

Opinion Editorial

“A Shared Future”

by

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I have always believed that the true test of character is one’s ability to handle and overcome adversity. In the aftermath of the tragic incidents of the past week, Thailand has the opportunity to prove to itself and the world, the strength of its national character and its commitment to pursuing justice, promoting national reconciliation, and building a socially inclusive society.

As a nation, we have been embroiled in the vortex of chaos and confusion. It is time for us to collectively take a deep breath and regain our sense of balance and proportion. The traditional Thai values of tolerance, moderation and compassion, which are intrinsic elements of our national culture, need to be stressed and promoted.

The senseless finger pointing and “blame game”, a popular pastime now, should cease. Harboring negative emotions, anger and hatred is destructive. We must rise above it and pursue the truth, and nothing less. Independent and credible investigations of the recent events along with due process must be the order of the day.

An accelerated course of action is needed to ensure national reconciliation and the fostering of sustainable peace. We need to engage in a process of dialogue, which recognizes and respects the differences, interests and values of all concerned parties. True acknowledgement and contrition by all sides will pave the way to forgiveness, which is the key to healing the hearts and minds of all Thais.

We must urgently close the deep and widening social divide through addressing structural poverty, social exclusion and inequality. Whatever view one may hold about the recent events, the grievances expressed by many of the demonstrators are valid. We need to have in place a comprehensive range of measures to tackle the following key challenges: (1) disparities in distribution; (2) deprivation of capabilities; and (3) inequalities in access and opportunities.

Unless we acknowledge and address these grievances, the deep wounds from this violent episode in our history will continue to fester, creating a widening chasm of estrangement, which will likely lead to further upheavals and violence.

Our country has witnessed, albeit at a great cost, the political awakening of the people at a critical juncture in Thailand’s development. In hindsight, we may see the empowerment of the rural and impoverished sectors of our electorate as a critical and necessary step for the development of Thailand’s democratic system. It is imperative

that we recognize the legitimate concerns and voices of these social groups in our electoral and other decision-making processes.

As a nation, we have reached the “point of no return.” Change is inevitable. We all have a stake in the future of our nation and need to contribute meaningfully to the process. Let us transform this crisis into an opportunity to build a political consensus for a people’s agenda that will ensure a more inclusive and equitable society as well as a shared future for all Thais.

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