

Thai Social Movements and the Anti-ADB Campaign: The Chiang Mai Experience

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Introduction

The anti-Asian Development Bank (ADB) campaigns which occurred during the Bank's 33rd annual conference in May of this year was a milestone in the democratization process in Thailand. It marked for the first time that such a massive protest action was waged against a multilateral agency in the country. It also witnessed the biggest demonstrations ever held in North Thailand where together with Northeast Thailand, the majority of the country's poor reside. It was also the first time that the Thai social movements held an anti-ADB international parallel conference, attended by as many as 1,000 participants. The relevance of such an occasion, however, is not only in terms of the number of conference participants and demonstrators but more importantly, the events revealed the persistent problems of poverty, inequality and underdevelopment in the rural areas, concerns which have existed in the past and which continue to confront Thai society.¹

This paper will therefore attempt to assess the efforts of the Thai social movements to highlight the adverse consequences of ADB policies in the country as well as to seek solutions for these during the ADB May annual conference in Chiang Mai. The first part of the paper will contextualize these protest actions within the recurring issues of underdevelopment, poverty and the nature of capitalist development as pursued by the Thai state and external forces, such as multilateral agencies. The second part will examine the particular issues raised against the ADB by the Thai social movements. The different strategies by which the affected villagers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs) sought to bring these issues to the Bank, the Thai state and society will be discussed in the third part. The fourth and the fifth parts will examine the evaluation of the Thai social movements of their anti-ADB campaigns in Chiang Mai as well as the examination of the ADB and the Thai state on the anti-ADB protest actions respectively. The last part will conclude the more pertinent issues raised in the paper which will hopefully contribute to the growing literature on Thai social movements in their attempt to push for further democratization.

I. A Critique of the Asian Development Bank

The protests of Thai social movements are viewed as part of a massive global resentment against multilateral agencies as embodied in the Battle of Seattle in December 1998 during the third World Trade Organization's (WTO) ministerial meeting. This massive protest highlighted the latent resentment against globalization felt by people in the United States and internationally as a result of the perceived failure of the WTO to

¹An estimated 60 per cent of Thailand's population of 62 million people live in rural areas, and 90 per cent of this number are farmers. An estimated 17 per cent of rural inhabitants live below the poverty line. (Asian Development Bank Aide Memoire: 2000, p. 13)

address the problem of poverty and growing inequality within and among nations. (Bello: 2000, p. 10)

Such a reality was not lost on the Thai social movements who have their own share of criticisms in the way they have perceived the manner in which the multilateral agencies have mishandled their country's development. The Thai social movements' criticisms towards multilateral agencies is nothing new considering that they have always been critical concerning the nature of capitalist development which these agencies have continued in the country. Such a development in the past they believe has been responsible for the rise of Thai peasant as well as labor unrests. (Kaewthep: 1984, p. 142; Bello et.al.: 1998, p. 139; and Dilokvidharayat: 1984, pp. 123-126) A consequence of this development in the countryside was the rise of Thai non-governmental organizations (NGOs) during this period which sought to address the adverse effects in the manner in which capitalist development, as an external force, was brought into the countryside. This was the period which witnessed the activist journalist and presently social critic Sulak Sivaraksa railing against the "Americanization" of Thailand and the pursuit of material wealth. Sulak argued that "modernization" undermined the institutions and traditions which formed the foundation of Thai culture. Together with Dr. Puey Ungphakorn, Sulak started the Komol Keemthong Foundation dedicated to the promotion of Buddhist values, community education, social welfare and the preservation of Thai art and culture. Other NGOs, which also saw the contrasts between the capitalist culture and the village culture, called too for the government to separate the economy from outside pressure through a "nationalist economic policy of greater self reliance". (Pongpaichit and Baker: 1995, p. 385)

Exacerbating the situation was the widening gap between the rich and poor because these rural development projects, particularly those devoted to infrastructural projects such as the building of the dams and roads, have been useful only to the rural upper classes. (Wun'gao:1984, p. 198) Noting this, Prawase Wasi, a doctor and university professor involved with NGOs in primary health care, voiced out that "poverty was a result of the 'oppressive structures' of the state and capitalism and that poverty would be overcome only through resistance and self-reliance. Prawase it was noted "did not simply contrast 'village' against 'state' but contrasted the village as the site of the true Buddhist values against the state as the weapon of capitalism". (Pongpaichit and Baker:1995, p. 388)

Such arguments seemed to have been marginalized, however, as Thailand went on to become in 1991 Asia's "Fifth Tiger" with the world's fastest growing economy between 1985-1995. The World Bank calculated the country's growth at an average of ten per cent a year. Such a rapid growth was fuelled by its dependence on foreign capital and on a fragile export sector. This growth could not be sustained. In July 1997, the Thai economy crashed and ironically these two factors of Thai development were partly blamed for this disaster. (Bello et.al.: 1998, p. 55) Much of the anger of Thai social movements is directed towards the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) which are deemed responsible for the direction of the Thai economy's growth and their failure to foresee its eventual collapse. The IMF and the Bank have

been instrumental in promoting Thailand with its openness to capital flow and its high growth rate (the highest in the world in the period of 1985-1995 according to the Bank) as a model of development for the rest of the Third World. (*Ibid.*: p. 41)

Such a situation would provide the context in which the meetings of multilateral agencies in Thailand were met with great hostility by the Thai social movements. The 33rd Asian Development Bank (ADB) annual meeting would be of no exception. In Thailand, the ADB is the third biggest provider for loans and academic assistance after Japan and the World Bank. Together with the IMF, these are the three major sources of official external (loan) assistance to the country. (ADB Aide Memoire:2000, p. 25) Prior to the convening of the ADB annual conference, there were already severe criticisms concerning ADB projects and policies in the country.

A. The ADB Wastewater Treatment Project.

The ADB Wastewater Treatment Project in Klong Dan, a fishing village in the province of Samut Prakan, East Thailand facing the Bangkok Bay seems to epitomize almost all of the criticisms which has been heaped on the Bank during the past years. (Janchitfah: 2000, p. 1) This project involves the building of a large-scale wastewater management plant and once completed, “the facility is designed to initially treat around 150,000 cubic meters of wastewater per day which will eventually be increased to a maximum of 525,000 cubic meters of wastewater per day in the following years”. (Sumi: 2000, p. 2) Approved by the Chuan government in 1995, the US\$605 million (23 billion baht) project is partly funded by an ADB loan of US\$320 million with additional funding of US\$70 million from Japan’s Overseas Environmental Cooperation Fund and Bt750² million from Thailand’s Environment Fund, as well as funding from the National Budget Bureau. The project construction is currently nearly 50 per cent complete. (Noel: 2000, A5)

A major issue raised against the construction is the absence of popular participation in the conceptualization as well as implementation of the project. According to Mr. Chalao Timthong, a villager in the area, they never knew of the project until a sign was put up in 1998. (Janchitfah: 2000, p. 1) Because of the absence of consultation and popular participation in the conceptualization and implementation of the project, suspicion abound that there is large-scale corruption involved in the project. This was precipitated when the Pollution Control Department (PCD) failed to convince the villagers of its reasons for changing the project site from Bang Pla Kod and Bang Poo Mai to their area in Klong Dan. “Along with the questions and concerns regarding the sudden change of the site are questions on the cost of land acquisition. According to the

² According to the 1995 ODA Annual Report by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “this project is an environmental aid project using a ‘two-step loan’. The two-step loan, which is a form of yen loan, is designed to ‘promote relatively small environmental projects’ conducted by medium to small-sized corporations or local governments in developing countries, and has the advantage of providing many recipients with funding”. (Sumi: 2000, p. 2)

feasibility study report, the plan was to purchase 1,500 rai of land at Bang Poo Mai and 500 rai at Bang Pla Kod. At Bang Poo Mai, the price of land was estimated at 200,000 baht per rai. Ultimately, the PCD ended up purchasing the land at Klong Dan for 1,030,000 baht per rai, more than five times the estimated cost at Bang Poo Mai, and at a site far more remote". (Sumi:2000, pp. 5-6)

The issue of corruption and external loans is not a new one and Thai social movements are very conscious of this as corruption is considered as one of the major factors which has contributed to the country's economic crisis. Thus, when the Thai government borrowed US\$500M³ from the ADB under the title "Social Sector Program Loan", approved in March 1998, public skepticism abounded concerning the absence of transparency in the manner in which the loan is being managed and monitored. NGOs, therefore, have demanded to be part of the committee tasked to do this. Such a demand, however, was rejected.⁴ (Arunmas and Noikorn: 2000, p. 4)

Such a concern comes in the light of a report which revealed that an estimated US\$600 million (Bt 23 billion) is lost to corruption every year in projects funded by the ADB. Senior procurement specialist Stuart Andrews told a seminar on ADB business opportunities that most losses are due to graft which occurred in social projects covering health, education and other sectors. He further added that "a critical element of poverty reduction is good governance" noting that "member countries and not his Bank had to bear losses through graft". In July 1998, the ADB adopted a code of conduct and set up an anti-corruption task force. (The Nation: 2000)

Aside from the absence of popular participation and good governance, the Samut Prakan ADB Wastewater Treatment Project also seems to go against another basic tenet of the ADB which is anti-poverty reduction. As Mr. Chalao pointed out, the project seems to do the opposite. That is, it does not reduce poverty at all because he argued that "when the plant begins operation, it will pollute the Klong Dan coastal area". He argued that "this will endanger not only a rich source of marine food but also the livelihoods and an important source of Klong Dan's 14 villages". (Janchitfah: 2000, p. 1) Because of this, the Klong Dan communities since 1998 have been demanding an EIA and public hearing. The PCD, however, claimed that they could not suspend the project. (Noel: 2000, A5) Besides from the possible loss of livelihood, another issue which seems to go against the ADB's policy of poverty reduction is the fear that the villagers will have to pay more for treated used water from their homes. It was reported that the PCD plans to charge 9-15 baht per cubic meter for wastewater treatment from factories in Samut Prakan. (Janchitfah: 2000a, p. 1) The absence of an EIA study has also brought about the concern that the construction of the foundation and buildings could cause flooding and land subsidence thus leading to the further loss of livelihood. (Noel:2000, A5)

³ Together with the agricultural sector loan, Thailand has borrowed more than US\$1.2 million (Bt46.11 billion) from the Bank to restructure its agricultural and social sectors after the country plunged into the economic crisis in July 1997. (Sukin: 2000, A6)

⁴ Of the ADB's social sector program loan totaling US\$500 million, "the first tranche of \$300 million has been disbursed, with only half of the remaining \$200 million allotted to "real" social restructuring". (Ashayagachat: 2000, p. 4)

B. Other issues against the ADB

Another major issue against the ADB is the imposition of a water tax in the agricultural sector because of the perceived growing scarcity of water. The idea stemmed from a belief that imposing charges would encourage farmers to use the water more efficiently. (Attahkor: 2000, p. 4) The imposition of such a water tax, which is one of the more contentious issues raised against the Bank, is a condition of the ADB and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) US\$600 million agricultural sector program loan (ASPL). (Janchitfah:2000b, p. 1)

The NGOs have also raised its concern with regard to the over-all framework or ideology of the ADB. That is, the Bank's ideology to boost competitiveness of exports in a free market system seems to benefit mainly the advanced, large-scale agricultural enterprises rather than small-scale farmers". (Atthakor: 2000, p. 4) A third issue is the ADB's loan interest rates which they say are the 'highest' imposed by any lender on Thailand or its loan conditions, which they allege are harmful to the poor. The NGOs have also noted the Bank's failure to help Asian economies prevent future collapse, confining its role to that of information supplier to governments in their region. A fifth concern is in the health and education sectors whereby the NGOs object to the call for the government to cut back on social welfare, saying this will largely hurt the poor. Furthermore, the NGOs believe that "the ADB's push for autonomous hospitals and universities would lead to massive lay-offs in these institutions and exclude the poor from such services. (Post Reporters: 2000a, p. 10)

A sixth issue is the weakening of the workers' bargaining power particularly the "reduced bargaining power of the provincial labor force after the ADB supported a minimum wage mechanism to be expanded nationwide to limit the minimum wage rise". (Ashayagachat: 2000) The Bank has actually called for the government to freeze the minimum wage at 162 baht until at least 2002. Some believe that this would make life difficult for workers. NGOs noted too that the Bank's support for privatization of state enterprises would result in massive lay-offs of state workers. And lastly, NGOs have also pointed out that the Yadana gas pipeline project on the Thai-Burmese border goes against the ADB's goal of environmental protection. They claim that such a project has brought about the widespread destruction of pristine forests in Kanchanaburi province and has threatened endangered wildlife species. (Post Reporters: 2000, p. 10)

II. Engagement and Confrontation with the ADB

The development challenge against multilateral agencies such as the ADB is not only a concern of Thai social movements but also of other social movements in the Third World which have been adversely affected by their economic policies. Unlike the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), however, which had to confront

the animosity of communities' adversely affected by their development thrusts during the 1970s, ADB projects were left basically unchallenged for the past 20 years. It was only in 1988 when there was a concerted effort among NGOs in the region, among which was the Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC), that ADB projects were systematically questioned. (Quizon and Perez-Corral: 1995, p. 2) Pressure from the NGOs led to a more systematic and open dialogue with the Bank and member-governments. NGOs were invited to attend the ADB Annual Board of Governors Meetings whereby they engaged in major lobbying activities which challenged the Bank's "over-all development priorities based on a centralized economic growth model and to open up greater public accountability, transparency and participation in the Bank's processes". Throughout these years, the NGOs felt that they were able to attain a headway with regard to these issues. (*Ibid.*: p. 37) Thus, the relationship between the NGOs and the ADB was basically characterized by engagement, i.e., dialogue.

For the Thai social movements, however, such a relationship did not exist. A probable reason is because the ADB's presence in the country is relatively new. Thus, the monitoring of ADB policies ensued mainly after the 1997 economic crisis when the ADB entered the country to give loans including conditionalities designed to reform the structure of the country's social and economic systems. (Thai Working Group on the ADB's Impact: 2000, p.1) Thus, the Thai social movements could not identify with the progress which some international NGOs believed they have achieved with the ADB during the past years.

A. The People's Forum on the ADB

An indication that things were to be different in dealing with the ADB already emerged during a preliminary meeting among the Thai and international NGOs, including the NGO Working Group on the ADB on May 2, a day before the People's Forum 2000 on the ADB⁵, from May 3-5, a parallel conference to the May 6-8 ADB annual conference. During this meeting, the Thai NGOs announced that ADB President Tadao Chino has "snobbed" the invitation to dialogue with the participants of the People's Forum 2000. His reason was that the invitation came too late and because of this he was now "too busy" to accommodate their request in his schedule. In the past, the ADB president would always address the NGOs but it would be in the venue of where the ADB conference was taking place. Because of this, the Thai NGOs called on the People's Forum 2000 to boycott any form of dialogue with the ADB. Instead, the Forum announced that it will only organize one big session to lobby the ADB in relation to the conference's resolutions. It added that for those who would want to engage the ADB, they should arrange the meetings by themselves. The Forum however said that it will help groups identify ADB officials they would want to approach. (Preliminary Meeting of the NGO Forum on the ADB: 2000, p. 1) This strategy is quite different from the past

⁵ The leading Thai NGO organizers of the People Forum 2000 were the Non-governmental Organization Coordinating Committee (NGO-COD), Secretariat; Towards Ecological Recovery for Regional Alliance (TERRA); and Project for Economic Recovery (PER).

whereby the NGO Working Group on the ADB⁶ arranged dialogues with ADB officials on behalf of all the NGOs present during ADB annual conference.

The People's Forum 2000 was attended by around 1,000 participants consisting of NGO practitioners and people's organizations, as well as by villagers of adversely affected communities with ADB projects, academics and social critics. Its purpose was "to highlight how the projects and policies of the ADB are exacerbating poverty, destroying the environment and undermining the rights, livelihoods and food security of local communities throughout". (People's Forum 2000: 2000)

Engaging the ADB officials. The flexibility of the Thai NGO organizers was seen when they decided to provide a venue for the conference participants, particularly the villagers of affected communities of ADB projects to express their concerns directly to the ADB officials. They however stuck to their stipulation that it should be the ADB officials to go to the conference venue of the NGOs and villagers and not the other way around. This highlighted the significance of such an event as this was the first time such a dialogue happened in the history of NGO engagement of the ADB. The first of such meetings was held after the last session of the second day of the People's Forum 2000. This was attended by the following ADB officials: Acting American Executive Director Ms N. Cinnamon Dorsife, Acting Austrian Executive Director Mr. Uwe Heinrich, who is in-charge of the ADB constituencies in the United Kingdom, Turkey, Germany and Austria and Australian Executive Director Mr. John Lockhart who is in-charge of ADB constituencies in China, Cambodia, Australia, Hong Kong and five Pacific Islands. During this meeting, the villagers from Klong Dan, Samut Prakan expressed their concerns about the ADB's wastewater treatment project in their community. They brought out all the issues against the ADB project ranging from the loss of livelihood due to the pollution which the project will bring to the absence of transparency and the issue of corruption. The villagers demanded that the suspension of the ADB loans for as long as these issues remain unresolved. The ADB officials expressed that the concerns which the villagers have articulated are "to be taken seriously" and that if proven true, one can only conclude that three of the ADB's policies have been violated, namely, 1) the need for an environmental impact assessment (EIA) prior to the implementation of any ADB project; 2) good governance; and 3) poverty reduction.

Presentation of the People's Forum demands to ADB officials. The second engagement of the NGOs and the villagers with the ADB officials was during the last session of the conference whereby the demands of the People's Forum 2000 were presented to the ADB. Mr. Myoung-Ho Shin, ADB Vice-President (for Region West) together with Yoshihiro Iwasaki, Director of the Bank's Program Department (west), headed the delegation of 10 ADB officials to the conference. Again, this was a first in the history of NGO engagement of the ADB.

⁶The NGO-Working Group on the ADB is an umbrella network of NGOs across the region which was formed in 1992 to engage the ADB. ANGOC is part of this Working Group. The Philippine NGOs were said to dominate this NGO coalition. It is currently known as the NGO Forum.

Among the more pertinent points raised were the following: (Statement of the People's Forum 2000:2000)

1. The ADB promotes and imposes development based on a narrow and prescriptive economic growth model, ignoring the many well-documented failures of this model and its inability to ensure ecologically sustainable or socially equitable development...;
2. The ADB does not only provide loans for socially and environmentally destructive projects, but also exerts its political leverage with client governments to impose far-reaching policy changes including sectoral reform, structural adjustment, privatization, and the removal of state subsidies and social services...; and,
3. The ADB's rhetoric promoting 'good governance' in recipient countries is the blatant and self-serving propaganda of an institution that is fundamentally undemocratic, unaccountable, elitist and secretive....;

Because of this, the People's Forum 2000 demanded that the ADB should "halt its loan disbursements for all active loans to the Government of Thailand and should stop the following: (Ibid.)

1. All loan conditionalities to the Thai government that interfere with the sovereignty of Thailand;
2. Samut Prakan Wastewater Treatment Project, in Klong Dan, Samut Prakan;
3. Agriculture Sector Programme Loan;
4. Social Sector Programme Loan."

Meetings after the conference. After the People's Forum 2000, the conference organizers arranged a meeting between the Thai and international NGOs, e.g., from Sri Lanka, Pakistan and the Philippines and Mr. Rintaro Tamaki, Director of the Development Institutions Division, International Finance Bureau of the Japan's Finance Ministry. There were around 38 Thai environment and human rights organizations during this meeting. The Klong Dan villagers were present too and they expressed again their apprehension concerning the ADB wastewater treatment project in their community. They reiterated their demands to suspend all ADB loans to the project until after the investigation. Mr. Tamaki, however, could not make any commitment to the disappointment of all the Thai NGOs and villagers present.

The rest of the meetings between the NGOs and ADB officials were now held in the ADB's annual conference venue and was officially part of the ADB conference program. As in the past, the dialogue between the NGOs and the ADB was mainly arranged by the NGO Working Group on the ADB with ADB officials. Conspicuously absent were the Thai NGOs, who although were now open to international NGOs engaging with the ADB during the annual conference, still refused to engage with the ADB officials in the Bank's conference venue and during the conference itself. Instead, their focus was now on another strategy of pressuring the Bank to accommodate their

demands presented during the forum. This strategy were the anti-ADB demonstrations which began on May 4, simultaneously with the parallel conference.

B. The Anti-ADB Demonstration

The anti-ADB demonstrations from May 5, 2000 to May 8, 2000 were carried out by the People's Network of 38 Organizations (See Appendix A for the People's Network list of demands and member organizations.) believing that the only way by which the ADB would listen to the demands of the Thai people was through confrontation. The seriousness of its anti-ADB campaign can be seen in the months-long preparation of the grassroots social movements, i.e., human rights activists, environmentalists, farmers' organizations and labor unions, for these event. Three weeks before the start of the ADB annual conference, more than 1,000 farmers and activists led by Bamrung Khayotha and Saneh Wichaiwong, advisers to the Forum of the Poor, gathered in the town of Khon Kaen to denounce conditions attached to the ADB loans which they claim would "marginalize the poor." They sent an open letter to the ADB president urging the ADB to step back from projects under the so-called country assistance plan, alleging those projects have a negative impact on the country. (Bangkok Post: 2000) The Thai authorities, aware of the movements' potential to disrupt the big international event mobilized their police and intelligence agencies to monitor all the anti-ADB activities.

The first of the anti-ADB demonstrations began on May 4, Thursday spearheaded by the 100-strong Students Federation of Thailand (SFT) who marched in front of the Westin Riverside Hotel, the venue of the ADB annual conference. "The protesters called on the ADB to stop interfering in Thailand by using the economic crisis to take the opportunity to push for controversial privatization policies. (Sukin: 2000b) The second of these protests was a "warm-up" demonstration in front of the Chiang Mai University of around 1,000 protestors which began in the afternoon of May 5, Friday, after the conclusion of the People's Forum 2000 conference.⁷ This was the "warm up" demonstration before the official opening of the ADB annual conference the next day on May 6, Saturday. Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai was to formally open the ADB annual conference at the assembly hall of the Chiang Mai University. During this demonstration, the People's Organization Network submitted their demands to the Bank to cancel the agricultural reform loan, remove conditions from the social reform program and scrap the Klong Dan wastewater treatment project in Samut Prakan. (Ibid.)

The opening session of the ADB conference on May 6, Saturday, saw more than 1,000 uniformed police formed in a line as the demonstrators marched to the assembly hall of Chiang Mai University on Nimmanahaeminda road. After talks with the police, the demonstrators were allowed to plant their anti-ADB white flag and they read a statement opposing the Agriculture Sector Loan and conditions to the Social Program Loan, as well as the wastewater treatment plant in Klong Dan, Samut Prakan. There was

⁷ There were about 500 villagers, activists and representatives of NGOs, some wheeling bicycles adorned with anti-ADB banners. They formed a procession at 3:30 p.m. to declare their opposition to the meeting. (Sukin: 2000a, A2)

a very conscious effort on both sides to refrain from violence. The police pledged not to use tear gas or harsh measures against peaceful demonstrators. ” (Attahkor and Khuenkaew: 2000) On the part of the Thai government, it was important that no violence occurs because it would be gravely embarrassed if this happens as the event was covered by international media. The demonstrators did not also want any form of violence from their end because they believe that this will erase any kind of sympathy they would want to generate from the middle-class or the Bangkokians who they believe is a powerful force in Thai society. This might also distract the public from understanding and sympathizing with the demonstrators’ issues against the ADB.

Like Prime Minister Chuan, ADB President Mr. Tadao Chino also refused to meet with the grassroots protesters and instead he sent on his behalf Mr. Gordon Wilkinson, the ADB-NGO coordinator. The first negotiation between the ADB and the protesters thus ensued during mid-day. The villagers demanded that the Bank arrange a special meeting with its executive board of directors to discuss their demands. The protesters also attacked the Thai government for refusing to give any reaction to the people’s movement. (Sukin:2000a, A2) ADB Vice President Myoung Ho Shin visited the protesters gathered outside the main venue of the Bank’s annual meeting and he informed the demonstrators that the Bank promised to assign officials by May 15 to attend to their diverse concerns and to hold a consultation with people’s organizations (POs) in June. As to the protesters’ call for their demands to be put on the agenda of the Bank’s meeting, he said it was “impossible” to do so “at this late stage”. The demonstrators rejected the answer as unacceptable. (Attahkor and Khuenkaew: 2000)

The third and final negotiation between the protesters and the Bank took place at midday on May 8, Sunday, the last day of the ADB annual conference. The Bank maintained its former stance not to convene the special meeting demanded by protesters. It also insisted on establishing a committee of its senior officials to review the protesters’ demands. This would be established by May 15 and an answer would be given to all the protesters’ demands by the end of this month. The meeting between the Bank and the villagers affected by its projects would also be arranged at a later date. (Sukin: 2000a, A2)

According to an ADB senior official, the Bank’s staff spent many hours discussing what stance to take against the protest. US delegates suggested ADB President Chino meet the villagers, but the proposal was refused. The protesters pledged to oppose any measures outlined by the Bank during its three-day meeting. The protesters finished with a concluding speech by several of their leaders. Despite the burning of the ADB’s flag, the demonstrators ended their protest peacefully by giving flowers to the police and the media. (Sukin: 2000b)

III. The Thai Social Movements' Assessment of the Anti-ADB Campaigns

The strategies and tactics used by the Thai social movements to raise their concerns about the ADB's programs and policies can be best assessed to the extent to which members of the Thai social movements believed that their goals and objectives were met. For Khun Nithirat Sopsomboon and Khun Saeksakun Kidnokorn, secretary and member of the Assembly of the Poor⁸ respectively one of the more important impact of the anti-ADB parallel conference and demonstrations was the increasing public awareness concerning the issues which they have against the ADB. This was also the view based on the assessment of the People's Network of 38 Organizations on May 22 concerning the anti-ADB campaigns in Thailand. They pointed out that such a public awareness takes on varying dimensions. One aspect of it was the awareness it inculcated in the people who are adversely affected by ADB projects in their communities as well as by policies nationally. For example, it was pointed out that "many Thais have forgotten about the Bank's loan for the health sector but the protests by the NGOs and the controversy sparked over by the ADB's loan conditions have forced many Thais to think twice about the almost forgotten debt and loan conditions for social sector programs". (Thawornwanchai: 2000, A5) A second dimension is the education of the greater public concerning ADB projects. For example, they believe that it made the middle-class and other villagers aware of the water tax. More importantly, they are able to make the people not only see the small picture but the big picture as well. That is, although the water tax only affects the small farmers, they are also able to bring out the social injustice with the imposition of such a water tax which the general public can identify with.

For Prof. Nithi Oeusti Wong, a leading historian and academic activist, the bigger picture is being able to link the anti-ADB campaign to the adverse effects of globalization which he feels that the Thai middle-class do not know much about. He added that the public awareness which the NGOs/POs were able to raise about the ADB would not have been possible in the 1980s when the NGOs themselves still did not have enough data concerning the projects of multilateral agencies. It is only now that there is an accumulation of information. The positive response of the Thai middle-class to the issues raised against the ADB is also such a feat considering that "they rarely listen to what the protests are really all about. They just expect the government to resolve them, although ironically, they are constantly disheartened by its inability to deliver anything." (Janviroj: 2000, A4)

⁸Assembly of the Poor is one of the leading grassroots movements in The People's Network of 38 Organizations.

A. The Effectiveness of Strategies Used

One factor which contributed to the successful consciousness-raising of the anti-ADB campaigns was the merging of the parallel conference and the anti-ADB demonstrations. Thus, for one week there was the continuing education of the public concerning the issues against the ADB which began with the parallel conference and ended with the demonstrations. Such an alliance was formed quite serendipitously. As noted by Khun Nithirat and Khun Saeksakun, the actions of the demonstrators were complemented by the organizers and participants of the anti-ADB parallel conference. Within this group, they noted there were different blocs. One bloc they pointed out was invited to present their problems with ADB projects in Thailand and in other countries in the conference. Another bloc was there to observe. These included villagers who were very much part of the demonstrations. A third bloc helped lobby the demonstrators' issues during the small meetings of the NGOs and ADB officials during the Bank's conference. They stressed that the demonstrators did not boycott the NGOs who wanted to speak to the ADB officials emphasizing that they actually helped each other. A fourth bloc were those who joined the demonstrators.

The nature of such alliances with like-minded NGOs/POs without any form of centralized leadership seems to have worked well too in carrying out the anti-ADB campaign. There was enough fluidity to allow for flexibility and to take into consideration the varying needs of not only the members of the People's Network of 38 Organizations but also of the NGOs, both local and international which partook in the parallel conference. A member of a grassroots organization also noted that such a separate strategy, i.e., of parallel conferences and demonstrations, are needed because it suits the very organizations which are behind these. That is, he notes that the NGOs are not really into demonstrations but are more concerned with the "theoretical" aspect of the problem while the grassroots movements are more concerned with the "practical" aspect. He also noted that sometimes there are tensions between what he refers to as Bangkok-based NGOs which sometimes have a tendency to "dictate" to the grassroots movements on what to do. But as can be gleaned from what happened in Chiang Mai, if ever this occurred it was very minimal as all the groups were basically satisfied with the manner in which their interests were carried out either through the parallel conference or through the demonstration.

Another factor Khun Nithirat and Khun Saeksakun explained which contributed to the public receptiveness of the anti-ADB issues is the external environment. That is, the consciousness which has been brought about by the anti-World Trade Organization (WTO) and anti-IMF/WB campaigns which was epitomized by the Battle of Seattle. Mr. Srisuwan, however, pointed out that the anti-ADB demonstration was still different from the "Battle of Seattle". Although this was the first time it happened in Chiang Mai during the annual conference of a multilateral agency, there was a very conscious effort for violence not to occur. Some of those interviewed attribute this to the Buddhist way, i.e.,

the path of non-violence. Another reason, as mentioned earlier on, was the demonstrators' appeal to the middle-class⁹ or the Bangkokians who abhor violence.

The receptiveness of the Thai public about the concerns raised against the ADB can also be due to the pertinence of such issues which it could identify with. Among the concerns which struck a very sensitive chord in the Thai public is the imposition of what is perceived as severe conditionalities by the ADB, e.g., the water tax and the privatization of schools and hospitals. As noted by Dr. Kasian Tejapira of Thammasat University, the demonstration in the North brought out the anti-external force sentiment. He adds that what has emerged in the anti-ADB campaign is the strengthening of the sense of nationalism that has also been brought about by the adverse effects of IMF conditionalities in the country.

The other issue which the Thai public was able to sympathize with was corruption as alleged in the ADB Samut Prakan Wastewater Treatment Project. A third concern was the unpopularity of the conditionalities itself as imposed by the ADB. It is already bad enough that because of the economic crisis, majority of the Thais can hardly make both ends meet. They therefore cannot accept any more additional burden to their pockets. An important instrument for propagating the anti-ADB campaigns and educating the public were the media. As noted by Dr. Kasian, the demonstration had the benefit of global media because it was an international conference. He adds that the Thai state could not really do anything except ignore the demonstrations. As declared by Khun Saeksakun, "the media has communicated our message to the Thai public and the rest of the world about the negative impact the ADB's loans policy on the Thai people". (Sukin: 2000d)

B. The Long-Term Strategies

The objective of raising the public's consciousness concerning issues against the ADB seems to have been attained. The challenge now is how to sustain this and more importantly, how the Thai social movements can resolve such issues. For Khun Nithirat and Khun Saeksakun, an important strategy is to strengthen and to build on the network and alliances which were formed during the anti-ADB campaigns. The People's Network of 38 Organizations felt that one thing which was achieved by the Chiang Mai experience was the laying down of the foundation to foster people's organizations (POs) to cooperate in a more long-term basis particularly in following-up their demands on the ADB. They also see such a cooperation as vital for their network of NGOs/POs to gain the power to negotiate not only with multilateral agencies but also with political parties during the election period.

⁹ Some would categorize Thais belonging to the middle-class as those earning between Bt 15,000 to Bt 30,000 a month. (Bello: 1998, p. 25) Furthermore, it was noted that "almost half of the middle-class are not natives of Bangkok, especially when compared with capitalists". They have moved to Bangkok from either the provincial towns or further away in rural communities." (Jumbala and Banpasirichote: 1999, p. 16)

An important challenge which confronts the anti-ADB campaigners is to convince the Thai public to stop all ADB loans. Members of the middle-class may agree that these loans may be anomalous but the solution is not to stop these but to punish those guilty of corruption and to reform the conditionalities of the loans so as to lessen the grave consequences on Thai society. A reason for this is the belief that the country is in dire need for external economic assistance thus such loans are still welcomed.

Concerning the effects of the People's Forum and anti-ADB demonstrations on the Bank itself, Prof. Sirichai Naruemetlikaken, who gave the welcome address at the People's Forum 2000, noted that one cannot expect that the demonstrators would be able to change the course of the ADB meeting but what is important is that those who had to say something to the Bank were able to speak and maybe as this continues, the Bank will eventually change. But he however shares Prof. Nithi's view that the ADB as the lender and Thailand as the borrower do not share the same "ideals". That is, the Bank is mainly concerned with gaining profit from the interest of the loans it lends out. The Non-governmental Organization-Coordinating Committee on Development's (NGO-COD) May 29 follow-up seminar of the People's Forum's demand on the ADB noted that the Bank is only willing to listen and to be sympathetic to a certain extent but there will be no action. Some, however, believe that the ADB even refuses to listen.

One of the bigger challenge though to the anti-ADB movement is how to deal with the Thai state regarding the ADB. As described by Dr. Kasian, Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai acted in an "authoritarian manner" when he dealt with the ADB demonstrators. Because he was elected by the people, his attitude is that he has the right to decide what to do and he does not have to listen to the people. Prof. Nithi points out that another reason why the government behaved this way is because "it has no choice but to follow the dictates of the international monetary organization". If this is the case, he adds, "then maybe there is no need for a government. It is as if no government is left". He further laments that whereas before it is the duty of the government who borrows the money to decide how it can repay the debt, this, he believes, is no longer the case as it is the international monetary agencies who decide and design everything for the Thai people. (Janchitfah: 2000b, p. 1)

The Chuan government could not however do much about stopping the demonstration as this has become very much part of the democratization process in Thailand. As noted, the ADB Chiang Mai meeting served as a useful gauge of the new Constitution of Thailand's effectiveness. ... According to the charter, the people must be informed of, and consulted on, the projects that would affect their lives, communities and country as a whole". (Business Day: 2000a, p. 4) To quell the demonstration would not only invite criticisms but also condemnation in Thailand and abroad. The fact that there is a need for demonstrations also reveals that much is still left to be desired from the parliamentary system according to Prof. Sirichai. The "showdown in Chiang Mai" therefore is said to reflect "a gap between under-privileged Thai people, represented by the NGOs on the one side, and the incumbent Thai government, in the form of "blind-folded" arrogant politicians and bureaucrats on the other". This, some would argue,

would explain why there was “confrontation” rather than “participation” leading to the NGO’s rejection of the ADB’s loans. Moreover, some have interpreted the NGO’s protest as “an expression of dissatisfaction more with the Chuan Leekpai regime than the ADB itself”. (*Ibid.*)

Dealing with the Thai state is also a long-term agenda as debates ensue on what the right approach is to be. Whatever strategy they choose, it is a reality that the people’s movement will have to deal with the Thai state if it is to succeed in pressuring the ADB to respond to their demands. Thus, a an editorial from *Thai Rath* argued that “instead of attacking the ADB, these NGOs should persuade the government and members of parliament to support their cause”. It added that “if the government disagrees, they can campaign for parties that share their concern and help them win in the next election”. (Dateline Bangkok, 2000, p. 9) Another editorial from *The Nation* called on the government, multilateral agencies and NGOs to unite because “they have much to learn from one another in order to increase their effectiveness and improve efficiency in serving their common constituents”. (*The Nation*: 2000b, A4)

IV. The ADB’s and Thai State’s Reactions to the Anti-ADB Campaigns

As equally important as the assessment of the people’s movements to the anti-ADB campaigns are the responses of both the Bank and the Thai government. These include both short-term and long-term reactions to the demands of the People’s Forum 2000 and the anti-ADB demonstrations. Unlike the Thai state, an immediate response of the ADB was to negotiate with the demonstrators albeit the refusal of President Tadao Chino to personally meet with the protesters despite the prodding of the United States delegates. (Sukin: 2000d) On hindsight, a couple of ADB officials lamented that President Chino should have personally addressed the demonstrators to show goodwill on the ADB’s part. Despite the negotiations, ADB and senior Thai officials also initially dismissed the NGOs’ protest as a misunderstanding concerning the Bank’s funding and loan policy. This they claim has resulted into a misinterpretation or misconception of the government’s ADB-funded projects which, in the long-run, they believe would help or be beneficial to the poor. (Lertcharoenchok: 2000, A4)

A more cynical attitude was the view of some ADB officials that these protesters are “dedicated professionals”. As articulated by the Chief of the ADB’s external relations office Robert Salamon, “these protesters would shadow the Bank’s every meeting”. (Sukin:2000d) Another official claimed that the protesters were paid by politicians in the North who are opposed to the Chuan government in an attempt to destabilize the country and to discredit the present leadership. ADB officials also claimed that the NGOs were the ones manipulating the villagers and that the communities with ADB-funded projects did not know any better. The NGOs were aware of such accusations and NGO-COD Coordinator Ms Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk rejected the allegations that the people’s movement was influenced by NGOs. She added that “they act on their own will”.

(Attahkor: 2000a, p. 1) Furthermore, one ADB official claimed that the demonstration was actually under the instigation of international NGOs, i.e., American, European and Japanese NGOs, claiming that the Thai NGOs were just following orders from them. Another believed that the anti-ADB protest in Chiang Mai is all part of the anti-globalization trend and has been given impetus in Thailand because of the new-found freedom of the Thai people to actively participate in political and economic decisions. Whether or not all these allegations and view points are true, what remains a reality is the need to address the specific issues raised by the protest movement.

A. Reaction to the Protest Against the Water Tax

Both ADB Vice President (West) Myoung-Ho Shin and ADB President Tadao Chino wrote separate letters to Mr. Dej Poomkacha, NGO-COD Chairperson basically denying all the allegations of the People's Forum 2000 and the People's Network of 38 Organizations. What was, however, more indicative than these formal responses were the informal ones.

For the ADB, one of the more volatile issues they had to urgently respond to was that of the water tax. Initially, the ADB was very adamant concerning this loan conditionality. According to Kazi F. Jalal, Chief of the ADB's Environmental and Social Development Office "farmers have to share responsibility with governments the cost of water provision". The Thai government, understandably, was in agreement with the ADB regarding the water tax. Finance Minister Tarrin Nimmanahaeminda, who chairs the ADB's board of governors, defended the government's position in a seminar on May 6, the second day of the anti-ADB demonstrations. He argued that the water tax would bring long-term benefits and help preserve the country's natural resources which is currently threatened by an alarming rate of forest encroachment. (Post reporters: 2000, p. 1) Government officials however felt that although they accept the ADB's argument against continuing what is effectively a subsidy, there was still a need to respond to the farmers. (Post Reporters: 2000a, p. 10)

Such a need to respond was highlighted by the pressure exerted by the anti-ADB demonstrators on the Bank which probably brought about a different tact from the ADB officials as they promised to exempt the poor, small-scale Thai farmers who are struggling to survive on subsistence farms from paying irrigation water charges. (Business Day: 2000, p.4) In relation to this, Mr. Craig Steffensen, ADB resident adviser in Thailand, claims that people should not be spreading misinformation about the water tax. That is, "a lot of people are complaining about the ADB wanting to charge small poor farmers for water pointing out that people who have access to irrigation systems are not small farmers, i.e., golf courses, housing estates, large commercial farms and industrial estates". (Poopat: 2000, A5) In reaction to the accusations against the absence of popular consultation concerning the water tax, the Bank informed the public that its officials will hold talks with farmers, non-governmental organizations, academics and government officials about setting a criteria for the charges. (Post reporters: 2000, p. 1)

B. Reactions to the Accusation of the Klong Dan Villagers

The other issue which took the ADB by surprise was the Banks' Wastewater Treatment project in Klong Dan, Samut Prakan. Their initial response was to defend this and to even claim credit for this "environmental project despite the lack of substantiating studies. Warren Evans, a former private sector consultant and now the ADB's Environment Manager, claimed that "the process of wastewater treatment in Samut Prakan is the most cost-effective, most technologically effective, and least risk, and has most environmental benefits". (The Nation: 2000b, A5) Sirithan Pairotporiboon, director-general of Thailand's Pollution Control Department (PCD), however, admits that, if built, the plant will definitely impact on fishing. He explained that the PCD had to find some place to locate the plant and compared to other areas, Klong Dan has fewer people so the site was chosen. He tried to defend the absence of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) by saying that at the time of the project proposal, Thailand's environmental laws did not require an EIA. (ibid.) The project however was approved on October 17, 1996 and the 1992 Environmental Act requires EIAs of *all* large-scale projects being constructed. (Janchitfah: 2000, p. 1)

As for the allegations of corruption, Mr. Evans insisted that there was no corruption in this project. (Janchitfah: 2000, p.1) Despite its adamancy on its position, the ADB sought to lessen the damage done by doing regular visits to the site and speaking to the concerned villagers. Three months later, an agreement between the villagers and the ADB regarding the wastewater treatment project remains elusive as the Klong Dan villagers vowed to petition His Majesty the King to have it stopped. The same issues of corruption, irregularities, lack of transparency and the allegation that the project will cause ecological imbalance and damage the villagers' self-sufficient way of life continue to haunt the project. They also persisted to demand the relocation of the project. The pressure from the villagers was so strong that the PCD chief Sirithan said his "agency bowed to local pressure and decided to discharge water only during the rainy season when coastal fishermen refrained from farming activities". (Attahkor: 2000b, p. 5)

C. The ADB's Reactions to the Thai State and the NGOs

For the ADB, much of the misunderstanding concerning the Bank's policies in the country has also much to do with the Thai state. Mr. Steffensen notes that multilateral agencies, such as the ADB, are used as the scapegoat for policy reforms initiated by the government. He points out that in their relationship with the Thai public, the voting public, they will tend to say "we did not want to do this but we had to because these were conditions set by the ADB". Thus, since the beginning of the process, it was understood that if there was any problem, the ADB should be blamed for this. He further observed that these are politically difficult decisions to make and there are lots of reasons that some of these reforms were never undertaken in the past decades. The ADB official

added that the government was aware of political sensitivities involved in approving these reforms.¹⁰ (Poopat:2000, A5)

For Mr. Steffensen, the NGOs have also not helped much in this kind of situation. He claims that the NGOs were invited to the consultative meetings regarding the drawing up of the agricultural policy reforms but they did not show up. (Ibid.) Despite these complaints, Mr. Gordon Wilkinson, ADB-NGO Coordinator admits that the NGOs and the ADB have to talk more and they need people at the ADB to change their attitudes about NGOs too pointing out that NGOs are not the Bank's enemies and are natural allies. That is, the ADB and the NGOs both work to benefit the poor but in different ways and they both have a lot of experience to share with one another.

Despite all these arguments against the NGOs and support for the ADB positions, Bank officials do not deny that the anti-ADB demonstrations indeed shook the multilateral agency to say the least. As one ADB official admits, it had to take these anti-ADB protest actions for the Bank to really listen to what the people's demands were something which probably would not have been attained through dialogue. Because of this, Mr. Wilkinson revealed that his office will be expanding to accommodate the strengthening of ties with the NGOs. Mr. Wilkinson pointed out that in the past, the Bank has not given ADB-NGO operations any strategic importance. Thus, the strategy now is for ADB not to have a single staff but to involve the other ADB offices in dealing with NGOs. Furthermore, the experience also made the Bank realize that there is a need to give more organizational resources in terms of labor and financial to the ADB-NGO Coordinating Office.

In dealing with the NGOs, one ADB revealed that a dilemma is that the Thai state is quite negative towards NGOs. Thus, they would have to find a balance between their relationship with the NGOs and the Thai government. He notes that this is also one probable reason why their dealing with Thai NGOs have been minimal. Furthermore, he feels that there is a lot of mistrust between the NGOs and the ADB and the NGOs and the Thai government. This hopefully will be resolved soon as the Thai social movements are definitely determined to pressure the ADB and the Thai government to come out with policies and programs which they perceive will not be to the detriment of the Thai people.

¹⁰Despite these political sensitivities, the Thai government plans to borrow some more from the ADB. The amount is between US\$300-US\$350 million a year from the Bank between 2001 and 2003 primarily for agriculture, rural development and social sector projects. An aide memoire signed by the government and ADB on the 2001-2003 program says a loan pipeline has been prepared for nine projects totaling \$1billion during this period. (Poopat: 2000a, A6)

Conclusion

As can be seen from the anti-ADB campaigns, the recurring theme of “maldevelopment” continue to preoccupy the Thai social movements. “Maldevelopment” includes development at the expense of the poor people who will suffer most from ADB’s policies on the water tax and privatization of education and hospitals. This also includes environmental degradation and the loss of livelihood as in the case of the Samut Prakan Wastewater Treatment Project. This is aggravated by the continuing development policy of top-to-bottom approach where there is the absence of popular participation and consultation in the nature of development which will affect the communities. This has mainly occurred in the agricultural rural areas where one would find the poorest of the Thai population. This development is once again linked with external forces, this time within the context of globalization. Such a development, however, has been blamed for the widening gap between the rich and poor.

The more open democratic environment which Thai social movements have fought for during the past years and are currently enjoying has paved the way for protest actions which would not have been possible a decade ago. Thus, the anti-ADB campaigns also brings to light the nature of the strategies which grassroots movements and NGOs have utilized to raise their issues of concern. In terms of the structure of their organizations, this is carried out through an umbrella organizations of loose networks of NGOs/POs all over the country which share the same views on the ADB. This consists of villagers who have organized themselves into grassroots organizations, also known as people’s organizations (POs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which may act as intermediaries between the POs and the state and multilateral agencies, social critics, academics and progressive politicians. There is no centralized leadership.

In the anti-ADB campaign, the Thai social movements also differed in their approaches in dealing with the Bank. One common denominator though was their reluctance to engage the ADB. If ever Thai NGOs, therefore, had to deal with the ADB, it was one of critical engagement but for those who have opted to demonstrate, it was one of confrontation. Nevertheless, part of their policy was to be flexible enough to accommodate differences in strategies as seen in their accommodation of the villagers as well as international NGOs who wanted to personally and directly confront the ADB officials with their complaints as well as demands on the Bank’s projects. In terms of logistics, the People’s Forum 2000 on the ADB revealed that the people’s movement is capable of hosting a parallel international conference of around 1,000 people revealing the diversity of the Thai social movements.

With regard to the demonstrations, the anti-ADB campaign showed that the government could not prevent such a protest action against a multilateral agency. It had to exercise the utmost restraint. An important factor here is the presence of the international media and the public expectation that such an action should be allowed as part of the country’s democratization process. Moreover, there was intense pressure from all parties for violence not to occur. The anti-ADB campaigns also showed that the Thai

social movements could carry on demonstrations something which the Thai public generally abhor and even gain sympathy for their cause. This is largely due to the issues they raised which even the Thai middle-class or the Bangkokian could identify with. Furthermore, they also made it as peaceful as possible knowing that the Thai public does not like violence and even demonstrations in general for that matter. Thus, the experience revealed that demonstrations could be resorted to as a way of gaining mileage with the Thai public concerning the issues these are fighting for.

For the long-term strategy, the people's movement seems to be optimistic in being able to build on the foundation that was laid to strengthen as well as to expand the network of alliances of NGOs/POs, villagers, academics, social critics and others against the ADB. A strength of this alliance is its resolve that the ADB should be abolished. For them, there is great pessimism that the Bank would ever change specially with the perception that even when the Bank listens, it does not act on these criticisms and worst, it does not listen at all. A challenge, however, for the people's movement is convincing the Thai public in general that this is the reality particularly in a period when there is a strong perception that loans are needed although it should not be borrowed at the expense of the people. The Chiang Mai experience also reveals that very much is still left to be desired between the relationship of the people's movement and the Thai state. As some have pointed out, the anti-ADB demonstration was also very much an anti-Thai government demonstration. The refusal of the Chuan government to negotiate at all with the demonstrators reveals the big gap between the NGOs/POs and the country's political leaders.

The fact that the ADB was quite "shocked" with what happened revealed that they were out of touch with the impact of their projects at the grassroots level. The Bank initially went into self-denial. That is, they claimed all these is a result of misunderstandings or misconceptions about ADB policies and programs and worst, the protesters were not "genuine" and were paid professionals or the anti-ADB protest actions were just following a global trend of anti-IMF/WB/WTO demonstrations. But as the reality bore on the Bank, there was a realization that they knew little of the Thai social movements and they have never dealt with them before. It also made them realize that these demonstrations are part of the democratization process which is burgeoning in the country which was given impetus by the May revolution in 1992 and the changing of the country's constitution in 1997. It is not only something for the Thai state to contend with but also for multilateral agencies to deal with. Thus, the promise to look into the complaints of the Klong Dan villagers, particularly about their loss of livelihood, corruption and the absence of an EIA, and to exempt poor farmers from the water tax were made. What the Bank, however, does not deny is the "politically sensitiveness" of the reforms they are introducing. They feel, however that it is the role of the Thai state to inform the Thai public concerning these reforms. A Bank official feels that the ADB is used as a "scapegoat" in bringing changes which are not palatable to the Thai people.

The anti-ADB campaigns also made the Bank realize that it should do its homework in strengthening its ties with not only the NGOs in Thailand but in the whole region as well so as not to suffer again the "nightmare" which happened in Chiang Mai.

The restructuring of the ADB-NGO Coordinating Office to give it more staff and resources is a proof of this. Its effectiveness partly lies in the elimination of the Bank's general attitude of negativeness towards NGOs which is not helped much by a Thai government which does not have a positive attitude towards the people's movement interfering with public policy-making.

With this kind of attitude, it is not surprising that based on the reactions of the Thai state, one can deduce that there is still much to be desired from the country's democratization process. There is the arrogant refusal to even deal with the demonstrators unlike the ADB which recognizes that the anti-ADB campaigns do carry a message that they have the responsibility to respond to. Such disposition is reinforced with the Thai government's persistent negative attitude towards the NGOs, accusing these of even being "communist fronts" and questioning where these organizations get their sources of funds. Such a demeanor provides the very barrier which prevents popular participation from ensuing in development projects for these to be beneficial to the affected communities. With this kind of attitude one can very well expect a "protracted struggle" of constant pressuring from the side of NGOs and grassroots movements to make both the ADB and the Thai state not only listen to their demands but to act on these. More importantly, one can view this as increments in the struggle of Thai social movements for a more pro-people development and further democratization.