Contextualizing the Pattaya Summit Debacle: Four April Days, Four Thai Pathologies[1]

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The abrupt collapse of the ASEAN Plus Three and East Asian Summits at Pattaya on 11 April 2009 initiated four days of extreme political tension in Thailand. This tension both epitomized the current "red"-"yellow" polarization in Thai politics and society and represented the surface manifestation of deep pathologies in the Thai body politic. Four of these pathologies are the structure of the post-1997 economy, the figure of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the continuing war in the far south and concerns surrounding the end of the current reign. These pathologies leave Thailand in an incipient revolutionary situation, albeit one that must be clearly distinguished from the "revolution" that Thaksin tried to precipitate through street violence in April 2009. The seriousness of Thailand's pathologies notwithstanding, comparative perspectives offer the hope of peaceful progress towards the emergence of a new, more egalitarian Thailand.

Key words: Pattaya ASEAN Plus Three and East Asian Summits, Thaksin Shinawatra, post-1997 Thai economy, Thai monarchy, devolution, *monthon* system, Thailand, Republic of Korea.

"A Great Calamity" in Progress?

Glossing the consequences of the invasions that swept over Europe during the second half of the first millennium, the French medievalist Marc Bloch noted: "Just as the progress of a disease shows a doctor

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the secret life of a body, so to the historian the progress of a great calamity yields valuable information about the nature of the society so stricken."[2]

Next to the bands of hardened Vikings and Magyars of which Bloch wrote, the crowd of some 3,000 red-shirted supporters of Thailand's United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship who succeeded, under the leadership of a pop-singing heart-throb turned politician, in bringing to an abrupt end the ASEAN Plus Three and East Asian Summits in the Thai tourist town of Pattaya during the second week of April 2009 had scant ability to cause a "great calamity" on their own.[3] However, this invasion did provoke, first, immediate suspension of the joint summits and, second, the move of elements of the Thai military, in force, into central Bangkok two days later to quell urban unrest provoked by red-shirts and to end their protest at Government House.[4] But even these latter events represented only symptoms of a Thai disease now long in progress.

During the months leading up to the events of the four days of 11–14 April, and despite the apparent belief of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva to the contrary, few observers of the Thai body politic believed that it was on the path back to good health. Abhisit had come to power the previous December following the sustained occupation of Government House by the yellow-shirted supporters of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and their much briefer invasion of Suvarnabhumi Airport. Designed to force the government of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's brother-in-law Somchai Wongsawat from office, the PAD's demonstrations during late 2008 highlighted several disturbing political trends.[5]

First, Thai society appeared to suffer extreme polarization. While this polarization long predated the final months of 2008, it contrasted with the optimism of just over a decade earlier, when the country adopted an ambitious reformist constitution.[6] Winning the first elections held under the 1997 Constitution in early 2001 and the subsequent 2005 elections, Thaksin succeeded in undermining its most important provisions. Marrying authoritarian tendencies to a raft of policies to benefit Thailand's less affluent, he found himself confronted by mounting calls for his removal from late 2005 and ousted by *coup d'état* in September 2006. The willingness of Thailand's most recent junta to hand power back to a Thaksinite government under the leadership of Samak Sundaravej following elections in December 2007 in no way reflected a healing of the divisions that had appeared during Thaksin's 2001–06 premiership.

September 2008 saw Somchai replace Samak, but it brought no let-up in anti-Thaksin pressures or activities.

Second, the country lacked both institutions with strength and leaders with stature. It presented a marked contrast to the Thailand that seemed emergent during the late 1980s, through most of the 1990s, and indeed until the time of Thaksin's first government. Those decades witnessed the apparent institutionalization of a parliamentary order. If a slowly changing cast of venal political opportunists dominated this order, at least they competed with one another and chose elections and parliament as the sites of that competition.

Third and fourth, the PAD's campaign underlined the propensity for outbreaks of real violence in Thai politics, while the inability of the governments of both Samak and Somchai to bring those demonstrations to an end made clear the Thai military's continued feeling of entitlement to act according to its own prerogatives in the political arena.[7]

The decision on 2 December 2008 by Thailand's Constitutional Court to disband the three most important parties in Prime Minister Somchai's coalition brought the result for which the PAD had campaigned.[8] Abhisit assumed the premiership as at the very least nominal leader of a coalition government apparently brokered by Suthep Thaugsuban, secretary-general of Abhisit's own Democrat Party; Sanan Kachornprasart, advisor to the Chart Thai Pattana Party and one of the shrewdest tacticians in Thai money politics; and Thai Army commander General Anupong Phaochinda. This coalition scored an important coup by inducing the infamous long-time Thaksinite Newin Chidchob and the slate of members of parliament (MPs) loyal to him to join it.[9]

The design of the Abhisit government was elegant and sound. Democrats took the premiership, the foreign and finance ministries, and several other portfolios. They left other ministries, by and large, to creatures of Thailand's well developed political spoils system, with little regard for competence or policy priorities.[10] Suthep and Sanan became deputy prime ministers, well positioned to conduct coalition maintenance and other trouble-shooting. In a pinch, Anupong could serve as a back-stop. By-elections held in early January to replace MPs who had served as executives of the recently disbanded parties demonstrated the effectiveness of this formula. Boosted not least by the strong performance of one of its spoils-hungry parties, the coalition did well.[11]

While it was possible to imagine those latter parties' growing too strong and confident and, at the urging of interests who

remained behind the scenes, deciding that they could do without the Democrats, Abhisit was serious about staying in power. He appeared to view his path to the premiership as entirely legitimate, notwithstanding the roles played by airport occupiers, helpful Constitutional Court justices and the Army commander in preparing that path for him. Realizing the need to focus on being able to win the general elections that would inevitably come, he hunkered down to pursue what he viewed as normal politics. If he recognized or others plotted the possibility that interests backing his coalition might abandon him and his Democrats to work with Newin or another such figure, that possibility also conformed to a certain elite understanding of business as usual in Thai politics.

This vision of normalcy represented a willful public denial that the political crisis that had engulfed Thailand since late 2005 and early 2006 continued, and that it had pushed Thailand into far from normal, into even "revolutionary", times. Well before the events in Pattaya on 11 April had made a mockery of that denial, those times offered the historian-as-diagnostician an opportunity for just the insight into "the nature of the society so stricken", into its particular pathologies, that Marc Bloch noted.

Beyond "Polarization": Four Thai Pathologies

The polarization and turmoil that had come to afflict Thai politics and society by April 2009 grew out of a number of underlying pathologies. Four of these pathologies merit particular examination: Thailand's post-1997 economic "recovery", the figure of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the implications of the conflict in the far south of the country and concern over the end of the ninth Chakkri reign and the almost indistinguishable issue of *lèse majesté*.

The Post-1997 Thai Economy

Talk of Thailand's "recovery" from the financial crisis of 1997 never made sense. That the crisis left the corporate sector scrambled beyond recognition has long been apparent.[12] Some business concerns weathered 1997 and its aftermath well. Others succumbed to their difficulties. Control of the country's once-dominant commercial-banking sector fell into foreign hands to an unprecedented degree.[13] The crisis accelerated the displacement of that sector's leading institutions from their long-term positions of centrality to the country's political economy. It allowed other business groups to begin to

fill the resultant vacuum. These groups included, not least, those of Thaksin and of many of his political allies, whose companies emerged from the financial crisis of a dozen years ago in relatively strong positions.[14]

What proved true for corporate Thailand proved no less true for Thai society as a whole. The shape of the post-crisis economy altered structures of economic opportunity. Economic growth during the boom years between 1985 and 1997 often seemed like a rising tide that lifted all ships, if not at all to the same degree. In contrast, the pattern of Thai growth during the most recent dozen years has proved very different. Foreign firms have penetrated the Thai economy more deeply than ever before. Urban Thais of even modest talent, from families able to send them to third-tier universities overseas, leverage their English and veneer of "global" polish to command out-sized salaries from these firms.

During this same period, the competitiveness of much of the Thai agricultural sector has collapsed with uncommon suddenness. In contrast to even twenty-five years ago, Thailand as a rural society has lost its viability.[15] Whither, then, the "ex-peasant" or his or her offspring? Ineffectual investment in education going back many decades represents a pathology within a pathology for Thailand.[16] The country's much-needed expansion of secondary education has come at the cost of a substantial, though easily avoidable, sacrifice in quality; much the same is true of tertiary education, where the over-expansion and commodification of Thai university and quasi-university education contribute to the country's general squandering of human capital. One canny observer has noted that, should two-thirds of Thailand's workforce vanish tomorrow, their disappearance would have but minimal impact on the country's macro-economy.[17]

Surely that observer spoke at least partly in jest. Thailand has enjoyed gains in employment since 1997.[18] But extreme risk aversion on the part of local enterprise has meant that foreign direct investment has accounted for the preponderance of growth in Thai industrial output and employment in this period.[19] The electronics sector offers a case in point. Its noteworthy growth since 2000[20] has resulted not least from manufacturers' favouring it over higher-cost settings.[21] In macro-economic terms, this development has a healthy aspect, but one hastens to note its dependence on a continued steady supply of inexpensive, relatively uneducated labour. Bluntly put, such growth gives Thailand an actual incentive to maintain the skewed income distributions that currently obtain.

One must view even this twisted version of good news in the context of less encouraging signs in previously winning sectors. The explosion of both automobile manufacturing and consumption in China can only threaten the sustainability of Thailand's position as a regional centre for automotive assembly. Issues of sustainability also threaten the continued growth of its tourism sector, itself a source of a considerable share in employment growth since the financial crisis.[22]

In short, structural features of the post-1997 economy have created the conditions for widening social distance among Thais. Utterly irrespective of allegiances to "yellow" or "red", these conditions give a material basis to diagnoses of an increasingly divided society.

This first pathology, however, has other, non-material aspects. The developmentalist ethic that in previous decades motivated many advantaged urbanites, from the pinnacle of society downward, to take a keen interest in rural and provincial Thailand has largely disappeared. Trends both material and non-material have exacerbated the historically status-ridden nature of the Thai social order. They have brought increased attachment among many Thais to a vision of that order and to their own privileged place in that order that is out of synch with social reality. This attachment extends well beyond the traditionally aristocratic and the truly affluent. Its aspirational dimension gives it much of its ugliness. For concerns — insecurities, really — over status haunt the rank and file of the yellow camp in Thailand's divided society far more than the red.

Thaksin Shinawatra as Southeast Asia's Juan Domingo Perón

In stylized terms, three basic views of the role of Police Lieutenant Colonel Dr Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand's ongoing crisis, and in the making of the social and political polarization so central to that crisis, have had currency.

The first of these views attributes the national mess to Thaksin and Thaksin alone.[23] This view credits Thaksin's greed, his manifest cynicism and unscrupulousness, his ability to subvert institutions, his dangerous cadre of lieutenants, and even his gaucheness for driving the country to its current, frightening state, one with little resemblance to Thailand as many Thais and foreigners have so complacently understood it. A return to the putatively happier times long taken for granted thus requires the defeat of Thaksin

and his lieutenants. The importance of purging Thai life of their influence justifies recourse to the most illiberal means — a military putsch, the effective abandonment of electoral models,[24] the ersatz "judicialization" of politics[25] and more. This view of Thaksin also helps to explain the state of denial of Thailand's underlying pathologies that characterizes many of its adherents. Appreciation of this view helps one understand how one can be assured, by well informed, responsible Thai interlocutors, that, for example, Thaksin orchestrated the five-year-old war in Thailand's far south or that one of his lieutenants composed pieces in *The Economist* that call attention to the monarchy's involvement in Thailand's prolonged political crisis.[26] For all its implausibility and simple-mindedness, this view has great significance; its currency and appeal help make clear the broad applicability of analogies between Thaksin and Perón treated below.

A second view of Thaksin's effect on Thailand joins the first in blaming him for the country's descent into deep and prolonged trouble. But it departs from that view in appreciating that the defeat of Thaksin and his confederates will prove insufficient to restore what long passed for a normal order in Thailand. This view holds Thaksin directly and uniquely responsible for letting a certain genie out of its bottle. But its adherents recognize that it is too late to put it back in.

In a third and final view, Thaksin is incidental to Thailand's current, revolutionarily unfamiliar circumstances. The country's material conditions — and the ever clearer obsolescence of the ideological constructs used to legitimize those conditions — would in time have led it to the present impasse. If not Thaksin, according to this view, then some other figure or group or event would have provoked a crisis very much like the current one. He has no particular importance in his own right, except as one factor among the many that might have set calamity in motion. Its hypothetical nature means that this third view of Thaksin and his impact is as poorly grounded in reality as the first view noted here. So, too, does its lack of focus on Thaksin's performance while in power.

For it was clear even before Thaksin's second general-election victory in February 2005 that he was a fairly cancerous figure in his own right. His campaign of extra-legal killings of alleged drug dealers[27] and what observers came to call his "policy corruption"[28] — making policy expressly to benefit his concerns and the concerns of those close to him, rather than engaging in more conventional forms

of graft — by themselves made his nature clear. But in assessing the impact of Thaksin on Thailand and its politics, one must not regard him as the only pathology. For the real meaning of the 2006 coup in Bangkok was that hatred of Thaksin had surpassed Thaksin himself among the pathologies that the country suffered. This blinding, irrational hatred remains in its own right a serious force in Thai affairs.

It is with this pathological hatred of Thaksin and its effect on some segments of Thai society and of the Thai political class in mind that analogies with Thaksin's fellow authoritarian Juan Perón appear most apropos.[29] While Perón's supporters among Argentina's *descamisados* or "shirtless ones" were rather more concentrated in the urban sector and were more unionized than pro-Thaksin *suea daeng* or red-shirts, the genius of each leader was to hitch his personal ambitions to the exploitation of long-festering tensions in his society. Each made a trademark of formulating populist social-welfare measures targeted at groups with scant previous stake in his country's social and political orders. Equally important, and central to the value of the analogy with Perón to any appreciation of Thaksin, the success of each man in apparently empowering the previously marginalized led to deep resentment and lasting enmity among the more privileged groups in society.[30]

The Peronistic aspect of the political career of Thaksin Shinawatra thus lies at least as much in the reaction that he provoked, and in the lasting social and political divide that he may have opened up, as in his populist measures and authoritarian approach themselves. In the three years prior to the Pattaya events of April 2009, irrational hatred of Thaksin and heightened emphasis on Thailand's socio-economic and even cultural divisions not on the part of Thaksinites or red-shirts but rather in the "yellow" camp and in segments of the Thai bureaucratic, educational and business classes proved far more poisonous and dangerous than Thaksin himself. They numbered among the most threatening pathologies during that period.[31]

Many in Thailand — above all in the above-mentioned classes — have long had an uneasy relationship with liberalism. Their embrace of a liberal political order has remained conditional upon the perceived success of that order, and its capacity for securing and sustaining their status. Through his own illiberalism, Thaksin has provoked an abandonment of liberal politics on the part of many of his opponents. That abandonment is deeply intertwined with the previously mentioned status insecurities among Thais in the "yellow" camp.[32]

War in the Far South

It is possible to treat the ongoing war in Thailand's far south only briefly here.[33] In a sense, however, that conflict had by early April 2009 long since reached one of the worst passes imaginable, short of ethno-religious killings and bombings on the scale seen in the recently ended 26-year-long civil war in Sri Lanka. That is, continuing violence — albeit at a "low" level — had attained the status of normalcy in the affected provinces.[34]

Well-meaning, though often poorly informed, critiques of the Thai state[35] had by April 2009 also begun to give way to recognition that Thailand faced a real enemy in its southern-most provinces, one as brutal and determined as it was shadowy. Far more clearly, the Thai state continued to undermine its own ability to wage an effective counter-insurgency campaign. It relied heavily on poorly disciplined and trained *thahan phran* auxiliaries (confusingly called "rangers" in English-language coverage).[36] It struggled, just as it had in its counter-insurgency effort against the Communist Party of Thailand from the mid-1960s through the early 1980s, to coordinate effectively the various dimensions of its campaign.[37]

While the sentiments of far-southern Thailand's proverbial — and also very diverse — silent majority remained difficult to gauge, the Abhisit-fronted government entrusted overall responsibility for security affairs to Deputy Prime Minister and Democrat Party secretary-general Suthep Thaugsuban. Suthep hails from Surat Thani province in the Buddhist-majority upper south. Duncan McCargo has argued that the long-term dominance of civil servants from the upper south in the lower south has bred real resentment.[38] Lower-southern Muslims have come, that is, to view government officers from the upper south as insensitive, predatory and ultimately self-interested henchmen of the centre. The poor attitude of these officers towards their charges in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat and resultant bad conduct have often proved this view correct. For both symbolic and practical reasons, then, Suthep represented an inordinately poor choice to assume effective oversight of the Bangkok government's far-southern policy.[39]

The matter of Suthep also exemplifies another significant dimension to Thailand's "southern problem": that it is not really a southern problem at all. Over and above the Thai state's need to defeat the armed insurgency now challenging its sovereignty in the far south of its territory, that state must also consider the degree to which events in the south represent but an extreme case of a

national pathology. Armed rebellion may concentrate minds on that region, but the violence in the south has raised questions relevant to all of provincial Thailand.

An emerging consensus holds that the Thai state faces a crisis of legitimacy in Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani and southern Songkhla.[40] The relationship between that crisis and the origins of the current round of violence there is not simple, straightforward or clear. Even absent Bangkok's brutal armed enemy in the far south, that crisis would persist. While the problem of state legitimacy has reached a critical stage in that region alone, it should likewise represent a matter of concern across the country as a whole.

In some part, this problem grows out of the obsolescence of a system of provincial administration well suited to Bangkok's in "internal colonization" of its own hinterland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to both developmentalist and counter-insurgency imperatives during the decades after 1950.[41] Today, however, that highly centralized system has fallen out of synch with Thai realities. In their scale, Thailand's provinces, now numbering 76, made sense as the primary units of sub-national administration at a time of difficult transportation and communication. Their administration by powerful appointed officials proved feasible when provincial society remained largely rural and poorly educated. These realities no longer obtain.

One need hardly succumb to the fashion among political scientists for studying decentralization to recognize the need for a substantial reform of structures of administration in Thailand. Among possibilities worth considering, the revival-*cum*-modification of the system of *monthon* or "administrative circles" holds particular promise. Introduced during King Chulalongkorn's reforms of Siam's provincial administration from the 1890s onward, *monthon* grouped a number of provinces under superintendent-commissioners (*kha luang thetsaphiban*) dispatched from Bangkok.[42] In their revived form, they might again involve government on a regional scale, albeit with elected assemblies and chief ministers (with the latter perhaps designated *mukkhamontri*, as are the chief ministers of, for example, Malaysian states in Thai). These latter features of the revived *monthon*, along with others, would transform what served in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as vehicles of internal colonization into structures ensuring local representation and promoting local participation in governance.

Recourse to such a "revival" of the *monthon* as a device to increase local say over administrative, fiscal, educational, cultural

and security matters — not just in far-southern Thailand but across the country — has a number of unmistakable advantages. First, it would help Bangkok address its southern problem in a politically palatable way. For it would be impossible to decry re-introduction of the *monthon* on a nation-wide basis as a perverse reward for a separatist minority in just one part of the country that took up arms to pursue its goals. Second, its royalist, historical packaging would make this option more acceptable in the eyes of some conservative potential opponents of the devolution of state power. Third, the devolution of a large degree of such power to the *monthon* level would ease the current regional divide in national politics. It would give Thailand an alternative means, necessary as the end of the current reign approaches, to take the edge off any return of political regionalism.[43]

As well as inevitably distracting the attention of senior military figures from the south, Thailand's political impasse in the first months of 2009 made even discussion of a serious re-organization of the Thai state impossible. In this respect, that impasse offered grounds for further pessimism regarding the southern crisis.

Fears over the End of the Ninth Reign and the Matter of Lèse Majesté

Fear and uncertainty in the face of the approaching end of King Bhumibol's reign represented a fourth Thai pathology in the early months of 2009, another pathology whose clinical description offers insight into the nature of the Thai body politic. The difficulty of talking and writing about this matter without arousing strong feelings or worse has led many apparently to wish its relevance away.[44] Nevertheless, retention of a sense of proportion makes it possible to advance a few relatively uncontroversial points.

For one, the current reign, now in its sixty-third year, began at a time when the monarchy counted for little in Thai politics. Displaced by the regimes that followed Thailand's 1932 coup, the royal institution could easily have faded into either quaint irrelevance or even penurious oblivion in the decades after 1946.[45] Instead, a series of accidents saw it prosper. These accidents included an uncommonly talented king with a solid educational foundation laid in Switzerland, a cadre of advisors bent on the monarchy's rescue, an excellent relationship between the palace and Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat and the latter's skill in harnessing the monarchy to developmentalism during his 1958–63 dictatorship. Royal success

came, and royal influence and power were accumulated, in a less complex, less well educated and less populous Thailand. Likewise, that success did not come immediately, and it required constant recalibration of the monarchy's position in a dynamic political and social order. The Thai monarchy was never static during the half-century after Sarit's coups of 1957 and 1958 helped boost it back into its perceived centrality to the nation and its affairs.[46]

Paul Handley's biography of King Bhumibol, *The King Never Smiles*,[47] makes unmistakable this fundamentally dynamic aspect of the current reign. It is in this regard complemented by Chanida Chitbandit's study of the king's famed development projects, which carefully analyses, for example, the phases in which those projects evolved.[48] Like Handley's book, Chanida's analysis makes clear not only the ongoing evolution of Thailand's royal institution but also the fact that the current sovereign has for some years not conducted himself with the energy that defined the prime years of his reign.[49]

The dynamic quality of the present reign has one clear implication. It means that the focus on "defending" the Thai monarchy adopted by the Abhisit-fronted government, and on making that defence a matter of "national security",[50] is fraught with danger for all involved. It poses a particularly great danger to the monarchy itself. For it depends on a static understanding of an institution whose greatest strength, not just since 1946 but rather since 1851 or even earlier, has lain in its adaptability. It also risks associating the institution with outright thuggery, as happened in the tense and violent period culminating in the events of 6 October 1976, the last time when the defence of the Thai monarchy became a cause in its own right.[51] Clearly with these risks in mind, one of Thailand's most prominent intellectuals has cautioned his most recklessly royalist countrymen that their own behaviour may bring precisely what they claim to be the objective of their enemies.

In addition to his symbolic, even inspirational, role, King Bhumibol has for forty or more years played an active, hands-on role in the affairs of his kingdom. Again, while Handley's controversial biography of the king documented royal activism in exhaustive detail, one need not rest one's entire case on that work. The years since its publication have seen prominent members of Thailand's governing cliques show increasing willingness to speak privately about that activism.

The king's ability to take an active role in Thailand's politics long depended on his contact with a circle of talented, able and devoted people. This circle and the scope of its influence embody

what Duncan McCargo has so valuably recognized as the country's "network monarchy".[52] At the same time, the very success of that form of monarchy has also exposed a great flaw. It has institutionalized a belief in management of Thailand's problems through discrete phone calls and conversations among a small number of people. However, Thailand has changed past the point at which such an approach to governance remains useful. It is too complex, too big, too tightly connected to the rest of the world; its people, at all levels of income, education, and status, are simply too well informed. Even a successor to King Bhumibol of talents equal to his own would struggle to play a role like that which he has played. Neither is it by any means likely that the monarchy's network will in future incorporate men and women of the calibre of those on whom the current sovereign has relied.

A decade into the twenty-first century, the complexity and sophistication of Thai society, coupled with increased awareness of the role that the current king has played in realms far beyond the merely symbolic, make it harder and harder to keep so obviously important a matter as the future of the royal institution out of public discussion. Indeed, it is its absence from discussion that would be truly worrying for Thailand. Uncertainty surrounding that future has sharpened fears among segments of Thai society comfortable with the order they have long known. These fears amount above all to insecurity, really, not least about status in an order whose hierarchical orientation has effectively been validated by the post-Sarit renaissance of Thai royalism. They also reflect pride in and attachment to what that order and its hierarchy once seemed capable of achieving. These fears have led many Thais, Prime Minister Abhisit among them, to take stands incomprehensible or even shocking to observers unburdened by such attachments.[53] These fears have thus doubtless worsened the risk of a Thai calamity, "great" or otherwise, the danger of which the Pattaya summit debacle did nothing to dispel.

The coincidence of a popular sovereign and monarchy with tough laws protecting them from criticism has long figured among those Thai anomalies to which scholars and analysts devoted little attention or thought. By late 2008, however, neglect of *lèse majesté* as a factor in Thai politics had become untenable. Internet surveillance and raids on people's homes, summonses to police stations for questioning and the blocking of websites joined the time-worn abuse of *lèse majesté* charges for political purposes. The whole business acquired an unmistakably sinister feel.[54] Hostile responses to well

intentioned scholars' petitions calling for the reform of *lèse majesté* law, above all so that private citizens would no longer have the right to file criminal complaints at will, led ironically to mirror-image charges and counter-charges. Petitioners asserted that *lèse majesté* complaints more often involved the settling of political scores than actual insults to the king, his consort or the heir to the throne. Their critics accused them of veiling their anti-monarchism behind calls for reform of *lèse majesté* law.[55]

Could the law be reformed? Was *lèse majesté* legislation in its current form a necessary pillar of Thailand's activist monarchy? Would agreement on the future role of the latter not need to come before attention to the former? Was, that is, *lèse majesté* law neither a problem in its own right nor a device used primarily for political purposes but rather, at least in the eyes of some, something more fundamental to Thailand's long-established order? If so, could it be a surprise that calls for its reform met with so much hostility? And was the battle not in that case about something besides "mere" freedom of expression? About, that is, political power itself? Unsurprisingly, serious, open discussion of such questions has remained impossible.

Towards a Healthier Thai Body Politic?

Just after 4 o'clock on the morning of 13 April, elements of the Thai military responded to the red-shirts' demonstrations of the previous two-and-a-half weeks, and to their disruption of the Pattaya summit two days earlier.[56] They began with an operation to clear protestors from Bangkok's Din Daeng intersection. They continued over the next twenty-four hours with gradual progress westward into central Bangkok, taking them closer to the red-shirts gathered at Government House. By late morning on 14 April, in the face of overwhelming force, those protestors agreed to disband. The government issued arrest warrants for their leaders.[57]

Contrary to widespread and indeed justified fears, and to the credit of its soldiers, Thailand emerged from its immediate crisis with minimal bloodshed. At the same time, several episodes of violence scarred 12 and 13 April in Bangkok. On the former day, red-shirt attempts to trap and assault Prime Minister Abhisit resulted in the beating of his secretary-general, the well connected Nipon Prompan, on the grounds of the Ministry of the Interior. Similarly, the positioning of tanker trucks carrying natural gas near the Din Daeng intersection, the torching of buses, a still poorly understood

incident at a mosque in Phetburi Soi 7 and armed confrontations between residents and protestors at the Nang Loeng market and other sites made for real ugliness.[58]

Not Thaksin's "Revolution", but an Incipient Revolutionary Situation Nonetheless

Coming against the backdrop of former Prime Minister Thaksin's 12 April call from overseas for "revolution",[59] that a segment of his red-shirted followers opted to bring calculated violence to the streets of Bangkok only reinforced the sentiments of those who regarded him as a menace to the Thai nation and his followers as uncouth, out-of-control rabble. The shrewd pseudonymous commentator "Chang Noi" called the red-shirt "rampage … both appalling and pathetic". But Chang Noi offered a pair of further valuable observations on the ugly turn of events. First, the "nasty and obviously ill-fated attempt to provoke urban disorder" left many participants in earlier red-shirt rallies sufficiently turned off to go home. Second, one ought not "use the rampage as an excuse for ignoring the rage" that had led crowds of up to 100,000 to those rallies in late March and early April.[60]

The 14 April *dénouement* to the red-shirts' three weeks of rallies and protests on the streets of Bangkok looked in the short run like a triumph of military-backed counter-revolution rather than revolution. Press reports mentioned a "specially assembled unit consisting of old veterans and retired generals"[61] that had supplanted the duly constituted chain of command in giving Abhisit military advice. The network monarchy seemed to have put its old hands at the disposal of its young servant. That servant, the same head of government who had left uncharged and unpunished those responsible for the occupation of Suvarnabhumi Airport in late November and early December 2008, proclaimed the need promptly to punish the law-breakers who had forced the cancellation of the Pattaya summits.[62]

Yet the red-shirts had lived to fight another day. There was little reason to believe that the organization that had allowed them to seize the political initiative had collapsed. Indeed, the provincial wing of that organization had remained essentially in reserve, its capacity to act undiminished.

Much foreign press commentary notwithstanding, analogies between the red-shirt protests of late March and early April 2009, and the yellow-shirt demonstrations of October–December 2008, which

paved the way for the fall of the Somchai government and the rise of Abhisit to the premiership, missed the mark. For Thaksin's enemies, the replacement of a Thaksinite administration with one led by the Democrat Party, managed by such savvy operators as Deputy Prime Ministers Suthep Thaugsuban and Sanan Kachornprasart, and in no need of facing the voters anytime soon, represented a satisfactory outcome. For Thaksin's supporters and other red-shirts, the fall of Abhisit would hardly bring any such satisfaction.

That fall would lead to one of two possible outcomes. First, it might bring to power an anti-Thaksin, anti-red-shirt government of a far more repressive cast than that fronted by Abhisit. The greatest threat to his premiership lay from the start in the potential impatience of more extreme yellow-shirts rather than in the opposition of red-shirts.[63] Second, should Abhisit's fall lead to elections that brought to power a Thaksinite or pro-red-shirt government, anti-Thaksin and anti-red-shirt forces might again seek to undermine a duly elected Thai government through extra-electoral means.

While yellow-shirts sought and won a change in government in late 2008, then, the unmistakable if undeclared goal of red-shirt activity during the first months of 2009 could only be a change in regime. This reality — far more than Thaksin's desperate and perhaps cynical late-in-the-day call for "revolution" or the willingness of his lieutenants and a red-shirt minority to resort to naked, calculated violence — made unmistakable Thailand's entry into a revolutionary situation by the time of the Pattaya events and the military operation at the Din Daeng intersection. One must sharply distinguish that call from this situation.

The incipient revolutionary situation that Thailand had reached by April 2009 had its roots in something far more significant than Thaksin, his ego, his greed or his lust for revenge. On one level, those roots lay in the four pathologies outlined above, as well as others. This revolutionary situation emerged from a cauldron of social change rather than from the scheming of one man, even one so politically astute as Thaksin. It stemmed too from the reality that, even as recent years saw Thailand's income skew grow, they saw its information skew shrink. On another level, then, little made Thailand's incipient revolutionary situation so clear as the new understandings of their society and politics at which many Thais had arrived. The readiness of red-shirt crowds to take up Thaksin's call for the resignation of members of the Privy Council after his 27 March phone-in to their rally in Bangkok offers one example of this transformation.[64]

Further examples abound. The Abhisit-fronted government suffered a singular failure to regain the political initiative in the weeks immediately following the end of the red-shirt demonstrations at Government House. Well placed, well educated and well informed Thais with little sympathy for Thaksin came increasingly to recognize what the top leadership of the Democrat Party did not: that the red-shirts had a social movement behind them, that this movement was far "bigger" than mere support for Thaksin, that it drew on genuine grievances — over effective disenfranchisement, contemptuous treatment and more. Such observers spoke more openly about "civil war". They commented that their country had moved beyond the era in which royal intervention could resolve political crisis. They fretted that, in the minds of tens of millions of their compatriots in the red-shirt camp, the Thai state faced a legitimacy crisis. One influential English-language journalist wrote of a red-shirt lack of "trust in the government, the state and most of the Thai media",[65] describing a situation with striking parallels to that which obtained in the far south of the country.

Among some responsible foreigners, too, awareness that Thailand stood on the brink of revolutionary times grew. Members of the diplomatic corps spoke unhesitantly and directly, albeit in private, about resolution of Thailand's troubles needing to await the end of the current reign and, implicitly, the crafting of a new political order to succeed that long focused on the current monarch. The nature of the network monarchy and the Privy Council themselves, the example of the early years of the current reign, and indeed the spirit of ostensible consensus relating to royal succession characteristic of nineteenth-century Siam all make likely an attempt among royalist insiders to effect a managed transition to the next reign. While this approach is not without merit, its possibility raises a number of fundamental questions. In an age of courtiers of little distinction, relative to those who assisted the current king in the years after 1946,[66] are royalist managers up to the task? Will they view their task as a matter of managing the royal institution, the focus of such managers during the 1950s and into the 1960s, or of trying to replicate the management of the country that has marked the most recent three decades or so of the current reign? To the degree that the focus is on the former rather than the latter, the monarchy's prospects for the future are better. But will its future path bring a genuine disengagement from politics, on something like, say, the Danish — or Japanese, or even Spanish — model? Or will its continued political engagement bring the risk of something more

like the fate of the Greek monarchy?[67] Either of these future paths might lead towards a less status-ridden Thai society, a more open and egalitarian urban society such as that to which some aspects of Phibunism pointed seventy years ago.[68]

Before Wat Phra Si Mahathat — the temple that Field Marshal Phibun ordered constructed at Bang Khen to honour the promoters of the 1932 coup[69] — can assume a more prominent role in the rituals of Thai national life, however, the country must bring its politics and society into a fresh alignment. Inevitably, the process of realignment will have cultural, sociological and intellectual dimensions. A more egalitarian Thailand — or even the growing recognition of the desirability of one — will demand a reconceptualization of the country's modern history.

Seeking a Sense of the Possible: Thailand's Ongoing Calamity in Comparative Perspective

Thailand and many scholars of Thailand have long resisted comparative perspectives on that history. The latter have squandered the potential of those perspectives to serve as the bases for a reconceptualization of Thai history.[70] For adoption of comparative perspectives would challenge the myths — along with some fairy tales — of uniqueness whose invocation has long served as national placebo, obviating clear-eyed diagnosis of national pathologies.

The single noteworthy exception to this aversion to comparative perspectives on Thai history has concerned Japan. The Kanagawa Treaty of 1854 and the Bowring Treaty of 1855 "opened" Japan and Siam, respectively, to commerce with the North Atlantic world. The Meiji Restoration and Chulalongkorn's accession to the throne each date to 1868. Subsequently, however, the two countries' historical paths diverged dramatically. One emerged as an industrializing society during the very first decades of the twentieth century; the other remained mired in "underdevelopment" into the 1980s. This divergence and the quest to understand it have long stimulated both comment from social critics and reformers and valuable comparative work on the part of Thai economists, historians and economic historians.[71]

In the "world history" perspective that has become fashionable in recent decades, scholars might best understand the divergence between the economic and social histories of Japan and Siam in regional rather than more narrowly national terms. The implications of the divergence between the Northeast and Southeast Asian regions

hold as much interest as its origins. Their contrasting macro-histories between, say, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the Plaza Agreement of 1985 may well prove the level of most stimulating analysis of both those origins and those implications.[72] Likewise, it may not be Japan so much as its Northeast Asian neighbour, the Republic of Korea (the ROK, or South Korea), whose recent experience of social and political change offers the clearest sense of the possible for Thailand.[73]

Just four days apart in the second half of December 2007, for example, both South Korean and Thai voters went to the polls. In Thailand, of course, the general elections of 23 December 2007 dashed the hopes of the outgoing military junta and its puppet administration by handing victory to the Thaksinite People Power Party.[74] That victory paved the way both for Samak Sundaravej's and Somchai Wongsawat's premierships and for the shabby serial-destruction-by-judicial-coup of those premierships in September and December 2008, respectively.[75] In South Korea, on the contrary, 19 December 2007 brought a conservative triumph at the polls. Voters elected a former *chaebol* (business group) executive, with — as it happened — early experience building roads in Pattani and Narathiwat,[76] to the country's presidency. Without any help from its country's courts, Seoul's new conservative administration succeeded two consecutive progressive administrations led by veterans of the country's democracy movement.

In the days following the 2007 South Korean election, Seoul's three English-language dailies ran innumerable columns in which political scientists pondered the significance of this transition. The analyses on offer accorded no importance to the ROK military as a factor in the country's politics. For it was not a factor.

Two decades earlier, even as the Bangkok government conducted a survey of public opinion before declaring King Bhumibol a *maharaja* in December 1987,[77] a South Korean president who had seized power with the help of a secret clique of generals, dominated by members of a single Korean Military Academy class, announced his plan to turn the presidency over to yet another general from that same clique and class.[78] At the time, this announcement and the resulting mass demonstrations reinforced South Korea's image abroad as a politically unstable, troubled military dictatorship.

In retrospect, however, 1987 proved a major turning point in ROK politics. South Koreans have chosen their presidents in direct popular elections since 1988. Coups such as those that Thailand suffered in 1991 and 2006 and judicial shenanigans such as those

that ousted Samak and Somchai have not had a part in the ROK's political transitions during this period. Events have proved absurd the patronizing judgment — so uncannily similar to that rendered by today's Thai yellow-shirts about their own countrymen — of some Seoul foreign correspondents just a generation ago that South Korea and its electorate remained politically too immature for democracy.[79]

The ROK has rid its politics of the military influence that Thais must still take as a given. Neither is that difference the only salient, marked divergence in the two countries' recent politics. The South Korean elections of 1997 and 2002 also brought to power progressive politicians with records of fighting dictatorship, men with ties to its historically poor Jeolla region.[80] In its relative poverty in modern times, its history of millenarian rebellion, its role in supplying cheap labour for the nation's factories and thus enabling rapid economic growth and its long-term political disenfranchise-ment and the discrimination that its natives have suffered in the capital, the formerly prosperous Jeolla became the Isan of South Korea.[81] Residents and natives of Isan, Thailand's historically impoverished and marginalized northeastern region, have long suffered the bigotry of many well educated urban Thais. More recently, they have lent considerable support both to Thaksin at the polls and to the red-shirt movement on the streets.

At the very least, of course, Thailand's developmentalist strong-man Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat came from Isan. Jeolla never had such luck: Sarit's more successful Korean opposite number General Park Chung-hee came from Jeolla's bitter rival region of Gyeongsang.[82] To an observer immersed in Thai affairs, however, the fading of regionalism as a singularly, sometimes violently, divisive force in ROK politics during the last decade proves striking. By 2007, when the ROK's second progressive president completed his term of office, the country's voters replaced him with a candidate of a far more conservative stripe in an election focused on policy differences rather than regional loyalties.[83]

To be sure, Northeast and Southeast Asia have had very different historical experiences. Not least, the heavy industrialization that marked Japan, Korea and Manchuria, even in the first half of the twentieth century, was correlated with the emergence of urban, even "mass", societies of a kind absent from Southeast Asia until very recently, if even then. This difference proves particularly relevant in the Thai case. Yet, despite this historical difference, Thailand's progressive urbanization,[84] the diminished viability of agriculture as

a means of earning a living and as a way of life for large numbers of Thais,[85] and the increasingly poor fit between Thai society and the imagined Thai social order today demand a recalibration of the country's politics.

The familiar comparison of Siam and Japan has value, albeit cautionary value, to the contemplation of this recalibration. Japan's disastrous lurch towards repression during the late 1920s and into the 1930s certainly represents one approach to the reconciliation of an emergent mass society with a monarchical social order. It would seem to find echoes today in the fascism of Thailand's yellow-shirted People's Alliance for Democracy. But conceiving of the sustained success of repression in Thailand requires a stretch of the imagination.

Another approach to recalibration would follow the path charted by South Korea, though Thailand faces a number of obstacles that the ROK did not. Thailand's notoriously poor record of investment in human capital, going back many decades,[86] comes at the top of the list. In meeting the glaring need to integrate its less affluent majority into its political system, the country will also struggle to find ways to integrate them into its modern economy. It will have to meet this challenge in the context of a Southeast Asian region that may figure as an economic irrelevance next to, or an economic colony of, the People's Republic of China. The region seems unlikely to re-emerge as a collection of promising NICs with rising living standards for all, like the ROK from the 1960s through the 1980s and the Southeast Asia of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Thailand's educational failings have, through their impact on the structure of its economy and on opportunities in that economy, played a large role in making Thailand vulnerable to a plutocratic populist like Thaksin. South Korea seems not to have suffered that vulnerability.[87]

Populism's evil twin is, of course, classism. King Bhumibol's long reign has afforded great prosperity and unprecedented, now jealously guarded, social status to Thailand's historically fickle urban middle and upper-middle class.[88] Insecurity over that status in the twilight of the reign has certainly helped choke off the emergence of a much needed social-democratic strain in Thai politics. That strain might replace the non-ideological provincial bossism that, given the country's rather long experience of parliamentary forms, has defined Thailand's version of money politics, so different from the ROK's own infamous version of political corruption.

If poor investment in education, economic uncertainty and classism confront Thailand with obstacles, the ROK's example in ridding its politics of military influence, integrating the voters of its poorest region into national politics and achieving peaceful transfers of power ought nevertheless give Thais a sense of the possible. In comparative perspective, the McCarthyite tendencies recently abroad in Thailand appear mild, as does even the fear of bloodshed which the four days of 11 to 14 April 2009 did nothing to counter. Seoul's departed military dictatorship was run by far harder men[89] than Bangkok's airport-seizing reactionaries of today.

By the time of the aborted Pattaya summits of mid-April 2009, Thailand did not face the inevitability of great calamity. Neither could it hope, however, for a quick or painless cure to all that ailed its political and social orders. Indeed, in domains ranging from utopian constitutional design to proposals to resolve its far-southern crisis, the country had suffered too many simplistic remedies to complex problems. These failed remedies reflected inadequate appreciation of Thailand's early-twenty-first-century pathologies. They also reflected a refusal to accept the magnitude of the change that attention to those pathologies will require.

NOTES

[1]   Earlier versions of this article were presented at the Center for Southeast Asia Studies, University of California, Berkeley, on 31 March 2009, and at the Junior Pyramid, Singapore, on 28 April 2009. The author thanks Sarah Maxim, Thuy Pham, and Penny Edwards at Berkeley and Gillian Koh in Singapore for making those talks possible and those present at both sessions for their questions and comments. He further acknowledges the ideas and assistance of Daniel Kim, Duncan McCargo, Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead, Grant Peck, Peter Schoppert, Daniel Slater, Michelle Tan, Edward Teather and Peter Vail and the helpful comments of an anonymous referee. The author takes exclusive responsibility for the arguments advanced and conclusions drawn in this article.

[2]   Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society, Volume I: The Growth of Ties of Dependence*, translated by L.A. Manyon (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 52. Bloch's words gained currency in the study of Southeast Asia, of course, as the epigraph at the beginning of Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involution: The Processes of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963). To regard contemporary Thai politics as "involuted" — scarcely less discouraging than the circumstances that Geertz attributed to mid-twentieth-century Java — would not be entirely off the mark.

[3]   For an eyewitness account of the red-shirt invasion of the venue of the Pattaya summit, see Charles McDermid, "The plummet of a summit", *Asia Times Online*, 15 April 2009 <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/KD15Ae04.html>.

Also see Somkiat Onwimon, "*Banthuek asian kanprachum sutyot asian lomleo thi phatthaya*" [ASEAN Diary: ASEAN summit fails at Pattaya], *Deli niu* on-line, 15 April 2009 <http://www.dailynews.co.th/web/html/popup_news/Default. aspx?ColumnId=72534&NewsType=2&Template=1>.

4   An account of this re-invasion of Bangkok, including violent episodes of local opposition to red-shirt forces, appears in Charles McDermid and Jakkapun Kaewsangthong, "Hand-to-hand fights in the streets", *Asia Times Online*, 15 April 2009 <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/KD15Ae01.html>.

5   Survey treatments of Thai politics during 2008 appear in James Ockey, "Democracy and Street Politics in Contemporary Thailand", in *Southeast Asian Affairs 2009*, edited by Daljit Singh (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), pp. 315–33, and Kitti Prasirtsuk, "Thailand in 2008: Crises Continued", *Asian Survey* XLIX, no. 1 (January/February 2009): 174–84.

6   On the 1997 constitution as an attempt by some in Thailand to remedy by fiat what they perceived as its political ailments at the time, see Duncan McCargo, "Alternative Meanings of Political Reform in Contemporary Thailand", *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* XIII (1998): 5–30.

7   See Chang Noi (pseud.), "Military biggest winner in political conflict", *The Nation*, 2 February 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read. php?newsid=30094723>. As Ockey points out, Prime Minister Samak's September 2009 declaration of emergency rule in Bangkok went essentially unenforced; "Democracy and street politics", op. cit., p. 323. Ockey also notes Thai Army commander General Anupong Phaochinda's pressure on Prime Minister Somchai in October 2008; ibid., p. 325.

8   "Three coalition parties bite the dust", *The Nation*, 3 December 2008 <http:// www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30090059>.

9   "Democrats claim majority to form government", *The Nation*, 7 December 2008 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30090358>, and "Democrat govt a shotgun wedding?", *The Nation*, 10 December 2008 <http:// www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30090626>.

10   A roster of the cabinet's members appears in "Cabinet of Abhisit government announced", *The Nation*, 20 December 2008 <http://www.nationmultimedia. com/search/read.php?newsid=30091514>.

11   "By-elections seen as test drive for new party alliances", *The Nation*, 10 January 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30092888>, and "By-election results indicate clear, loud voice of voters", *The Nation*, 13 January 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30093066>.

12   See, for example, Natenapha Wailerdsak, "Companies in Crisis", in *Thai Capital after the 1997 Crisis*, edited by Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2008), pp. 17–57, and Suehiro Akira, "Business Leaders in Contemporary Thailand: Politics, Business Circles, and the Chinese Community", in *The Rise of the Middle Classes in Southeast Asia*, edited by Shiraishi Takashi and Pasuk Phongphaichit (Kyoto and Melbourne: Kyoto University Press and Trans Pacific Press, 2008), pp. 124–75.

13   Natenapha, "Companies in Crisis", op. cit., pp. 26–29.

14   Pasuk Phonpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thaksin: The Business of Politics in Thailand* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2004), pp. 57–59, 71–72.

[15]   Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 212–16.

[16]   For a relatively early alarum see Sirilaksana Khoman, "Education Policy", in *The Thai Economy in Transition*, edited by Peter G. Warr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 325–54, and, for a survey of the historical roots of Thailand's education crisis, see Michelle Tan, "The Politics of the Decentralisation of Basic Education in Thailand", doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds, 2007, especially Chapter III on "The Politics of Thai Education, 1932–2006", pp. 43–72.

[17]   Remarks of Chris Baker, appearing as a panelist during a session on "Does Thailand Need a New Government?", Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand, Bangkok, 17 August 2006.

[18]   "Thailand — Securing Growth", Standard Chartered research note (reference GR-J2009), Singapore, 29 January 2009, p. 2.

[19]   Ammar Siamwalla, "Forward", in *Thai Capital*, edited by Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, op. cit., p. xii, and Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, "Introduction", in ibid., pp. 1–15.

[20]   See "Thailand by the Numbers (February 2009)", UBS Investment Research report, Singapore, 4 March 2009, p. 12.

[21]   Author's interview with a regional bank economist, Singapore, 17 March 2009. As early as 2002, the consulting firm McKinsey placed the Thai electronics sector "on an unsustainable 'middle ground'" between "lower-wage" and "higher-skill" economies; McKinsey Global Institute, *Thailand: Prosperity Through Productivity*, McKinsey & Company, February 2002, available at <http://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/publications/thailand.asp>, p. 171. Writing with specific reference to the disk-drive industry, which came to both Singapore and Thailand at approximately the same time, Richard Doner notes the former's success in making the sorts of wise investments in education and training that in turn made it possible "for multinationals to develop new products and to promote indigenous (precision engineering) suppliers not seen in Thailand"; see Richard Doner, *The Politics of Uneven Development: Thailand's Economic Growth in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 53. The data presented in the UBS's "Thailand by the Numbers" suggest that the growth in electronics manufacturing in Thailand has proved rather more sustainable than McKinsey envisioned. At least in comparison to some Southeast Asian competitors, Thai wage rates appear to be a big part of the story.

[22]   "Thailand — Securing Growth", op. cit., p. 2.

[23]   As just one example of a surprisingly common sentiment see "Exclusive Interview — It's all about Thaksin: Chain-anan", *The Nation*, 6 April 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2009/04/06/politics/politics_30099719.php>.

[24]   Kitti, "Thailand in 2008", op. cit., p. 179.

[25]   Duncan McCargo, "Thailand: State of Anxiety", in *Southeast Asian Affairs 2008*, edited by Daljit Singh and Tin Maung Maung Than (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), pp. 335–36.

[26]   These allegations followed most notably that publication's departure from the mainstream foreign media's long habit of self-censorship with "Thailand's Monarchy: The King and Them" and "Thailand's King and its Crisis: A Right Royal Mess", both in *The Economist*, 4 December 2008.

[27]   Pasuk and Baker, *Thaksin*, op. cit., pp. 158–67.

[28]   See Daniel Ten Kate, "Thailand's Thaksin Freeze Out", *Asia Sentinel*, 14 June 2007 <http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=53 6&Itemid=31>, which dates use of the phrase to 2002, and also "Thaksin era corruption 'cost state Bt400 bn'", *The Nation*, 2 October 2006 <http://www. nationmultimedia.com/2006/10/01/headlines/headlines_30015092.php>. Pasuk and Baker, *Thaksin*, op. cit., Chapter 7, pp. 197–224, treat this matter in detail.

[29]   On Perón, see Robert D. Crassweller, *Perón and the Enigmas of Argentina* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987). On Thaksin, see both Pasuk and Baker, *Thaksin*, op. cit., and also Duncan McCargo and Ukrist Pathmanand, *The Thaksinization of Thailand* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2007).

[30]   On Perón's populist programme, its appeal to theretofore marginalized Argentineans, and the antagonism that it aroused among social and political elites, see Daniel K. Lewis, *The History of Argentina* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 95–98, 99–105, which notes elite characterizations of rural migrants to Buenos Aires who figured among Perón's supporters as a "zoological flood" (p. 101). See also pp. 113 ff. on the legacy of polarization in times of slow economic growth that followed Perón's fall.

[31]   The pace of events in Thailand during the late 2005 to early-to-mid-2009 period was such that accounts and analyses were often dated before they appeared. Nevertheless, both the special issue on "Thailand's 'Good Coup': The Fall of Thaksin, the Military and Democracy", in *The Journal of Contemporary Asia* XXXVIII, no. 1 (February 2008), and *Divided Over Thaksin: Thailand's Coup and Problematic Transition*, edited by John Funston (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), remain valuable.

[32]   These developments recall those of Thailand's bleak mid-1970s, the dramatic changes in Thai society since that time notwithstanding; see Benedict Anderson, "Withdrawal Symptoms: Social and Cultural Aspects of the October 6 Coup", in Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 154–57.

[33]   Valuable, current work on that war includes Marc Askew, *Conspiracy, Politics, and a Disorderly Border: The Struggle to Comprehend Insurgency in Thailand's Deep South* (Washington and Singapore: East-West Center Washington and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007); Duncan McCargo, *Tearing Apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008); and Chaiwat Satha-Anand, ed., *Imagined Land? The State and Southern Violence in Thailand* (Fuchu City: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2009).

[34]   Incident data are tracked and reported at <http://www.deepsouthvis.org/>, the site of the Southern Border Provinces Violence-Related Injury Surveillance Network.

[35]   For a discussion of such "state-bashing" in the southern Thai context, see Michael J. Montesano and Patrick Jory, "Introduction", in *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula*, edited by Michael J. Montesano and Patrick Jory (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), pp. 4 and 13–14.

[36]   McCargo, *Tearing Apart the Land*, op. cit., pp. 102–03 and 213, n. 72.

[37]   Ibid., p. 133. On the search for better coordination in Bangkok's counter-insurgency campaign against the CPT, see Tom Marks, *Making Revolution: The Insurgency of the Communist Party of Thailand in Structural Perspective* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994), pp. 99 ff. and 196 ff.

38   McCargo, *Tearing Apart the Land*, op. cit., pp. 57–58.

39   McCargo made this point at the conference on "Southern Thailand: Anatomy of an Insurgency, 2004–2009", Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 10–11 March 2009.

40   McCargo, *Tearing Apart the Land*, op. cit., offers the most compelling, best documented case for this understanding. This case echoes the earlier analysis of royalist ideological dominance, stunted Thai nationhood, and the place of "minorities" in Thailand in Benedict Anderson, "Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies", in *The Study of Thailand: Analyses of Knowledge, Approaches, and Prospects in Anthropology, Art History, Economics, History, and Political Science*, edited by Eliezer B. Ayal (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, Southeast Asia Program, 1978), pp. 211–15.

41   The classic account of the start of that process of internal colonization is Tej Bunnag, *The Provincial Administration of Siam, 1892–1915: The Ministry of the Interior under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977). On post-1950 developments, see Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Thailand*, op. cit., pp. 157–58, and George Tanham, *Trial in Thailand* (New York: Crane, Russak & Company, 1974), pp. 73–78.

42   See Tej, *The Provincial Administration of Siam*, op. cit., pp. 101 ff. and 163 ff.

43   The preceding paragraphs draw on Michael J. Montesano, "Tackling Woes in Thai South: Past may save the future", *Straits Times*, 7 April 2009, and the author's "*Samphat phiset*" [Special interview], pp. 148–68 in the appendix of Barun (pseud.), *Prawattisat latthi pralat* [The History of a Strange Ideology] (Bangkok: Sarika, 2008), especially pp. 166–68. The prominent Thai social commentator and royalist Prawase Wasi has also suggested the kingdom-wide reintroduction of *monthon*-level government; see "*Nayokratthamontri kap kansang kwampenekkaphap nai yuttasat dap fai tai*" [The prime minister and solidarity-building in the strategy to extinguish the southern fire], 24 February 2007, available at <http://www.prawase.com/article/129.pdf>, p. 2. Prawase suggests the division of Thailand into 14 or 15 *monthon*, compared to the 21 created at various times between the early 1890s and the mid-1910s; see Tej, Appendices II and III (pp. 268–72). The author thanks Duncan McCargo for calling his attention to Prawase's website and invocation of the *monthon*.

44   In this context, one may take the Ockey and Kitti pieces cited herein as cases in point.

45   Even a scholar so commonly associated, correctly or not, with Thai royal-nationalist historiography as the late David K. Wyatt, could write, with reference to the period ending in the late 1950s, "For a quarter century, Siam's society was without the royal focus that it had had for so many centuries and that to a certain extent it has since restored"; David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, 2nd ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 233.

46   On the revival of the Thai monarchy from political insignificance and the specific circumstances attending that revival, see Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Kings, Country and Constitutions: Thailand's Political Development, 1932–2000* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 137–63; Thak Chaloemtiarana, *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2006), pp. 204–18; and Paul M. Handley, *The King Never Smiles:*

A Biography of Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2006), Chapters 5–8, pp. 80–155.

47   See preceding note.

48   Chanida Chitbandit, *Khrongkan annueang ma chak phraratchadamri kansathapana phraratcha-amnatnam nai phrabatsomdetphrachaoyuhua* [The Royally Initiated Projects: The Making of King Bhumibol's Royal Hegemony] (Bangkok: Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2007).

49   For a tribute to the pace that the king set during those years, see Vasit Dejkunjorn, *Roi phrayukkhonlabat banthuek khwamsongcham khong phon to. o. Wasit Detkunchon* (Bangkok: Matichon, 2001), available in English translation as Vasit Dejkunjorn, *In His Majesty's Footsteps: A Personal Memoir* (Bangkok: Heaven Lake Press, 2006).

50   See "Lese-majeste websites a matter of concern for Abhisit govt", *The Nation*, 9 January 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read. php?newsid=30092798>, and Pavin Chachavalpongpun, "In Thailand: Abhisit, the Monarchy and National Security", OpinionAsia, 16 January 2009 <http://www. opinionasia.org/AbhisitMonarchySecurity>.

51   Anderson, *Withdrawal Symptoms*, op. cit., pp. 159–73.

52   See Duncan McCargo, "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand", *The Pacific Review* XVIII, no. 4 (December 2005): 499–519, and "Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South: Network Monarchy Strikes Back?", *Critical Asian Studies* XXXVIII, no. 1 (March 2006): 39–71. Note, too, the influence of Handley, *The King Never Smiles*, on McCargo's theory of "network monarchy".

53   A widely noted example of such stands has been the columns of Police General Vasit Dejkunjorn — a veteran crusader for police reform, well known novelist and former senior aide to the king — in the daily newspaper *Matichon*, including "*Minpramat Phramahakasat*" [*Lèse majesté*], 16 December 2008 <http://www. matichon.co.th/matichon/view_news.php?newsid=01act05161251&sectionid= 0130&day=2008-12-16>; "*Phaenkan lom rabop prachathippatai baep thi mi phramahakasat pen phramuk*" [The plan to topple the democratic regime with the king as head of state], 17 March 2009 <http://www.matichon.co.th/matichon/ view_news.php?newsid=01act03170352&sectionid=0130&day=2009-03-17>; "*Muea man kamlang phao mueang thai khon thai ko tong chuaikan dap fai*" [When they are trying to burn Thailand down, Thais must help one another put the fire out], 28 April 2009 <http://www.matichon.co.th/matichon/view_news. php?newsid=01act02280452&sectionid=0130&day=2009-04-28>; and "*Cha topto chon plon chat yangrai?*" [How to counter bandits pillaging the nation?], 12 May 2009 <http://www.matichon.co.th/matichon/view_news.php?newsid=01 act04120552&sectionid=0130&day=2009-05-12>.

54   Thai Netizen Network (TNN), 26 May 2009 press release on "Cases Related to the Computer-Related Crime Act", offers a useful summary. The TNN Website <http://thainetizen.org> also represents a valuable resource; on the TNN's background, see Supinya Klangnarong, "'Netizens' and Political Agency in Thailand: Cyber-liberty vs National Security", paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, 26–29 March 2009. Another valuable site, "LM watch", <http://lmwatch.blogspot.com/>, actively tracks *lèse majesté* cases.

55   For a relatively mild version of such accusations, see Thanong Khanthong, "Over-drive: Lese majeste allows criticism but not abuse", *The Nation*, 6 March 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2009/03/06/opinion/opinion_30097261.php>.

56   "Political Turmoil: Crackdown Begins", *The Nation*, 13 April 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2009/04/13/headlines/headlines_30100388.php>, and, for an eyewitness report, "Battle at Dindaeng, Bangkok, 13 April", New Mandala blog, 13 April 2009 <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/rmap/newmandala/2009/04/13/battle-at-dindaeng-bangkok-13-april-2009/>. An overview of these four April days and the period preceding them is available in "Special Chronology: Red Revolt — Timeline: How the red-shirt protest developed and ended", *Bangkok Post*, 14 April 2009.

57   "Veera announces ending the protest", *The Nation*, 14 April 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30100507>, and "Key dates in the red shirts' rally", *The Nation*, 15 April 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30100554>.

58   "Red Rampage: Furious residents repel invading protestors", *Bangkok Post*, 14 April 2009; "Urban-terrorism tactics alienating the public", *The Nation*, 14 April 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30100477>; and "Govt wins the battle, but has it won the war?", *The Nation*, 15 April 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30100558>.

59   For the most serious discussion-*cum*-substantiation of this point, see the thread "Did Thaksin call for a revolution?", especially the historian Somsak Jeamteerasakul's 23 April posting, on New Mandala, <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/rmap/newmandala/2009/04/23/did-thaksin-call-for-revolution/>.

60   Chang Noi (pseud.), "The rage before the rampage", *The Nation*, 20 April 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/2009/04/20/opinion/opinion_30100801.php>; and "More Than 100,000 Thais Rally Against King's Adviser", Bloomberg News, 8 April 2009 <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=conewsstory&tkr=APSCF:US&sid=aOUYdX.ixIfg>.

61   See, for example, "Urban-terrorism tactics alienating the public", op. cit.

62   "Legal actions against wrongdoers in Pattaya rallies will be carried out in 3 or 4 days", *The Nation*, 12 April 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30100316>. By late May, too, it had emerged that the Abhisit-fronted government had itself organized the mysterious blue-shirted thugs who attacked red-shirt protestors at Pattaya before the latter invaded the summit venue; "Blue shirts organized by Interior Ministry", *The Straits Times*, 26 May 2009.

63   Whether that threat will materialize in the PAD's plan to launch the Karn Mueang Mai (New Politics) Party remained to be seen as of this writing; see "News Analysis: Political PAD marks start of power play", *The Straits Times*, 26 May 2009, and "Somsak first leader of PAD party", *The Nation*, 3 June 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/search/read.php?newsid=30104255>.

64   Thaksin accused these men of involvement in the September 2006 putsch that ended his premiership; see "Special Chronology: Red Revolt" and "More than 100,000 Thais rally", op. cit.

65   Pravit Rojanaphruk, "Resentment lingers among the poor over 2006 coup", *The Nation*, 17 April 2009 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/worldhotnews/30100672/Resentment-lingers-among-the-poor-over-2006-coup>.

[66]   Handley, *The King Never Smiles*, op. cit., pp. 83 ff.

[67]   The last man to sit on the Greek throne before the monarchy's abolition in 1973 was, ironically, the direct descendant of a prince plucked, while still a minor and in time-tried Balkan practice, from Central Europe (in this case, Denmark) to take the throne as constitutional monarch following a bloodless 1862 "revolution" on the part of his thirty-year-old state's professional army and French-oriented intelligentsia; see W.A. Heurtley et al., *A Short History of Greece, from Early Times to 1964* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 100–04.

[68]   For useful surveys see Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thailand's Durable Premier: Phibun through Three Decades, 1932–1957* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995), and *Chom Phon Po. Phibunsongkhram kap kanmueang thai samai mai* [Field Marshal Po. Phibunsongkhram and Modern Thai Politics], edited by Chanwit Kasetsiri et al. (Bangkok: Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 1997). Anderson, "Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies", op. cit., p. 226, notes another stage in the emergence of *popular* nationalism in Thailand — perhaps more successful than that promoted by Phibun — starting in the early 1960s.

[69]   Handley, *The King Never Smiles*, op. cit., p. 62.

[70]   The most stimulating sustained comparative treatment of Thailand's politics remains Anderson, "Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies", op. cit., pp. 193–247. In addressing the Chakkri reforms and the Meiji Restoration, Anderson comments, with reference to late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Siam, "Nothing in all this reminds us of Japan; everything recalls Johor or Kelantan" (p. 209). While well known and indeed intellectually influential in Thailand, Anderson's critique of Thai political uniqueness cannot compete in its reach or sensual appeal with the filmed historical epics — "The Legend of Suriyothai", "Naresuan", and others — from which some in the country would now have their compatriots learn history; see Hong Lysa, "Does popular history need historians?", *Warasan thaikhadi sueksa* I, no. 2 (2004): 51–52, and "Invisible semicolony: the postcolonial condition and royal national history in Thailand", *Postcolonial Studies* XI, no. 3 (September 2008): 315–27, especially pp. 324–26.

[71]   Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Thailand*, op. cit., pp. 75, 76 and 109, note that, as early as the final decades of the nineteenth century, both strident critics of prevailing social norms and power structures and princely would-be reformists unflatteringly compared Siam and Japan and that critics of royal absolutism in the 1920s drew the same comparison. A sample of more recent, academic work, available in English, includes Carl A. Trocki, ed., "The Emergence of Modern States: Thailand and Japan — conference proceedings, 19–20 March 1976" (Bangkok: Thailand-Japan Studies Program, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1976); Khian Thirawit et al., *Japan in Thai Perspective* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1980); Chira Hongladarom and Medhi Krongkaew, eds., *Comparative Development, Japan and Thailand: Papers and Proceedings of the Conference on a Comparative Study on Patterns of Economic Development of Japan and Thailand, October 10–12, 1980, Pattaya, Thailand* (Bangkok: Thammasat University Press, 1981); and Likhit Dhiravegin, *The Meiji Restoration (1868–1912) and the Chakkri Reformation (1868–1910): A Comparative Perspective* (Bangkok: Faculty of

Political Science, Thammasat University, 1984). Again, Anderson, "Studies of the Thai State", op. cit., pp. 205 ff., also argues strongly for fundamental lack of similarity between the Meiji Restoration and Chakkri reformism.

[72]   Anne E. Booth, *Colonial Legacies: Economic and Social Development in East and Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), makes evident both the value of comparative historical studies of Southeast Asia's political economy at the regional level and the lack of scholarship on Southeast Asia comparable to, say, Bruce Cumings, "The Origins and Development of the Northeast Asian Political Economy: Industrial Sectors, Product Cycles, and Political Consequences", *International Organization* XXXVIII, 1 (Winter 1984): 1–40.

[73]   While suggesting this sense, the following discussion does not offer a systematic account of the ROK's remarkable political transformation during the past quarter-century.

[74]   See McCargo, "Thailand: State of Anxiety", op. cit., pp. 345–48.

[75]   See Ockey, "Democracy and Street Poitics", op. cit., pp. 323, 327, 330.

[76]   See "Man in the News — Lee Myung Bak: The Evolution of a Man Called 'Bulldozer'", *New York Times*, 20 December 2007 <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/ 12/20/world/asia/20lee.html>. On Lee's experience in Hyundai's first large over-seas project — the construction between 1965 and 1968 of a 98-kilometre-long road in far-southern Thailand — and on the place of this project in the man's, the firm's and the Korean economy's histories, see John P. DiMoia, "Before Rolling Thunder: Hyundai Construction and Southeast Asia, 1965–1973", paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, 26–29 March 2009. The paper includes a black-and-white photograph of a young Lee Myung-bak riding a "*rot phuying*" motorbike past a typical rural Thai elementary school.

[77]   This new title made him, in effect, "King Bhumibol the Great"; Handley, *The King Never* Smiles, op. cit., p. 316.

[78]   Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton, updated edition, 2005), pp. 380 and 392, and John Kie-chiang Oh, *Korean Politics: The Quest for Democratization and Economic Development* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press), pp. 76, 108.

[79]   Chi Jung Nam, "Olympics to World Cup", in *Korea Witness: 135 Years of War, Crisis and New in the Land of the Morning Calm*, edited by Donald Kirk and Choe Sang Hun (Seoul: EunHaeng NaMu and Seoul Foreign Correspondents Club, 2006), pp. 311–13.

[80]   On Kim Dae-jung's roots in Jeolla and its politics, see Cumings, *Korea's Place*, op. cit., p. 366. While a native of Gyeongsang, Roh Moo-hyun was early in his political career a member of a regional party with its roots in Jeolla; one might regard his long-term effort to reduce the role of regional animosities in ROK politics in the context of a determination to end the marginalization of Jeolla and to re-orient that politics towards ideological and democratic principles rather than regional rivalries; see Jaung Hoon, *President Roh Moo-hyun and the New Politics of South Korea* (New York: Asia Society Asian Update, February 2003), pp. 6–7, and Cumings, *Korea's Place*, op. cit., p. 400.

81   On Jeolla, see Cumings, *Korea's Place*, op. cit., pp. 171, 176, 192, 219, 243–44, 326, 386, 457. The Donghak rebellions of the 1890s are treated on pp. 115–20. The second chapter of Somchai Phattharathananunth, *Civil Society and Democratization: Social Movments in Northeast Thailand* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2006), surveys the tradition of "Political Radicalism in Isan". On Isan's tradition of rebellion, also see Preecha Uitragool, "From Men of Merit to Men of Wisdom: Peasant Resistance in Northeast Thailand in the Twentieth Century", in *Village Communities, States, and Traders: Essays in Honour of Chatthip Nartsupha*, edited by Nozaki Akira and Chris Baker (Bangkok: Thai-Japanese Seminar and Sangsan Publishing House, 2003), pp. 135–46, and the same scholar's "Peasant Resistance in Isan 1900–1995: From the *Phu Me Bun* Rebels to the Northeastern Small Farmers Assembly", doctoral dissertation, James Cook University of Northern Queensland, 2002.

82   Cumings, *Korea's Place*, op. cit., pp. 354–55.

83   Lee Myung-bak is a creature of the world of the *chaebol*, or business groups, whose dominance of the ROK economy and sheer size date largely to the era of dictatorial rule in Seoul; see Cumings, *Korea's Place*, op. cit., pp. 322–31, and also note 76 above. The suicide of Roh Moo-hyun on 23 May 2009 suggested that, the removal of its military from politics notwithstanding, the ROK continues to grapple with the long-term effects of dictatorship; see "Trying to Break from Past, Roh Was Caught by It", *The International Herald Tribune*, 26 May 2009.

84   See "Over half of all Thais now live in cities", *Bangkok Post*, 28 June 2007.

85   See Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Thailand*, op. cit., pp. 212 ff.

86   See note 16.

87   One Seoul businessman who has worked often in Bangkok commented to the author that Thailand's current polarization made him glad that the ROK always had the northern Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) nearby to temper the behaviour and policies of its elites towards the country's less affluent. North Korea, he meant, long offered an apparently successful egalitarian alternative, awareness of which made it impossible for South Korea to risk the level of naked social inequality that he had witnessed in Thailand. Of course, the Lao People's Democratic Republic might have played for Thailand a role similar to that of the DPRK for the ROK; no such luck. Also, proponents of what one might call deep culturalism might argue that the contrast between the commitment to egalitarian principles in Korean political cultural and the contrasting nature of Thai political culture have nothing to do with these countries' twentieth-century, let alone twenty-first-century, experiences. To return to two still respected works of modernization theory, Gregory Henderson, *Korea: The Politics of the Vortex* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968) argues for the pre-modern origins of the country's "mass society", while Fred Riggs, *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966), describes the pre-modern Siamese polity as a series of cosmologically sanctioned nested hierarchies. Others might go farther than Riggs and root modern Thai society's status-ridden nature in the mists of earliest Tai history. Such matters lie well outside the scope of the present article, and, indeed Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Thailand*, op. cit., pp. 220–24, argues persuasively for the emergence of a "mass society" in Thailand from the mid-1970s onward.

88   Again see Anderson, "Withdrawal Symptoms", op. cit. Not least, Anderson
      highlights the deep interest in issues of social inequality during the mid-1970s
      among students and other groups in Thai society. The relative lack of such
      interest in the current period is notable. This lack of interest offers further
      contrast with the South Korean experience, which featured the crystallization
      of an opposition movement around the country's *minjung* or "alienated classes".
      For a definition of *minjung*, see Choi Jang Jip, "Political Cleavages in South
      Korea", in *State and Society in Contemporary Korea*, edited by Koo Hagen
      (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 17, n. 6, which argues for continuity
      between the "collective historical consciousness that is alienated from existing
      relationships of domination" and the Donghak movement. A brief history of
      the *minjung* movement appears in Koo Hagen, "The State, *Minjung*, and the
      Working Class in South Korea", pp. 131–62 in ibid. Carter Eckert, "The South
      Korean Bourgeoisie: A Class in Search of Hegemony", in ibid., pp. 95–130, makes
      clear that, Henderson's "vortex" notwithstanding, deep-rooted classism marked
      the attitude of many more affluent South Koreans toward this movement; see
      pp. 113 ff. On movements of the excluded in recent Thai history, see Somchai,
      Civil Society and Democratization, and Chris Baker, "Thailand's Assembly of the
      Poor: background, drama, reaction", *South East Asia Research* VIII, 1 (March
      2000): 5–29.

89   See the explicit linkages, for example of Jeolla's Isan-like position in the ROK
      to the demonstrations against martial law that preceded that dictatorship's
      infamous Gwangju massacre in Oh, *Korean Politics*, op. cit., pp. 80 ff.