

The Politics of Reform and the Future of Thailand

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Abstract

Historically, King Chulalongkorn in the 1890s initiated the idea of political and administrative reform in the Chakri Reform, which limited political and development reform, thus resulted in the emerging Thai state that did not develop its attributes—developmental orientation, cohesiveness, and strength of the bureaucracy. Starting with the 1991 Coup which ended in a mass protest of bloody May 1992, critics and politicians called for a political reform to avoid future crisis stemming from the inefficient political system. The National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) which staged the recent 2014 Coup also claimed its righteous role in taking power by force so that it could construct/manufacture the reform project for the country. But as the government and the junta tried to portray a new apolitical version of reform, one that is not a result of the internal conflict between the new rising political force based on the rural constituency and the traditional elite and upper middle class who eventually lost trust in the electoral system and government, the road to reform looks more reminiscent of the grand old reform which never created real developmental institutions capable of change. At issue now is not so much about the modern form and efficacy of the government as about who should rightly rule and govern the country—the elected or appointed government.

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