



UCBMUN XXI



Thailand 2014: The Bangkok Shutdown

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Head Chair Letter

Dear Delegates,

I am so excited to welcome you to UC Berkeley Model United Nations XXI. My name is Disha Subramaniam, and I will be serving as your Head Chair for Thailand 2014: The Bangkok Shutdown. I am a fourth-year student double majoring in Economics and Molecular and Cell Biology. While I was born to Indian parents in the US, I grew up in Bangkok, Thailand, a vibrant and – as you'll learn this weekend – an often politically turbulent metropolis in Southeast Asia. Outside of this conference, I also serve as Head Delegate/Team Mom of UCBMUN's Traveling Team and specialize in herding large groups of people into hotels. In the rare moment that I am not working on MUN-related things, I enjoy brewing industrial quantities of heavily caffeinated Indian chai and having conversations at ungodly hours in my apartment.

Growing up in Bangkok in a politically charged time, I naturally developed an interest in the politics of the country - which ultimately gave rise to this committee. Within a month of moving to Bangkok in 2006, then-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was ousted in a military coup; the ensuing decade of on-again-off-again political turmoil shaped my teenage years in the most unique way. As both your chair and as someone who calls Bangkok home, I am eager to see how the delegates will navigate the complex political backdrop of the 2014 Thai political crisis – and perhaps alter the outcome of history.

On behalf of the staff of this committee and of UCBMUN XXI, we hope you find your experience on this committee invigorating and enjoyable. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with any questions about the committee or conference.

Sincerely,

Disha Subramaniam

Head Chair, Thailand 2014: The Bangkok Shutdown, UCBMUN XXI

Crisis Director Letter

Hello delegates!

My name is Celine Bookin and I am a first-year at Berkeley intending to major in Political Science with a concentration in International Relations.

A few facts about me: I have a passion for counterterrorism policy, particularly centered around the Middle East and North Africa; I love learning about historical and present-day warfare and war strategy; I aspire to be like Megyn Kelly; and I play the cello.

I am thrilled to be your Crisis Director for Thailand 2014: The Bangkok Shutdown! Despite campaign promises of a united Thailand, Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra's reign thus far has appeared to be plagued by tension and suspicion. What culminates is a series of protests beginning in late 2013, known as the Bangkok Shutdown. It is up to the leaders gathered in this committee to forge a path toward a united Thailand. If they fail, Thailand could very well see its twelfth coup d'état.

I look forward to providing challenging crisis updates that will test every leader's ability to maintain control of this inherently chaotic situation and stay on policy throughout the tumult. May a coup be avoided, and order in Thailand be restored!

Sincerely,

Celine Bookin

Crisis Director, Thailand 2014: The Bangkok Shutdown, UCBMUN XXI

Thailand: An Introduction

Nestled in the underbelly of South Asia lies a nation that tends to not draw much international attention to itself. Despite its apparent teflon qualities, however, Thailand has a seemingly endless amount of activity in its internal affairs. In fact, in the past decade alone, Thailand has toggled between military junta and democracy several times.

Thailand also has a very active economy, which revolves largely around its industrial, service, and agriculture sectors. Thailand has relied heavily on the exportation of electronic goods, which account for about 15 percent of its total exports. In addition, vehicle production has proven to be an emerging source of revenue for Thailand. The service sector has consistently demonstrated itself to be a dynamic part of Thailand's economy. Tourism is the most significant part of the service sector in Thailand, and is a critical part of the Thai economy. Finally, developments in agricultural technology have been one of the key factors in Thailand's transition to an industrialized economy. Rice is an essential crop for the health of the Thai economy; historically, Thailand has been the leading global exporter of rice. Seafood, coconuts, rubber, and corn also serve as important Thai crop exports.

Our committee transpires in Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand. Bangkok is the most populous city in Thailand, with over 14 million residents. The city is the nexus of Thailand's economy, relying heavily on wholesale and retail trade as well as service sectors to foster economic stability and growth (Source). In fact, Bangkok's wholesale and retail trade sector alone accounts for 24 percent of the city's gross provincial product.

Thailand's main trade partners lie within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). However, many surrounding nations have begun to employ trade discrimination to avoid domination of markets by Thai products.¹ Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, China, and Vietnam, which compose the GMS, all have economies that are rapidly expanding, with a combined 11 billion USD worth of infrastructure projects having been implemented or completed.² However, the economic prosperity that these trade groups bring is primarily being directed towards Bangkok, and the wealth inequality is rising because of that. Because the controllers of the wealth are deeply entrenched in Thai society and power, and there is a visible

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<http://www.slideshare.net/choenkrainara/thailand-s-international-trade-policies-16127698>

² <https://www.adb.org/countries/gms/overview>

lack of accountability, decentralization, and political stability, Thailand's economy will move towards the Middle-Income Trap of a reliance on low-skill, low-wage work and middle-class stagnation.³

Thailand in the 20th Century

Westernization and Modernization: Early 20th Century

King Chulalongkorn ruled Siam beginning in the late 19th century, and his reign in the early 20th century embraced both Westernization and a resistance to European colonization. In addition, he enacted many reforms that modernized Siam and made it more globally prominent and competitive. One such reform was a law of royal succession, following Western tradition, which allowed for a peaceful transition of power to Chulalongkorn's son in 1910. Under Chulalongkorn's reign, the pivotal Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 was crafted, defining the modern borders of Thailand. Its impact can still be felt today: geopolitically, in the form of the modern borders between Thailand and Malaysia, and culturally, in the sense of pride Thais hold for Siam's deterrence of traditional European colonization - something that sets

this nation apart from its neighbors to the south (British Malaya), and north/west (French Indochina).

As an independent state as yet ungoverned by any European power, Siam's involvement in World War I was strategic: it chose to declare war on the German Empire and Austria-Hungary in order to gain the favor of France and Britain. These careful calculations made by Siam resulted in success during post-war negotiations; Siam was granted full sovereignty. Chulalongkorn's move towards Westernization and modernization is credited for avoiding colonization, resulting in this king - called "Chula" affectionately - being hailed as a Thai icon; the "Chulalongkorn" namesake crops up all over Bangkok; from universities to bridges to entire districts.

Siamese Revolution of 1932

The move towards Westernization started by King Chula eventually gave rise to what became the first major turning point in this newly defined Siam. In 1932, the nation was faced with the Siamese Revolution, remarkably in the form of an entirely bloodless coup d'état orchestrated by a group of academics and military officials known as the Khana Ratsadon, which later became Thailand's first political party. The

³<http://asiafoundation.org/2014/01/15/can-political-dynamics-cause-thailand-and-malaysia-to-fall-into-the-middle-income-trap/>

Khana Ratsadon originated in France as a meeting between a few members of the Thai elite. Responding to the global economic pressures created by the Wall Street Crash, the Royal Privy Council opted to slash public service salaries instead of levy taxes on income for the wealthy in a move to protect their fortunes. This, in addition to slowly developing ideas of democracy in the Western-educated Thai intelligentsia, gave rise to a group of students meeting in France to discuss the formation of a legitimate democratic political party, where they quickly realized that in the rural “upcountry” areas, there was widespread apathy about the goings-on in Bangkok, the seat of government. The Khana Ratsadon decided that the only way to bring about political change in Thailand would be to utilize the Royal Thai Military; there would be no full-blown revolution possible without galvanizing the rural populations. These young scholars orchestrated an eventually successful plan to take control of parts of Bangkok and demand a constitutional monarchy and new administration. And on June 24th, 1932, this plan was enacted.

The ultimate result was to transition Siam’s government from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy. Part of the stipulations that resulted from this revolution forced King Prajadhipok to grant Siam its

very first constitution. The success of this movement was immortalized in the erection of the Democracy Monument in Bangkok and, of course, enshrined within Thailand’s first constitution. While the immediate impact of the Siamese Revolution (in turning Thailand into a constitutional monarchy) is without a doubt crucial to understanding the politics of Thailand, it is also important to look at the more abstract cultural implications of the ideologies propagated by this revolution, which persist into today’s Thailand and into the landscape of this committee. The idea put forth by the Khana Ratsadon (an elite and highly educated group) was that the rural classes were incapable of deciding the fate of their own country and that it would be up to them, the intelligentsia and military, to direct the country towards prosperity. It is crucial to bear this theme in mind when examining Thailand’s political atmosphere today.

Early Days of Democracy: 1932-1946

Within a decade of the 1932 Siamese Revolution, the country (called Thailand beginning in 1939) was embroiled in chaos characteristic of many of the new Southeast Asian democracies at the time, leading to the eventual emergence of the military faction led by Luang Phibunsongkhram (commonly referred to as simply Phibun).

Phibun had been a more moderate leader of the Khana Ratsadon and had significant clout both before and as a result of his leadership in the bloodless coup. As prime minister, Phibun endorsed extremely nationalist policies with the end goal of unifying all of Thailand. Additionally, he allied Thailand with Japan in a historically significant move that guided Thailand's actions throughout World War II and has been the subject of significant critique in the ensuing decades. In early 1941, Thailand invaded French Indochina, beginning the brief French-Thai War. A few months later, a peace settlement was brokered with the aid of Japan, and Thailand chose that time to declare its neutrality in the war, although Thailand proceeded to assist Japan in several ways throughout the war.

At World War II's end, Prime Minister Phibun was put on trial under the charges of war crimes for having aided the Axis Powers, but was acquitted, allowing him to continue wielding significant influence over Thai politics. Thailand allied itself with the United States after the war, marking the beginning of its slow path toward a democratic system. However, the country also found itself embroiled in political instability marked by several coup d'états, controversies at the Palace, protests, and on-again-off-again military rule.

In perhaps one of the most significant shifts in the Thai political landscape of this time, in 1946, King Ananda was found dead under mysterious circumstances, just one year after he returned from his exile, following which his brother, King Bhumiphol Adulyadej, ascended to the throne.⁴ While the cause of King Ananda's death was initially thought to have been an accidental misfire of a Colt .45 pistol on the part of the King himself, public pressure and a subsequent royal inquiry began to unearth some of the more questionable aspects of this death (though never entirely). The ensuing seven years saw a lengthy trial, resulting in the questionable sentencing of King Ananda's secretary and two other royal associates, a verdict that was largely viewed by the international community as insufficient.⁵ Over the years, discussions of potential motivations for a regicide have ranged from the belief of its providing an impetus for a stronger military government to the implication that King Bhumipol had some role to play in this death.⁶ Discussion of the latter theory was and continues to be heavily hushed up in Thailand, due in part to the creation of an atmosphere of fear by

⁴ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/flash/june/siam46.htm>

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<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB947195451842936035>

⁶ <http://www.zenjournalist.com/2012/01/the-tragedy-of-king-bhumibol-iii/>

Phibun in conjunction with strongly enforced Lèse-Majesté laws.

King Ananda Mahidol's death was a defining moment in Thai history for a range of reasons: from the controversy that surrounded the death to the ascension and crowning of King Bhumipol, a truly loved and revered icon in Thailand.

Late 20th Century Turbulence

Beyond the controversies plaguing the Royal Family, Thailand moved forward into the Cold War era and gradually began to become both politically and culturally aligned with the United States. The 1950s and 60s saw intermittent periods of military rule alongside an increasingly galvanized student population. In 1973, the student uprising at Democracy Monument managed to bring about the fall of the military government, replacing it with free elections. Although these student protests against Field Marshal Thanom came with the price of dozens of student lives, primarily from Thammasat University, the resultant election led to unstable governments.⁷ As a result, the military reclaimed power in 1976, but a new constitution was proclaimed in

1978.⁸ Under this civilian constitution, General Prem Tinsulanonda was voted in as prime minister with an overwhelming 79.8% of the National Assembly's votes in March 1979, and continued his rule with a successful reelection until 1988.⁹

The 1973 Thammasat University Student Uprising created a stark contrast to the 1932 "Revolution" - a bloodless coup orchestrated almost entirely by Bangkok's rich elite. This movement served to highlight a growing trend of mass political involvement in Thailand; a far cry from the apathy perceived by the Khana Ratsadon in 1932. This uprising denoted a culmination of the increased voices of university students in the Thai political sphere, paving the way for the voices of other factions in the coming years.

In 1976, Thammasat University was the site of a large-scale massacre perpetrated by the Thai Armed Forces against students who had protested the previous day against an incident of police brutality across the city. The demonstration had involved a theatrical skit that seemed to simulate the hanging of the Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn. The following day, the army intervened and massacred the protesters, citing lèse-majesté. The official death toll released by

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http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/14/newsid_2534000/2534347.stm

⁸ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-15641745>

⁹ http://www.th4u.com/prem_tinsulanonda.htm

the government was 46, but multiple other sources have reported fatalities at greater than 100. The massacre had the effect of sufficiently suppressing future revolts for a substantial amount of time.

General Chatichai Choonhavan was democratically elected in 1988, but there was another military coup, albeit bloodless, in 1991 led by Sunthorn Kongsompong because of complaints of corruption and inflation. The Chatichai government was replaced with the National Peacekeeping Council.¹⁰ During the rule of the military council, General Suchinda Kraprayoon was selected undemocratically as the prime minister, which caused many of the middle class to rise up in protest. This culminated in what is known as Black May, during which the military crackdown on these demonstrations left an estimated 20 civilians dead and 300 injured, although King Bhumibol Adulyadej eventually managed to arbitrate and end the conflict.¹¹

Later in September 1992, elections pushed Chuan Leekpai, leader of the Democratic Party, to the position of prime minister, a spot he held for longer than any other elected prime minister, until his government

collapsed in 1995. The voluntary dissolution, stemming from a corruption scandal in which a land redistribution program to poor farmers ended up benefiting several wealthy families, including the husband of a member of the Democratic Party, was a remarkable event in Thai history because the army pledged to remain uninvolved.¹²

The following regime of Banharn Silpa-archa lasted until 1996, when it was forced to resign due to extreme corruption and exceedingly poor economic policies of overlending that partially created the Asian Economic Crisis of 1997.¹³ This economic collapse was exacerbated by the regime of Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, under whose rule the baht lost 40% of its value and Thailand had to seek a \$17.2 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund. However, the military again remained neutral, although several thousand middle-class protesters demanded that Chavalit step down.¹⁴ The twentieth century came to a close as Chuan Leekpai was reelected as prime minister, a position in which he endured the remainder

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<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/08/07/world/sunthorn-kongsompong-68-thai-general-led-1991-coup.html>

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<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/may/19/from-archives-thai-army-massacres>

¹²

<http://www.nytimes.com/1995/05/20/world/thai-government-collapses-in-a-land-reform-scandal.html>

¹³<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/25/world/asia/banharn-silpa-archa-former-prime-minister-of-thailand-dies-at-83.html>

¹⁴http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1997-10-21/news/9710210133_1_prime-minister-chavalit-yongchaiyudh-thailand-reshuffle

of the Asian Financial Crisis and saw the recovery of the economy in 1999.¹⁵

In the midst of the Asian Financial Crisis, Thailand saw a movement pushing for a redrafting of the constitution. In response to the 1992 Black May protests' push for greater accountability in government, a "Committee of Democracy Development of the House of Representatives" was established to draft a new Thai constitution. Through a partnership between former military government premier Anand Panyarachun, representatives of the Banharn Silpa-archa government, and other key academics and legal scholars, a new constitution was drafted and then put through a lengthy process of public consultation.¹⁶

Thai legal scholars cite the 1997 Thai Constitution as the "People's Charter" because of the extensive involvement of the public in its drafting and passing. The primary reforms implemented by the 1997 constitution included a bicameral legislature, in which both houses were directly elected by the people, compulsory voting, decentralization of government through the establishment of provincial administrations ("Tambols"), and strengthened executive

branch power.¹⁷ This constitution, while not in effect during this committee, laid much of the groundwork for the political landscape of Thailand in the 2000s - including the turning point that was the election of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Seeds of Unrest

Thaksin Shinawatra Era: 2001-2006

At the turn of the millennium, Thailand was beginning to slowly emerge from the ashes of the Asian Financial Crisis and domestic political turmoil of the years prior. However, with a brand new People's Constitution and a slowly recovering economy, Thailand's trajectory was beginning to look upwards.

In 2001, Thailand had its first general election under the 1997 constitution. In this election, the Thai Rak Thai (translated to mean "Thais love Thais") Party founded three years prior by successful businessman and former Deputy Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra won a striking majority in the House. Thai Rak Thai proposed a populist platform that appealed directly to the rural masses, contributing in large part to the continued support for the Shinawatra family outside of Bangkok. Beginning in 2001, Thaksin would shape the

¹⁵ http://www.th4u.com/chuan_leekpai.htm

¹⁶ http://www.unafei.or.jp/english/pdf/PDF_rms/no60/ch06.pdf

¹⁷ http://kpi.ac.th/kpi/en/con_th.asp

course of Thai history and politics in more ways than one.

Born to a successful provincial politician in Chiang Mai, a city in northern Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra grew up to become a member of the Royal Thai Police and obtain a master's degree in Criminal Justice from the United States. He and his (now former) wife Potjaman dabbled, largely unsuccessfully, in a range of different businesses, from silk merchandise to television shows to real estate.¹⁸ In the 1980s, Thaksin began leasing out computers to government agencies, utilizing his police contacts to secure contracts. This small business expanded quickly, due in large part to Thaksin's ability to forge connections with individuals in high places. Through the securing of a lucrative military contract in the late 80s,¹⁹ Thaksin's computer business began skyrocketing to success. Soon, this company evolved into what is now known as Advanced Info Services (AIS). AIS is currently Thailand's largest phone service provider,²⁰ although it is no longer owned by the consolidated Shin Corp, Thaksin's umbrella business. Thaksin made his entry into politics in 1994 and

went on to found the Thai Rak Thai Party in 1998.

Thaksin served as prime minister from 2001 to 2006. His tenure was defined by social and healthcare policies benefiting the poor, rural, agricultural areas predominantly in the north and northeast, a controversial War on Drugs with vast human rights implications and a staggering death toll, a hard-line stance on the insurgency in southern Thailand, potential conflicts of interest with his businesses (under the umbrella of Shin Corporation), and much more.

Thaksin's administration's policies tended to appeal broadly to his rural voter base. He implemented provincial level economic policies promoting microfinancing, direct cash transfer, streamlined low-cost agricultural loans, and promotion of local products through a program that exists today known as OTOP.²¹ Thaksin also implemented a broad healthcare policy known as the the "30 Baht/Visit" program, wherein each doctor's visit would only cost 30 baht (at the time, around US\$0.75). This program was popular among rural populations but criticized by health workers for increasing workload and decreasing quality.²² Overall, these Thaksin-era policies

¹⁸ <http://tri333.exteen.com/>
¹⁹

https://www.jobtopgun.com/profile/searchprofile?id_emp=255

²⁰ <http://ais.co.th>

²¹ <http://www.newsweek.com/economics-thailands-thaksin-catching-88109>
²²

<https://web.archive.org/web/20060820004448/ht>

saw incomes in the poorest region of Thailand to rise by 46% over Thaksin's premiership and cause a sharp drop in income inequality in the same time.²³ Thaksin's economic policies became known abroad colloquially as "Thaksinomics."²⁴

Simultaneously, however, Thaksin's administration was characterized by more controversial policies such as the War on Drugs and ongoing scandals of corruption, ranging from allegations that he had tampered with the 2001 election and subsequent 2005 reelection to suspicions that he was purposefully concealing his wealth and corporate conflicts of interests. In these five years, Thaksin Shinawatra had established himself as one of the most influential figures to have ever graced the stage of Thai political history. Then, in September 2006, while he prepared to address the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, Thaksin Shinawatra was ousted in a military coup.

Instability: 2006-2011

On September 19, 2006, just weeks before national House of Representative (and prime ministerial) elections were scheduled to take place, the Royal Thai Army staged a coup d'état against the government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The coup was masterminded over the course of several months by army generals Sonthi Boonyratgalin and Prem Tinsulanonda despite the issuance of public statements over the course of 2006 reassuring the populace that the military would not take control. As preparations for the coup brewed, the army issued an order that reassigned several members of the Thai army rumored to be Thaksin supporters and finally seized control of the government and major parts of the city overnight in Thaksin's absence.

The immediate effect of the coup was to cancel the upcoming elections and abrogate the constitution. Thaksin's parliament was dissolved and General Sonthi was assigned as temporary head of state. The immediate aftermath of the coup also saw a declaration of martial law and corresponding repressive actions characteristic of military regimes: blanket bans on protests, congregations of large groups in public, and other political activities; large-scale media censorship, with a specific blackout on non-Thai media

[tp://www.bangkokpost.net:80/midyear2004/health01.html](http://www.bangkokpost.net:80/midyear2004/health01.html)
²³

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTHAILAND/Resources/Economic-Monitor/2005nov-econ-full-report.pdf>

²⁴ <http://foreignpolicyblogs.com/2013/05/28/the-rise-of-thaksinomics/>

outlets; and mass arrests of former members of Thaksin's cabinet,

In 2007, over a year after the coup, democratic elections were held and won overwhelmingly by Samak Sundaravej, a close Thaksin and Shinawatra family-ally as well as leader of the People's Power Party (a successor of the now disbanded and banned Thai Rak Thai party). Samak's short-lived tenure as Prime Minister was marked with significant opposition in Bangkok by supporters of the 2006 coup (largely known as the "Yellow Shirts"), allegations of corruption and electoral fraud, and turbulent parliamentary politics – including an ultimately unsuccessful motion of no-confidence. During Samak's term, the opposition party; the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), also known as "Yellow Shirts" began taking to the streets of Bangkok to pressure Samak to resign. In September, the PAD Yellow Shirt protesters staged a siege of the government house and shortly after, a state of emergency was declared. On September 9, the Constitutional Court of Thailand impeached Samak on the grounds of corruption. He was replaced by caretaker Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat, Thaksin Shinawatra's brother-in-law.

The protests of 2008 persisted into Somchai's administration. The Yellow Shirt PAD protesters were well organized and

utilized a range of different tactics: these excluded expanded sieges of government buildings and parliament. These usually originated as peaceful protests but escalated quickly into clashes and saw an increased police crackdown in response. PAD saw some casualties. Significantly, Thai Queen Sirikit presided over the funeral of one such slain Yellow Shirt, sending a strong message from the Royal Family about their support.

Perhaps the protest tactic that gained the attention of the international community most intensely was the late-November 2008 shutdown of Bangkok Suvarnabhumi International Airport – wherein hundreds of PAD supporters strategically blocked two ends of the largest airport in Bangkok, effectively shutting down all airport operations for several days. This caused severe detrimental impacts to the economy, tourism industry, and Thailand's general stance on the global stage, with many international actors criticizing the use and disruption of a global platform to protest a domestic issue.

On the domestic stage, however, this protest was highly effective, leading to the ultimate Constitutional Court decision to disband the PPP on charges of corruption and banned many PPP leaders from politics altogether. By December 2008, Abhisit Vejjajiva, a member of the Democrat Party

(affiliated with the PAD) was elected Prime Minister by a parliament coalition of former PPP allies who joined with the Democrat party in response to the PPP's dissolution.

Abhisit Vejjajiva's tenure as Prime Minister began in a relatively benign matter. 2009 saw brief escalation of the protests of the opposition Red Shirts. Notably, a brief three week Red Shirt protest period in Bangkok and neighboring Pattaya to protest the perceived undemocratically elected Abhisit administration was quelled almost instantly with a strong military crackdown. Thailand remained reasonably quiet until 2010.

In March 2010, Red Shirt protestors, now representing the National United Front of Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) and a successor to Thai Rak Thai and the PPP began to gather and rally in a much more organized manner. The protestors converged on Bangkok and occupied major spaces close to the Government House. There was some rallying force behind these protestors that provided the financial and logistical means to transport individuals from rural Red Shirt strongholds into the capital city to demonstrate. The Democrat government fueled the perception that Thaksin Shinawatra was the rallying force behind these strengthened and more organized protests. Notably, the UDD Red Shirt protestors in March collected and splashed their own blood outside the

Government House – a metaphor for the idea that the Ministers and Government officials were 'walking over the blood of the people' to enforce their regime.

Red Shirts began to move towards Bangkok's commercial district, Ratchaprasong, in late April and early May 2010. The protests escalated beyond the peaceful baseline, and grenade blasts, tire burnings, and riots broke out in major commercial districts in Bangkok. Military crackdowns over this period were also violent, and the final death toll of these protests was racked up to be in the 200s. The protests increasingly began to look like they would serve little productive purpose and were simply devolving into riots and chaos. Organization among the Red Shirts began to dissolve and factions of the protestors began inciting violence, damage, and destruction in major Bangkok districts. Finally, in a last ditch effort to draw some level of attention to themselves, a faction of protestors set fire to CentralWorld, a large mall in the Ratchaprasong shopping district, gutting the entire building and effectively bringing support of the Red Shirt cause to an all time low. Protests fizzled largely until negotiations between protestors, Abhisit's government, and the royal family called for new elections in 2011.

2011 finally saw the election of Yingluck Shinawatra, Thaksin Shinawatra's younger

sister – who entered politics largely at the behest of her brother. Yingluck's first few months were defined by a disastrous flooding crisis in Bangkok, during which her mismanagement of the redirection of flood waters to protect the Bangkok business districts was largely criticized. Beyond 2011, the political situation in Thailand seemed to have simmered down until 2013 – when Yingluck introduced the Amnesty Bill. This was a Bill that proposed the dropping of charges against exiled Thaksin Shinawatra. This proposal was met with an uproar from the opposition party and Bangkok elite – and was the driving force behind the brewing of protests in 2013.

The Bangkok Shutdown: Where the Committee Begins, Jan. 2014

Our committee begins at the start of the New Year, 2014. Protest leader Suthep Thaugsuban has begun to galvanize large crowds in the heart of Bangkok. Protests have been breaking out throughout December.

The Thai military has treated these protests with lenience thus far. Yingluck Shinawatra's government has had a largely disorganized response to these scuffles and seems to be unable to contain the anti-government wave that is sweeping Bangkok. At the government house, the

newly reshuffled cabinet is just beginning to adjust to its ways

King Bhumipol Adulyadej is ailing. He used his annual speech on his birthday, December 5, to preach a message of unity and stability, but has not been seen in public since. Prince Vajiralongkorn remains unpopular among the Thai populace.

Beyond the Political Turmoil: Domestic Policy Goals

As a committee, your focus will be placed predominantly on negotiating an agreement between the military, government, and other factions. But as in all political crises, governance must go on. As a body, delegates in the committee will need to remain focused on national policy issues facing the Thai government at the time of the 2013-14 political crisis.

Tourism

Tourism accounts for a large component of Thailand's GDP. Political instability in Bangkok has been known to adversely affect tourism. Small businesses in Bangkok and other destinations rely heavily on tourism to stay afloat

Agriculture and Rural Development

Agriculture, specifically rice production, accounts for a large component of Thailand's GDP and, despite the progress of the last two decades, rural poverty remains an issue. Thailand's poor are particularly susceptible to the tropical weather conditions.

Healthcare System

Thaksin's 30 Baht/Visit plan is still currently in place and Thailand has universal health care, but issues of health worker shortages, fraud, and diminishing quality of services still plague Thailand.

Bangkok Transportation and Urban Development

Bangkok has always been notorious for its traffic. With an ever-growing population of migrants from the countryside and a constant influx of expatriates, Bangkok's roads, canals, and public transportation and other infrastructure need to be developed to support the needs of a globalized city.

Flood Management

The monsoon season of 2014 looks to rival that of 2011 and it is imperative that measures are taken to prevent a disaster of the scale that was seen two and a half years prior to the start of this committee.

International Response

Many international actors - including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and France - have expressed their concern at the possibility of a coup d'état occurring in Thailand. Furthermore, these countries have stated that they fully expect the military to stand by its word and remain neutral throughout this chaotic time in Thailand.^{25 26 27}

The United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki-moon has urged Thailand to remain a constitutional democracy and for all parties in Thailand to work together.²⁸ He has additionally expressed worry over the potential for violence, discord, and the violation of human rights.

Thailand's neighbors also have been active in demonstrating their allegiance to or mistrust of Yingluck's government, with Malaysia, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos being particularly involved in this regard.

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-calls-for-return-to-democracy-in-thailand>

²⁶ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/thailand-coup-leaders-hold-ex-pm-yingluck-shinawatra-1.2650454>
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<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/news/breaking-news/aec/30234374>

²⁸ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2014-05-22/statement-attributable-spokesman-secretary-general-thailand>

Malaysia

Thai relations with Malaysia have been strained for several years, mainly stemming from anti-Muslim actions from Thaksin Shinawatra's government in the mid 2000s. This tension peaked when 131 Thai Muslims fled into Malaysia, whose government then refused to release them back to Thailand until their human rights could be guaranteed. After a bilateral discussion that made little progress combined with unrest in southern Thailand, the Thai government began to isolate them and blame them for Muslim insurgency.²⁹

However, in August 2013, Yingluck tried to bring in Malaysia as a third party to the southern insurgency to entice the separatists to come to peace talks.³⁰ Despite these attempts by Yingluck and the Malaysian incumbent prime minister, Najib Razak, and their agreement on the Ramadan Peace Initiative, there was much criticism from Thai citizens. Furthermore, Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BSN) revoked their participation in the ceasefire after forty days and killed Imam Yacob Raimanee, an outspoken critic of the militants.³¹

²⁹ <http://www.newmandala.org/malaysia-in-2014-a-perspective-from-thailand/>

³⁰ <http://thediplomat.com/2013/08/thai-negotiating-skills-found-wanting/>

³¹ <http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/node/4720>

Myanmar

Myanmar, home to Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, is similarly struggling with anti-Muslim actions, like repeated violence and the refusal to recognize the Rohingya Muslims as citizens, which Suu Kyi has done little or nothing to stop. Instead, she blames the current Burmese government and the climate of global Islamophobia.³² In May 2013, after clashes between the Rohingya Muslims and the Rakhine Buddhists that killed 40 Rohingyas and displaced 1,200, the government arrested six Rohingya and no Rakhines.³³ A further similarity to Thailand is the excessive power of the military in policy-making. The Burmese constitution requires 75% or more of the legislature to approve an amendment. However, at least 25% of the parliament is comprised of military officers, who are unilaterally selected by the commander-in-chief, which is not an elected position. This creates a significant barrier to democracy, although Myanmar is globally praised as making large strides towards true democracy.³⁴

³² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-24651359>

³³ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12992883>

³⁴ <http://theconversation.com/aung-san-suu-kyi-democracy-human-rights-and-national-reconciliation-in-myanmar-20859>

Myanmar struggles greatly with extreme internal friction between the popularly supported National League for Democracy (NLD) and the military. Beyond that are the numerous rebel groups, the most powerful of which are the United Wa State Army, Kachin Independence Army, Rakhine Liberation Army, Palaung State Liberation Front, and Karen National Liberation Army,³⁵ which have been administering their own territories for several years now.³⁶ Although a national ceasefire agreement was created in January 2013, the armies of the Kachin and Palaung people have yet to sign on. Furthermore, the trust needed for permanent peace still does not exist, and the civil war would likely resume at the slightest provocation.³⁷

Cambodia

In November, the International Court of Justice settled a dispute of land between Cambodia and Thailand, ultimately awarding 4.6 square kilometers of land to

Cambodia but simultaneously denying some other demands of Cambodia, leaving both sides able to accept this compromise, an open door for further agreement.³⁸ However, this agreement happened on the coattails of the Cambodian prime minister Hun Sen's extremely narrow reelection bid and of Yingluck's failed attempt to push through an amnesty bill for Thaksin to return to Thailand. Therefore, neither country can afford to appear as if they are sacrificing national interests. This is especially true in Thailand, where the Thai Patriot Network has begun to protest the accession of land to Cambodia.

Economically, there are many ties between Thailand and Cambodia, especially in terms of trade. Recently though, Cambodia has begun to buy less and sell more to Thailand, evening out the trade disparity between the two.³⁹ In addition, Cambodia has initiated talks of a double tax agreement with Thailand, in a way that will further increase trade between the two nations. However, in a move that has the potential to cause tension, the second and third largest rice exporters have started to move some of their business from Thailand

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http://www.conflictmap.org/conflict/myanmar_rebels

³⁶

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/11/asia/myanmar-shan-rebels-civil-war/>

³⁷<http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21587272-despite-hopes-nationwide-ceasefire-agreement-trust-needed-lasting-peace-remains-long>

³⁸

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2013/11/thailand-and-cambodia>

³⁹

<https://opendevelopmentcambodia.net/news/cambodia-sells-more-buys-less/>

to Cambodia.⁴⁰ Even more incensing is the underlooked fight for gas and oil in the two countries' disputed maritime boundary in the Gulf of Thailand between the growing energy needs of Thailand and the booming oil and gas industry in Cambodia.⁴¹

Laos

Much of the relationship between Laos and Thailand is peaceful and mutually beneficial. In fact, they have publicly united several times on policy, such as declining to side with Vietnam on a dispute in the South China Sea against China.⁴² Furthermore, there are numerous joint construction projects, including the controversial \$3.8 billion Xayaburi Dam which will harm food security in Vietnam and Cambodia by disrupting the fish spawning season, which normally feeds about 60 million people.

However, behind the scenes, Laos is a large transit and destination site for human trafficking. The largest number of victims of forced labor and sexual exploitation are trafficked by Laos, particularly in the commercial sex trade and

fishing industry.⁴³ In addition, although Laos had a growth rate of more than 7% for the past six years before 2014, it is still mired in poverty and poor infrastructure. Laos holds one of the few one-party state communist regimes remaining in the world.⁴⁴

Questions to Consider

- Thailand was never traditionally “colonized” by a European power - a point of pride for many Thais that also has other implications. How might this unique aspect of this Southeast Asian country's history influence the way?
- What role do historically prevalent attitudes have to play in the negotiations in which you will be involved? How did crucial moments in Thai history such as the Siamese Revolution of 1932 and the 1973 Student Uprising bring us to where we are today - and how will they affect how we move forward?
- These negotiations will take place in the heart of Bangkok (the exact location will be provided to you in an

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<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/few-benefits-cambodia-thai-rice-policy>

⁴¹ <http://www.clc-asia.com/the-struggle-between-thailand-and-cambodia-over-oil-and-gas-resources-2/>

⁴² <http://thediomat.com/2012/08/laos-cozies-up-with-thailand/>

⁴³

<https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2013/215499.htm>

⁴⁴

<http://www.indexmundi.com/factbook/compare/laos.thailand/economy>

update paper). How does this location change the dynamics of the decisions you are making, bearing in mind that these decisions will have ramifications throughout Thailand and well beyond the capital city?

- What role does the Royal Family play in the complex landscape of Thai politics? How do they influence culture? How will you respond to crises involving the Royal Family, both as an individual delegate and as a committee?

Character List

Government Actors

- Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand

Yingluck rose to the position of Prime Minister of Thailand in 2011, following the defeat of the incumbent, Democrat Abhisit Vejjajiva. Though Yingluck's campaign for prime minister centered on the idea of national unity, many citizens remain skeptical of her intentions. One reason for this skepticism is the fact that her older brother, Thaksin Shinawatra, was Prime Minister of Thailand from 2001 to 2006, and was overthrown by the military primarily on the charges of corruption. Yingluck's government has already been associated

with controversy; just recently, it admitted to its association with the controversial rice pledging scheme.⁴⁵

- Nattawut Saikua, Deputy Minister of Commerce

Nattawut is known for his excellent oratory skills and fiery activism. He is a leader of the United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), also known as the Red Shirts. The UDD opposed the coup d'état against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in 2006. Nattawut has a history of leading and organizing large protests, including those in 2009 and 2010, the latter resulting in a severe military response. Currently, Nattawut serves as the Deputy Minister of Commerce in Yingluck's cabinet.

- Surapong Tovichakchaikul, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister

Surapong was a candidate for Prime Minister of Thailand several times, but did not find success. In 2009, he signed the UDD's petition for former prime minister Thaksin's amnesty after the coup d'état. In 2010, Surapong joined the Pheu Thai Party, and has been a member with various leadership positions ever since. He currently serves as both the Minister of Foreign

⁴⁵ <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/thailand-crisis-in-thai-rice-pledging-scheme/>

Affairs and the Deputy Prime Minister in Yingluck's administration.

- Charupong Ruangsuwan, Minister of the Interior

Charupong has led the Pheu Thai Party as its chairman since 2012, and also serves as the Minister of the Interior in Yingluck's administration. Having a lengthy background in various sectors in the government, Charupong was a natural candidate for a cabinet position in Yingluck's administration. He was first appointed Minister of Transportation and Communication. In 2012, Charupong became the Minister of the Interior after his predecessor resigned due to a corruption scandal.⁴⁶

- Yukol Lim-laemthong, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives

Though he maintains a relatively low public profile, Yukol has a large influence on a very important sector of Thailand's economy: agriculture. As the Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives, he has focused much of his efforts on two of Thailand's most important crops and exports, rice and rubber, in an effort to allow Thailand to continue to be globally

competitive in the exportation of those two commodities.⁴⁷

- Niwatthamrong Boonsongpaisan, Minister of Commerce and Deputy Prime Minister

Niwatthamrong began his career in the business sector, and worked in association with Thaksin Shinawatra. In addition, he was the director of the widely-criticized rice pledging scheme. He now serves as the Minister of Commerce and Deputy Prime Minister in Yingluck's administration, and has vocalized his support of increased globalization and free trade in order to stimulate Thailand's economy.

Military Actors

- Prayut Chan-o-cha, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army

Prayut is Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army. In November 2013, Prayut stated that the army would remain neutral as the first protests began against Yingluck's administration, and he would not lead a coup effort.⁴⁸ Prayut has made clear

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<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/news/national/aec/30193347>

⁴⁷<https://www.gupta-verlag.com/news/industry/13194/thailand-minister-targets-reduced-production-cost-to-shore-up-rubber-price>

⁴⁸ <http://www.bangkokpost.com/archive/prayuth-says-army-neutral/382363>

that he did not support former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, and there have been several instances in which the two leaders have exchanged biting remarks.

- Thanasak Patimaprakorn, Chief of Defense Forces of the Royal Thai Army

Thanasak serves as the Chief of Defense Forces for the Royal Thai Army and is subordinate to Commander-in-Chief Prayut.⁴⁹ In this position, Thanasak directs combat readiness and military operations of the Royal Thai Army. Despite the fact that he receives orders from Prayut, Thanasak's position is the highest ranking in the Thai military chain of command.

- Narong Pipathanasai, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Navy

With a military background focused on leading Thailand's navy, Narong rose through the ranks of the Royal Thai Navy to the position of Commander-in-Chief while under Yingluck's administration. He has been quoted on the record as stating that despite the tensions sweeping the nation, the Royal Thai Navy will not get involved in any protests or disputes as it has in the past, and that it will remain neutral.

- Prajin Juntong, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Air Force

Prajin has significant experience serving in various leadership roles in the Royal Thai Air Force, culminating in his current role as Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Air Force. Similar to Narong, Prajin has stated that the Royal Thai Air Force will remain neutral at the moment despite the chaos metastasizing throughout Thailand.

- Adul Saengsingkaew, Royal Thai Police Commissioner-General

As the Royal Thai Police Commissioner-General, Adul oversees all police forces in Thailand. In addition, he works closely with the three branches of the Thai military in coordinating law enforcement implementation. Adul has not commented publicly, as many of his colleagues have, that the military will remain neutral during this chaotic time in Thailand.

- Prawit Wongsuwan, former Minister of Defence

Prawit, who once served as the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army and as Minister of Defence of Thailand, now is rumored to be spreading news of the possibility of a coup d'état occurring. In addition, he has been referenced as a potential candidate for

⁴⁹ <https://www.cogitasia.com/the-leaderboard-thanasak-patimaprakorn/>

Prime Minister, should the coup d'état prevail.

Middle Ground

- Maha Vajiralongkorn, Crown Prince of Thailand

Maha is the only son of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, and therefore holds the title of Crown Prince of Thailand. Maha has much experience serving in the military, and holds the ranks of Air Chief Marshal for the Royal Thai Air Force, General for the Royal Thai Army, and Admiral for the Royal Thai Navy. Despite this extensive military background, his role in the military is now more ceremonial than it is functional. Maha's record is not completely spotless, though; his sexual scandals have been of much interest to media around the world, and have made him a controversial figure.

- Prasong Soonsiri, leader of the People's Democratic Reform Committee

Prasong was one of the central leaders in the coup d'état of Thaksin Shinawatra in 2006. He was then appointed by the ruling junta to the National Legislative Assembly. Since then, Prasong has become a leader of the People's Democratic Reform Committee, seeking to once again

overthrow a government led by a Shinawatra sibling.

- Jatuporn Prompan, leader of the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship

Jatuporn leads the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship, also known as the Red Shirts. The organization seeks to promote democracy in Thailand and oppose rule by junta, such as the one that followed the coup d'état in 2006. Jatuporn and the Red Shirts support the Pheu Thai Party, and by extension Yingluck's government. As one of the leaders of the Red Shirts, Jatuporn has stated that he opposes Suthep and his People's Democratic Reform Committee.

- Weng Tojirakarn, activist in the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship

Due to his stark opposition to the government of Thaksin, Weng aligned himself with the People's Alliance for Democracy, also known as the Yellow Shirts. He subsequently found the Yellow Shirts to be very undemocratic in their policies and platforms, and cut off ties with them soon after. Since then, Weng became a member of the Red Shirts and was elected as a member of Parliament for the Pheu Thai Party. He continues to be an activist for the Red Shirts to this day.

- Veera Musikapong, leader of the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship

Veera served various positions - from Deputy Minister of Agriculture to Deputy Minister of Interior - under different administrations in Thailand. Currently, Veera works closely with colleagues Jatuporn and Weng for the Red Shirts, and aims to bolster democratic principles and policies in Thailand. In addition, Veera has made it clear that he does not support the work of Suthep or his organization, the People's Democratic Reform Committee.

- Abhisit Vejjajiva, leader of the Democrat Party

Abhisit was the Prime Minister of Thailand from 2008 until 2011, when he lost to Yingluck. Under his administration, Thailand saw two economic stimulus packages as well as one of the most censored regimes in recent history. His administration faced many protests that turned violent, leaving many dead and causing a national uproar. Abhisit resigned the party leadership in 2011 after the defeat of his party in the parliamentary elections. He is now the leader of the opposition, the Democrat Party, and therefore leads the main minority party in Thailand's House of Representatives.