

*The Parallel Society in Thailand (2001-2014)*

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**Abstract**

The article on the parallel society in Thailand during 2001-2014 is developed from the field research by the authors when the contestation between two rival protest movements still existed. The research focused on the hostility between two major political factions; the conservative middle class based yellow shirts and the rural mass based red shirts. The main task of the research is to find out the factors that tore apart Thai society since the rise of Thaksin government in 2001 until the latest coup de tat in 2014. Hence, the authors employed the qualitative interview and the non-participant observation techniques as tools to collect data from the fields in Chiang Mai and Bangkok. The main objective of the article is to explain the rationale behind the enmity between two different Thai protest movements. The authors founded that the hostility between two major Thai protest movements was a result of their different views on Thai constitutional monarchy system, the different political ideology, the different preferable economic approach and the different views on the reconciliation process. The political ideology of the yellow shirts seemed to lean on the conservatism. Meanwhile, the political ideology of the red shirts seemed to be more liberal but quite radical. Both political factions also defined the term 'democracy' in different way. The research findings are useful for the understanding of contemporary contentious politics in Thailand during 2001-2014.

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## **Introduction**

The article on the parallel society in Thailand during 2001-2014 is developed from the field research by the authors when the contestation between two rival protest movements still existed. The research focused on the hostility between two major political factions; the conservative middle class based yellow shirts and the rural mass based red shirts. The main task of the research is to find out the factors that tore apart Thai society since the rise of Thaksin Shinawatra government in 2001 until the latest coup de tat in 2014. Hence, the authors employed the qualitative interviewing to collect data from the protester's communities in Chiang Mai and Bangkok. Therefore, the main objective of the article is to explain the rationale behind the enmity between two different Thai protest movements.

From the data gathering works in 2013, the authors founded that the hostility between two major Thai protest movements, the red shirts and yellow shirts, was a result of their different views on Thai constitutional monarchy system, the different political ideology and the different preferable economic approach. The political ideology of the yellow shirts seemed to lean on the conservatism. Meanwhile, the political ideology of the red shirts seemed to be more liberal but quite radical than the yellow shirts.

Beyond that, both political factions also defined the term 'democracy' in different way. The military's coup can be legitimized for the yellow shirts if the operation aims to preserve 'nation, religion and the King'. In contrast, the red shirts strongly believed that the bringing back of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra is the revival of genuine democracy. In the meantime, the protesters from both movements decided to join the political protest activities because of various political and economic factors/motivations. For instance, the red shirts supported radical changes in political and social structure but the yellow shirts preferred to maintain 'semi-democracy' political order. The authors believe that this article is useful for the understanding of contemporary political conflicts so-called the colour-coded politics in Thailand during 2001-2014.

## **The sources of parallel society**

### **The Different Views on Thai Constitutional Monarchy System**

The difference between the two main protest groups in Thailand emerges in every aspect of the political life of Thai citizens, beginning with the political points of view on the Thai monarchy. As mentioned by Tanet, the red shirt movement tends to push Thailand to become a genuine constitutional monarchy in the same way as the modern British monarchy. The yellow shirt movement and allies show a tendency to maintain the so-called 'neo-absolute monarchy' at the peak of the Thai political pyramid. Tanet hinted that this political phenomenon has developed continuously since 1947, when Thailand was ruled by the notorious military dictator, Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat. Therefore, until today, Thailand is still a 'semi-democratic' state. All state affairs are controlled by the nobility within a bureaucratic system. The core of modern Thai bureaucratic polity is King Bhumipol himself<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Charoenmuang, T. Interviewed by: Jotikut, R. (5 April 2013).

Tanet also indicated that there will be two scenarios concerning the issue of the succession of the throne and the future of Thai politics.

The first one, if the throne succeeds to the Crown Princess, the Neo Absolute Monarchy will go on without interruption and tends to be stronger than ever. This possibility is supported by the Thai conservative political elites and the yellow shirt movement. In contrast, if the throne succeeds to the Crown Prince as usual, Thailand will be able to acquire a genuine Constitutional Monarchy system. The same system as United Kingdom. The yellow shirt movement and alliances totally fear this kind of scenario and are afraid that the Kingdom of Thailand will gradually be transformed into a republic by the red shirt movement and Thaksin regime.<sup>2</sup>

The scheme for the succession to the Crown Prince as hinted by Tanet coincides with Andrew Walker's opinion, which held that this will be good for Thai democracy (Walker, 2010). Walker believed that a Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn will become a weaker king when compared with his charismatic father. Therefore, the future king will not be able to gain an influential position at the heart of the Kingdom in the same way as his father. This symbolical weakness will "open up spaces in Thai political life where alternative forms of political authority can be asserted" (2010).

The discussion of Thai monarchy in Thailand has been prohibited under the *lèse-majesté* law. Anyone who publicly insults the king and his royal family must be jailed. Some Thai academics and protest movement leaders, especially the red shirt movement, had to flee from the country to avoid the punishment. However, during the past five years, higher educated red shirt protesters have been trying to conduct private political discussion groups in various areas around the country. Because some red shirt leaders used to be members of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) during the cold war era in 1970-1980's, the anti-monarchy and republicanism sentiment have transferred to the red shirt protesters in the present day. In the meantime, some radical red shirt scholars have been trying to call for change in the *lèse-majesté* law. They believe that the law is used by the state authority to suppress political dissidents. As pointed out by Somsak, the prominent critic of Thai monarchy, the law must be scraped and Thai society should be allowed to discuss freely about the monarchy in the same way as any other constitutional monarchy country, such as the United Kingdom and Australia. Somsak believed that the open discussion about the monarchy as a political institution should be good for Thai politics when the throne succession practically occurs in the near future<sup>3</sup>.

On the other hand, the yellow shirts and their allies still believe that the king is the 'centre of national security, as constantly indicated by the conservative Thai political

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<sup>2</sup> Charoenmuang, T. Interviewed by: Jotikut, R. (5 April 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Jeamteerasakul, S. Interviewed by: Trisuriyadhamma, P. Tob Jote. (12 March 2013) 9.45PM Thai

elites. As reiterated by Vasisit, the prominent king's advocate and one of the influential anti-Thaksin regime leaders<sup>4</sup>:

The Thai King is the core of national security because the King is the father of all Thai people. Insulting the King and the royal family is the same criminal crime against the state. Nowadays, an abuse of the monarchy during political conflicts is always caused by the intention of the anti-monarchy person or group (implying as Thaksin and his ally) not by the decline of admiration by the Thai people. The objective of this person or group is to dissolve the Thai constitutional monarchy and transform Thailand to a republic state.

Therefore, in the author's opinion, the different ideas about the trend toward the monarchy is one of the prominent factors that divide two Thai protest movements. The red shirts seem to push hard for the British-style constitutional monarchy system in which the king cannot conduct any kind of political intervention. Beyond this, the radical red shirt scholars seem to be republicans, who have dedicated their life to delegitimize the existence of the royal dynasty in Thailand. On the other hand, the yellow shirts and the anti-Thaksin campaigners strongly prefer to reserve the Thai-style constitutional monarchy in which the king can use his "magic power" to step in whenever his people ask for it. These kinds of different sentiment look like creating hostility between the two protest factions.

### **The Different Political Ideologies**

The different political ideologies also form one of the most important factors that divides the two Thai protest movements. Both sides define the meaning of democracy in different ways. As hinted at by Pinkaew(2010), the red shirt protesters believe that they are the protectors of democracy. During the 2006 coup, the military junta toppled former Prime Minister Thaksin and his elected government. Therefore, their call to bring Thaksin back is a call for democracy. Pinkaew reiterated that for red shirt protesters, Thaksin is democracy and they think that they are a kind of "new citizen with more liberal mind"<sup>5</sup>. In Pinkaew's opinion, the core identity of the red shirt protester is people who favour justice, democracy and truth.

Generally, the red shirt protesters are sensitive to national politics: for instance, the protection of the Phue Thai government from the coup by the army, or the call for justice for victims of the military crackdown. However, they are not so active in local political issues such as the call for the election of provincial governors. As analysed by Tanet, because most of the red shirt protesters gained direct experience from the national demonstrations rather than local political campaigns, most local political topics are still not of interest to most red shirt protesters<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Dejkunjom, V. Interviewed by: Trisuriyadhamma, P. Tob Jote. (13 March 2013) 9.45PM Thai PBS.

<sup>5</sup> Luangaramsri, P. (2012) Chiang Mai Villagers's Democratic Experience. Presented at the Faculty of Social Science, Chiang Mai University. Chiang Mai.

<sup>6</sup> Charoenmuang, T. Interviewed by: Jotikut, R. (5 April 2013).

The abundance of democratic sentiment in rural Thailand was caused by the 1997 Thai constitution, which opened up more political space in Thai society. The constitution that was abolished by the coup leaders in 2006 brought direct experience of democracy to rural Thai people. Meanwhile, the electoral culture among the countryside people was also changed. Thai voters chose their representatives from the party's policies rather than any connection or personal favour toward the local politician as before. Besides, the rural people gained more chances to access economic capital from the Thai Rak Thai party's economic policies. All the factors mentioned above are the origins of the political awareness of Thai people in rural areas. Nevertheless, the 2006 coup has destroyed all of those factors and brought Thai politics back under the control of a "royalist autocracy" (WashingtonPost, 2008). Most red shirt movement scholars also believe that Thaksin's policies have transformed the passive rural people of the past to become more active citizens today.

On the other hand, since the yellow shirt movement's members are from the urban middle class and most of them are royalists or ultra-nationalists (BBC, 2012), their ideology leans towards political conservatism. Their ultimate political goal is to maintain the status quo of the traditional Thai-style constitutional monarchy in which the king can use his reserve power to end political stalemates. Meanwhile, the immediate task for the yellow shirts and anti-Thaksin groups is to destroy the Thaksin regime. The yellow shirt protesters saw Thaksin and his allies as corrupt politicians who came to power by vote-buying and use their crony capitalism to rampage the country (Kane, 2010). For them, the Thaksin regime is also a threat to the Chakri Dynasty throne.

The yellow shirt protest leaders and their allies strongly believe that the Thaksin regime does not rely solely on Thaksin himself but has been evolving into a vicious systematic mechanism that deceived the less educated rural Thai people to support them. As contended by Suriyasai, the coordinator of The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) movement<sup>7</sup>:

The Thaksin regime not only tries to mislead the rural farmers or urban labourers, but also the emerging Thai middle class is defrauded by this regime with sham populist policies. Nowadays, if you can notice, even those with a doctoral degree also allow Thaksin and his regime to conduct corruption if the practice can bring some benefit to the country and themselves. This situation is really dangerous since we are now giving a green light to the corrupt politicians under the Thaksin regime to rape the country and rampage the national resources for their own benefits.

After the general election in 2011 in which the Pheu Thai party won, most local red shirt groups seemed to separate themselves from their central organization and have been trying to conduct their own political campaigns. Most red shirts in the rural areas were unsatisfied with their radical leaders and the transparency problem in their

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<sup>7</sup> Katasila, S. (2013) Presented at the Thai Spring Forum 6. Bangkok.

central organization<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless, the red shirt movement seem to be more united in their establishment and ideology when compared with the yellow shirts.

Because the yellow shirts form a diverse grouping of elite conservative movements (Kane, 2010), their establishment seems to be more fragmented than the red shirts. Each group has their own political agenda but they share only one enemy, the Thaksin regime. The royalist and traditional elites would like to protect the monarchy from the threat of the Thaksin regime. The ultra-nationalists regard the Thaksin regime as traitors and that they should be punished with treason charges. The urban middle class (especially in Bangkok), most business entrepreneurs, NGOs and mass media see the Thaksin regime as an abuser of democracy, human rights and national resources<sup>9</sup>.

All political factions under the anti-Thaksin regime umbrella share the same traditional sentiment and seem to oppose free trade economic policy. The yellow shirt protesters believe that free trade is used by Thaksin regime's members to "trade the country" for their own benefit<sup>10</sup>. They saw the Thaksin regime as a parliamentary dictatorship that rises to power through the democratic electoral system. Hence, some of them were unsatisfied with the representative democracy but prefer undemocratic means to install the government, such as a Prime Minister selected by the king. In some cases, the yellow shirts seem to be pleased with a Prime Minister appointed by the military junta: for instance, General (ret.) Surayud Chulanont, the former army chief who was appointed as interim Prime Minister after the 2006 coup<sup>11</sup>.

During the 2010 political turmoil in Thailand, the red shirt and yellow shirt movements were totally divided over the discourse of class struggle between 'serf' and 'noble'. In every political campaign during that time, most red shirt leaders tried to persuade their followers to believe in this conflict. The red shirts regarded themselves as serfs, or "Prai" in the Thai language, who were oppressed by the traditional elites and their alliances or "Ammat". As indicated by Jatuporn, a notorious United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD)'s leader<sup>12</sup>:

Thailand is a "dual political system" country. One system is a genuine popular participant democracy. The other is the bureaucratic polity system or "Amatayatipatai". The Ammat or traditional nobles and technocrats always use their undemocratic capability and privilege to steal political power from ordinary Thai people. The Ammat also prefers to use the monarchy as a tool to crush political opponents as well.

The discourse on Ammat-Prai class struggle was welcomed by the red shirt protesters. The movement successfully applied this gimmick as their political campaign against

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<sup>8</sup> Red shirt protester Interviewed by: Jotikut, R. (April 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Thai reporter Online Interviewed by: Jotikut, R. (May 2013)

<sup>10</sup> Yellow shirt protester Interviewed by: Jotikut, R. (April 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Yellow shirt protester Interviewed by: Jotikut, R. (April 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Prompan J. Interviewed by: Trisuriyadhamma, P. Tob Jote. (5 May 2012) 9.45PM Thai PBS.

the Prachatipat government and the unfair jurisdictional power performed by the courts before the general election in 2011. The protesters strongly considered themselves as Prai, who were repeatedly harassed by Ammat. The overthrow of elected Thaksin government in 2006 was enacted by the Ammat's political network to take back political and economic powers from the grassroots people. In the meantime, the Ammat deliberately used their unconstitutional power to stall Thai political development by destroying the people-based political parties and promoting the elite-based parties instead<sup>13</sup>.

However, for the traditional Thai elite and urban middle class especially in the capital city, there was a different story. For them, the Thaksin regime came from so-called 'big money politics' or the power- and profit-sharing between big business persons and dominant bureaucracy (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2002). During the revision of the Thaksin regime by Kaewsan, a former senator, academic lecturer and prominent coordinator of the anti-government Thai Spring Forum, he stated that<sup>14</sup>:

This vicious regime of Thaksin have been using their big money to buy political power, build a network, create the mass propaganda, cultivate the populism, set up a power base in every aspect of Thai bureaucracy. The objective of the Thaksin regime is to establish a formidable political power, try to obtain maximum economic benefit from public policies and the worst case scenario, to tear down the traditional Thai political establishment and reconstruct the country according to the fugitive Thaksin's vision.

In the yellow shirts and anti-Thaksin protesters' world view, the Thaksin regime is a "clear and present danger" for the nation, their religion and their beloved monarchy. They strongly believed that<sup>15</sup>:

The Thaksin regime plans to build their own mass of supporters to compete with our almighty King. Thaksin himself is a sick person who has a fancy for ruling Thailand as a sole head of state. Meanwhile, the red shirts are the uneducated rural people who were deceived by the regime's elites. The obvious example of this claim is the event during the political turmoil in 2010, when the red shirt leaders could easily escape from the crackdown but left some protesters to die for them on the streets of Bangkok. Therefore, it is our obligation, not only of the yellow shirts but also all Thai patriots, to liberate the red shirt people from the brain-watched Thaksin cult..

Therefore, the anti-Thaksin regime tactic is to broadcast a live academic forum via social networks along with street demonstrations. The aim of this kind of forum is to remind group members of the danger of the Thaksin regime as well as to educate the red shirt people. Apart from that, the forum's coordinators also wish to awake the "silent power" of the urban middle class, who still do not want to join the movements openly. From the author's personal observation, the protest activities by the yellow

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<sup>13</sup> Red shirt protester Interviewed by: Jotikut, R. (April 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Atibhoti K. (2013) Presented at the Thai Spring Forum 2. Bangkok.

<sup>15</sup> Yellow shirt protester Interviewed by: Jotikut, R. (April 2013).

shirts and anti-Thaksin groups regularly take place during the weekend since most of the movement's members are salaried white-collar workers in the cities.

One of the interesting points from the yellow shirts and of the anti-Thaksin group members' point of view is that they still regard the red shirts and the rural people as the uneducated population living under the influence of a "patron-client system". Under this system, the democratization in the countryside of Thailand can be distorted. Rather than the ideal participant democracy, the political development among rural Thai people then moved towards guided democracy and anarchic politics (Luangaramsri, 2010). Since 2001, the TRT had centralized the local patron-client systems into the patronage of the party rather than individual politicians as before. The populism that Thaksin and his regime cultivated among the rural population was the key to their successful mobilization of draconian support from the red shirts.

In the meantime, the negative attitude of the Thai traditional elite and urban middle class toward the rural population seems to have existed long before the contemporary conflict between the two different protest movements. Traditional elite and urban middle class fear that the majority of the rural people could be easily exploited by corrupt politicians or rural organized groups of criminals. The appearance of Thaksin and the TRT phenomenon was the visible reality of their political nightmare. Therefore, from the author's standpoint, the prominent factor that divided two protest movements in Thailand was the different mode of political ideologies: the clash of conservatism, royalism, and a nationalist mindset with liberalism under populist guidance.

### **The Different Preferable Economic Approaches**

The different preferable economic policies also represent an important factor that tore apart the two Thai protest movements. As mentioned earlier, the red shirts are the solid supporters of Thaksin's populist set of economic policies since 2001. The policies were known as "Thaksinomics" and targeted the rural poor, the majority of the Thai population (Aeusrivongse, 2001). This unique economic policy by the Thaksin regime aimed to empower the poor people of Thailand's countryside. During the Thai Rak Thai government administration (2001-2006), the rural people benefited from Thaksin's set of economic policies: for instance, the One Tambon One Product (OTOP) programme that encouraged rural small and medium-size enterprises. From this programme, the rural merchants could transform their home-made goods into more valuable exported products.

The ultimate goal of the Thaksinomics scheme was to combine the best parts of capitalism and socialism. Thaksin had applied capitalism to the 'upper economy' to boost GDP. In the meantime, socialism was put into action in the 'lower economy' to improve the living standards of people at the grassroots level (Pasuk & Baker, 2009). Two years after winning the landslide election, Thaksin also initiated the 'war on poverty' that was targeted to solve two of the most important complaints made by the poor about the shortage of agricultural property and large indebtedness (2009). Most red shirts in the rural areas of Thailand seem to have been pleased with Thaksinomics since the policies enabled them to earn more income and improve their living standards. Nevertheless, the protest performed by yellow shirts and the military coup in 2006 has destroyed these schemes and brought the rural people back to hardship.



The red shirts strongly believed that the military junta brought Thailand back to the dark ages of authoritarianism when the flow of economic benefit was controlled by the traditional Thai elites in Bangkok<sup>16</sup>. As also claimed by Pinkaew, a majority of the red shirts are rural people and most of them were able to elevate their social and economic status from the lower class to the middle class during Thaksin's rule. Thus, the 2006 coup demolished their economic opportunities and their chance to access national resources<sup>17</sup>.

The red shirt protesters considered that the yellow shirt demonstrations and the overthrow of the Thaksin government in 2006 were the circumstances that harmed national investment and reduced the number of foreign travellers to Thailand. Moreover, those phenomena have destroyed their emerging businesses, which had benefited the Thaksinomics policy. Most red shirt entrepreneurs suffered from the closure of the Thai international airports in 2008 by the PAD. They blamed the yellow shirts and traditional elites for their loss of economic benefits after the 2006 coup. Thus, they decided to join the UDD movement to recall their rightful benefits from the Thaksin regime's economic policies<sup>18</sup>.

On the opposite side, the yellow shirts and anti-Thaksin protesters viewed Thaksinomics as a combination of populist and economic policies. Thaksin and his comrades simply employed this economic programme to acquire political power from the rural crowds. As agreed by Kaewsan and Kwansruang, the objective of the populist economic policies of the Thaksin regime was only to gain the public vote in every general election. The populist regime was motivated by human greed, deluded people and converted Thai citizens into a kind of passive subject. On the national scale, Thaksinomics activated the bubble economy in the same way as happened in Greece and Argentina<sup>19</sup>.

Likewise, as presented by well-known Thai economists on an anti-government academic forum, Thaksin's populism and Thaksinomics were the same thing. Chawin said during his lecture to the online-based Thai Spring Forum<sup>20</sup>:

Thaksinomics had been passed from the TRT Government to the Pheu Thai government under Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. The Pheu Thai government had retrieved the future national budget to spend in the present time. This situation would inevitably lead to an increase of public debt: for instance, the government's rice price guarantee programme degraded Thai rice

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<sup>16</sup> Former red shirt entrepreneur. Interviewed by: Jotikut, R. (June 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Luangaramsri, P. (2012) Chiang Mai Villagers's Democratic Experience. Presented at the Faculty of Social Science, Chiang Mai University. Chiang Mai.

<sup>18</sup> Former red shirt entrepreneur. Interviewed by: Jotikut, R. (June 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Atibhoti K. and Atibhoti K. (2013) Presented at the Thai Spring Forum 3. Bangkok.

<sup>20</sup> Leenabanjong C. (2013) Presented at the Thai Spring Forum 3. Bangkok.

and brought in a 130,000 million Thai baht (approximately £2,600 million) loss. Thai people had been paralyzed by Thaksinomics since it is just an illusion. In reality, all Thaksin's economic schemes, such as the village fund, the women empowerment fund or the credit card for farmers programme, increased money but had not reduced poverty. Besides, Thaksinomics has never preserved national capital but hoped to gain money that flows from abroad. As a result, Thailand will never be able to become a developed country under Thaksin's economic development scheme.

From the author's point of view, the red shirts and anti-Thaksin coalition groups favour economic policies in different ways because they are the 'winners' and 'losers' from the set of economic policies under Thaksinomics scheme. Since 2001, it seems Thaksin desired to strengthen the grassroots economy as a long term approach to stimulate national wealth and competitiveness (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2002). Therefore, most of the economic benefit spilled into the countryside through many populist projects. Even though Thaksin also targeted the middle class with the scheme, especially the mass of small business persons, but the urban middle class still saw Thaksin as a provincial businessman who tended to please the rural voters for his own political agenda.

## **Conclusion**

From the three-month qualitative field research in Thailand, the authors found that the political contestation between the red shirts and yellow shirts in Thailand during 2001–2014 was caused by four main reasons: 1) the different views on the Thai constitutional monarchy system; 2) the different political ideologies and 3) the different preferable economic approach. In the yellow shirt's worldview, the Thai constitutional monarchy system should be maintained as the "Thai-styled" model in which the king stays 'above' politics but not 'out' of politics. In another word, the Thai king could use 'magic power' (Chongkittavorn, 2011) to intervene in Thai politics, generally through the Privy Council or the military establishment. On the other hand, the red shirts preferred to push for reformation of Thai constitutional monarchy system. They would like to see the Thai monarchy system convert into a British-style model. The King's Privy Council should also be dissolved or have limited power and role.

One of the most important reasons that triggered the hostility between the red shirts and yellow shirts was their different political ideologies. The middle-class based yellow shirt movement seemed to be more conservative than the rural red shirts. The political ideology of the yellow shirts also leaned toward royalism. Some Thai and international critics went far beyond that by accusing the yellow shirts of being fascist (Kane, 2010). The conservative and royalist sentiment was contributed from the yellow shirt elites and distributed to their masses through satellite TV and social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Meanwhile, the red shirts seemed to be more liberal but also more radical than the yellow shirts. The radicalization of the red shirts was processed through their self-proclaimed red shirts village, the UDD political school sessions and the red shirt local radio stations.

Both sides also defined the term 'democracy' in different ways. The red shirts believed that the government at every level should be elected by the people through a

free and fair electoral process. Therefore, they strongly resisted every kind of intervention in government affairs by unelected political institutions. On the other hand, the yellow shirts believed that the government and the Members of Parliament can be installed without election as long as they are 'good' enough to handle state affairs. Intervention by unelected government agencies or even a military coup can be legitimized as long as the action is intended to remove corrupt political leaders.

The different preferable economic approaches between the red shirts and yellow shirts was also the reason that divided the two Thai political protest movements. The red shirts gained most benefit from the so-called 'Thaksinomics' during Thaksin's rule (2001–2006). Therefore, their main mission after the 2006 coup d'état was to bring Thaksin and his set of economic policies back through the UDD protest movement. In contrast, the yellow shirts felt uncomfortable with Thaksin's rural-centric economic development projects. They saw the schemes as corruption-prone economic agendas. Thus, the yellow shirts preferred to enjoy the economic policies that were controlled by the technocrats inside the bureaucratic system rather than the elected leader.

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