages was conducted and on its basis, all villages were divided into three categories; red, yellow and green zone. Villages which were less susceptible to violence and unrest were kept under the yellow zone, and green zone included peaceful villages¹¹. Red Zone villages were the ones having higher incidents of violence and were denied any sort of government assistance. This categorization was to put pressure on those who had sympathy with the insurgents, but it fired back as people were pushed to seek other alternatives, sometimes from militants itself.

These changes in administration and security system escalated violence indirectly in the South, but Thaksin government always considered the problem of the Southern provinces as a very normal one which could be handled with simple measures of law and judiciary (Chalk 2008). This misperception from the government side led to many administrative changes such as abolishing SBPAC and the Civilian-Military-Police Taskforce 43 (CMP-43). It broke the direct linkage, the process of decentralization and participation in these areas. It had been a successful counterinsurgency tool since the 1980s. Both also these helped in maintaining the relation between security and intelligence authorities (Liow and Pathan 2010). Dismantling these institutions proved to be very destructive for the region. The government abolished them, but could not provide any effective alternative in place of these two. Southern Border Provinces Peace Building Command was made by Thaksin in 2004 but it was highly politicized and could not work effectively (HRW 2007).

2.4 Martial Law: Incidents of *Kru ze Mosque* and *Tak Bai*

In response to the intensified situation in 2004, rather than finding a long-term solution through peace dialogues, the government adopted a military security approach. Martial law was declared in many districts of the three Southern provinces Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala, which transferred all powers in the hands of regional army commander. The heavy-handed military approach of the government came with many atrocities. Albritton (2005) says that for many Muslims in the South, the government itself became an instrument of horror. One of the examples of atrocity by security officials was the incident of the Krueze Mosque (28 April 2004). On the 56th anniversary of the Dusun Nyor

¹¹ In 2014, naming of these zones was changed to give a more positive identity to the area. Red, Yellow and green zones were changed as Security Promotion Villages, Villages with accelerated development and development promotion villages (Nanuam 2014).

rebellion¹², a series of violent attacks took place around Patani. Many militants, more than hundred simultaneously, attacked 11 police stations and check posts; seven in Yala, three in Pattani and one in Songkhla province (Chaiwat 2007). Later, next day in this religious sanctuary of Pattani district around 32 militants took refuge in the mosque. In response without the concern of religious, sentimental aspects of the mosque, the military entered into it (McCargo 2007). All militants were killed with grenades after a standoff of around eight hours. This military action inside the mosque hurt the sentiments of the people in the South. Investigation of the incident was demanded by many academicians and human rights activists. In response, one independent commission was appointed; it reported that the disproportionate security force was used in the mosque (Albritton 2004). Militants were very lightly armed, commission mentioned that militants with machetes and only one gun were tackled with heavy machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. According to the investigation commission “the tactic of laying siege to the mosque, surrounding it with security forces, in tandem with the use of negotiation with the assailants, could have ultimately led to their surrender.” (HRW 2006)

Another incident was of Tak Bai that took place on 25 Oct. 2004. It is a town in Narathiwat where people gathered around one police station protesting against the arrest of six local people under the martial law. These persons who were part of “civilian defense unit” formed by the government itself to protect their village, were accused of providing their weapons and other help to the militants who attacked in the region (Biel et al 2006). Among these protestors who came there to protest, many of them were not even aware of the reason, some were asked by friends, some were told there will be some lecture on Islam and some in hopes of seeing Thaksin and some were only curious passersby (Srisompob and Panyasak 2007). To disperse the crowd water cannon, tear gas and later shooting was used, seven people died on the spot in open gunfire by security forces. Rest of the 1300 protestors were all arrested; stripped down and lied on the ground (Biel et al 2006). After that, they were made to crawl on their bellies to be staked in the army trucks in layers that carried them to the Inkayut military camp, Pattani. When all the trucks reached and were unloaded, a total of 78 people had died out of suffocation. Later, those who survived were freed except for 58 people

¹²Continued inspiration for the resistance against the state, Dusun Nyor Rebellion took place in Dusun Nyor village in Narathiwat province when in April 1948 Malay Muslim farmers held fights against the Thai Police and army for being attacked to held a public gathering to perform traditional ritual. In this fight 30 police men and many Malay Muslims died and many fled to Malaysia, making it the fiercest fight of Malay Muslims against state officials. Dusun Nyor Monument in shape of a bullet is still there in the provincial police station of Narathiwat with the names of police officers who died in the fight (Chaiwat 2007).

who were charged for destroying state property (Biel et al 2006). This incident that occurred in the month of Ramadan, outraged people all over the region. Later on, due to the pressures and protests, a fact-finding commission was set up for investigating the incident. Committee condemned the methods to disperse the crowd and the commanding officers for failing into their duty to supervise the transportation of the protestors in custody¹³. The committee found the commander of the fifth infantry division was responsible for both incidents. However, instead of justice, the commander of the operation was promoted (Storey 2007).

2.5 National Reconciliation Commission

In March 2005 the government of Thailand took one more initiative, it formed an independent commission to report on the situation in the provinces of the South. It was named as National Reconciliation Commission (NRC). In the elections of 2005, TRT facing a major setback had lost all seats in the south, additionally, there was enormous pressure from the Privy Council that led Thaksin to agree for establishing an independent commission to bring back normalcy in the southern region (McCargo 2007). In 2004 few members of NRC strongly spoke about the southern tensions. And the commission came up with many radical proposals to solve the violence at different levels; agency levels, structural and cultural levels. At the agency level report suggested to form an “unarmed peace unit (Shanti Sena)” and to have a dialogue with militants. It stated that though structural gaps in law enforcement and judicial processes exist in other parts of Thailand as well, due to the historical, cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious distinctiveness of the South it creates a severe impact on the public (NRC: Report of the NRC 2006). In brief, this report maintained that southern violence is a political problem that needed to be solved politically.

Meanwhile, when NRC was busy preparing its report, the government issued an emergency decree without the consultation or knowledge of NRC, which transferred the emergency powers to the Prime minister. Powers to impose a curfew, and emergency anywhere in the state were given to Thaksin. In the south, the decree worsened the situation giving more powers to security officials. Under martial law, police or military could hold suspects for seven days only, but this decree extended these to 30 days. According to the Crisis Group report (2008), “the security officials used ‘Seven+ 30’ formula where they

keep the accused without trial for seven days under martial law and 30 days under the emergency decree¹⁴". It also provided immunity to government officials from the law who kill suspects while performing their duties. This decree was opposed by many opposition parties, academicians, human rights members, and the National Reconciliation Council as well but the government insisted on the necessity of such a decree to combat the problem in the south. Thaksin himself denied saying that "it is not a license to kill (as it was perceived among the southern provinces) it was a tool to fight with the separatist ideology and prolonged violence". In these circumstances report of NRC was presented raising hopes among public, but by the time this report was presented to the government, Thaksin himself was facing a political crisis. Hence, the report could not get much attention and was kept in a cold bag.

Conclusion

National Reconciliation Commission was the only political initiative taken by the Thaksin government, otherwise all other measures were heavily dependent on the military and the police. Instead of considering the political nature of the problem, state used martial law and emergency decrees as the tools to control the situation. This heavy-handed military response fomented suspicion and distrust between military and local population (Harish and Liow 2007). The thing behind all these heavy-handed tactics was that the state never recognized the problem as a political one. Srisompomb and McCargo (2010) argue that manipulations were given by the state to validate tougher security measures in the area. It kept on blaming the criminal gangs for the violence. The roots of the problem were never addressed by the state. Though once money was used to cure the problems, but the red zone districts were highly criticized as it strengthened the feeling of alienation in the public. All the repressive measures taken by the Thaksin government created an environment of the fear and insecurity among Malay Muslims. Army and police were considered as those who prosecute not the one who protects.

It can be said that TRT mobilized the common people to be a part of active politics but the mobilization based on populist policies rarely worked in south. Thaksin government was more involved in replacing the presence of network monarchy, in such process the existing administrative and security paradigm was changed. To validate the changes heavy

¹⁴ During these 37 days they were denied access to lawyers and not allowed to meet the family members also (ICG 2005).

handed measures were adopted to suppress all sort of resistance. Understanding the political nature of the problem which was prerequisite to bring democratic solutions, was never accepted. All the calculations fired back when in the elections of 2005 though made the government of majority TRT lost its support in south. Soon after, Thaksin was ousted by a bloodless military coup. Thaksin was on personal as well as an official tour that included addressing the General Assembly meeting in the United Nations when the military took control of the nation. Military chief General Sonthi Boonyaratglin announced martial law all over the country before forming the interim government and revoked the existing constitution promising the public to bring the civilian government rule soon. Since then none of the elected governments could finish their term, either military intervened or the decisions by judiciary forced the removal process of the governments. The weak civilian governments based on vulnerable political parties led to political instability that further hampers the required long-term strategy to solve the insurgency in South.

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