

Dao Din Student Activists: From Hope to Victims under the Thai Society of Darkness

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Abstract : The Dao Din group is a gathering of students from the Faculty of Law, Khon Kaen University, a leading university in the northeast of Thailand. The Dao Din group has been one of the most prominent student movements in the past four decades since the bloody massacre of the 6th of October 1976. The group of student is a movement who gather to oppose and protest against different capitalist-run projects that have impacted upon the environment since 2009. The students have become heroes in Thai society and receive support from various groups, especially the middle class who regard the students as role models for the youth. Subsequently, the Dao Din group has received numerous awards between 2011-2013. However, the Dao Din group opposed the military coup d'état of 2014 and the subsequent military junta. Under the military dictatorship regime (2014-present), security officials have hunted, insulted, arrested, and jailed members of the group many times amidst silence from most of the from the middle class. Therefore, this article posits the question of why the Dao Din group which was once the hero and hope of Thai society, has become a political victim in only a few years. The study methods used are the analysis of documentaries, news articles, and interviews with representatives of the Dao Din group. The author argues that Thailand's middle class previously demonstrated a positive perception of the Dao Din group precisely because that group had earlier opposed policies of the elected Yingluck Shinawatra government, which most of the middle class already despised. However, once the Dao Din group began to protest against the anti-Yingluck military government, then the middle class turned to harshly criticize the Dao Din group. So it can be concluded that the Thai middle class tends to put its partisan interests ahead of a civil society group which has been critical of elected as well as military administrations. This has led the middle class to support the demolishing of Thai democracy. Such a Thai middle-class characteristic not only poses a strong bulwark for the perpetuation of military rule but also destroys a civil society group (composed of young people) who should be the future hope of the nation rather than under the Thai society of darkness.

Keywords : Dao Din student activists, the military coup d'état of 2014, Thai politics, human rights violations

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