The Thailand crisis

What is the issue?

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Political instability & populism is costing the ‘Thai economy’ dear.

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What is the reason?

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- In 2006, then PM - Takshin Shinawatra was ousted in a military coup and has been living in exile since.
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- Thereafter, Takshin’s sister Yungluck Shinawatra became PM, who too was eventually ousted by a constitutional court.
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- A return to democratic order remains a long-standing concern.
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- The Shinawatras largely symbolise the simmering opposition to the entrenched influence of the military and urban elites in the nation.
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How hopeful is the new Constitution?

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- A new constitution providing for a nominated upper house, a non-elected PM and greater powers for the Generals was recently approved.
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- A 2016 referendum drew a mere 61% approval even from the small 55% voter turnout, which gives it little legitimacy.
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- More ominously, it exposed the ethnic divisions between the Malay Muslim-concentrated provinces in the south who rejected the Constitution and the remaining majority Buddhist regions.

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- Given the systematic suppression of dissent human rights activists have all fallen foul of the Generals.
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- Any hopes for a stable democratic government will hinge on the conduct of free and fair general elections promised for 2018.
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How does the economy fare?

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- While Yungluck is facing charges for a constitutionally non compliant ‘Paddy scheme’, the present government too was obliged to offer similar farmer schemes due to the global price scenario.
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- Continued protests & political turbulence has cost the economy dear.
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- The country’s leaders should also be concerned that deficits in democratic governance may not always go unnoticed.
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- Thailand could be losing out to its other ASEAN peers, which could have ramifications to both its internal & external polity.
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Source: The Hindu

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