CONCLUSION

From Chapter 1, information on the human rights situation in Thailand during the 1992 - 1999 years indicates that there has not been any significant improvement in the number or nature of human rights violations suggesting a "negative" link between democracy and human rights in that further institutionalization of democratic processes does not seem to have improved the human rights situation in Thailand. One reason for this is the nature of democratic development under the military-dominated political system (Chapter 5).

Another point clearly reiterated in the reports put out by human rights organizations year after year is that Thailand should continue to strive for full compliance with its international obligations and demonstrate its ongoing commitment to developing human rights as an integral part of society by considering the ratification of a number of outstanding international treaties, not to mention the fact that there must be further pluralist representation of the social forces (within civilian society) involved in the promotion and protection of human rights.

From Chapter 2, the general overview of the history and origins of "concepts" of human rights shows a lack of unified understanding of the nature and/or relevance of "human rights", even in the West. However, the author would like to reiterate Dr. Tamthai's observation that the

"universality" of human rights is the universal yearning of human beings to find means for peaceful cohabitation and that questions of genesis are intrinsically separate from any specific understanding of "human rights" at any particular time or place.

In Chapter 3 the author would like to suggest that a more holistic model for Thai national development would not see development and human rights as competing concerns. The author would propose that, rather than following a *means to an end* (Donnelly, 1991: 194), the "end" or goal should be re-examined and more emphasis should be place on the validity of the process. If the ultimate goal of development is *to lay the basis for realizing human dignity* (Donnelly, 1991: 202), the goals should be constantly shifting in accordance with the integrity of the process, that is to say, in accordance with the extent to which any process of national development successfully realizes human dignity in the Thai case.

The human rights survey, covered in Chapter 4, exhibits the respondents' "positive" expectations with regard to the democracy-human rights implicit link. Among the results, the respondents expressed their belief in a strong link between human rights and political systems and human rights and economic development.

From Chapter 5, a brief look at the military-dominated system reveals that the military mainly came to represent the interests of business groups and the local god fathers who assisted parliamentarians during their elections. This form of democratic government in the past was held merely

for the benefits of certain limited segments of society and not for the majority of the populace.

An image of democracy may not be directly conjured up by the words "human rights" to the Thai, but the way in which the Thai define "human rights", "for all people to have the right to freedom in all respects", "the right to express one's own opinions", and so on, as well as their concomitant expectations, revealed in comments such as "all kinds of rights, for example, the right to free elections", may not be far removed from Thai perceptions of "democracy" identified in Dr. Richard Basham's study.

According to Basham's findings, *only a minority of Thai have conceptions of democracy which correspond with its Western meaning* (Basham, 1993: 17), and despite his observation that *from the vantage point of history, democracy seems to have served more to help provide legitimization of leaders chosen from within the top ranks of the military than to permit the people to govern themselves* (Basham, 1993: 17), the perception of democracy in terms of "fairness and justice" would not seem to preclude notions of an implicit relationship between "democracy" and "human rights" as being interdependent and reinforcing in the Thai case. This is supported by the previously-mentioned human rights survey findings which also indicated that people believe there is a strong relationship between human rights and political systems.

Also, hitherto "failures" of democracy seem to have occurred when conventional *bunkhun* reciprocity relations and tolerance levels were exceeded: when the "fairness" objective has been lost, ignored or purposely

bulldozed over by special interest groups in a fashion unacceptable to the *doctrine of reasonable greed* (Basham, 1993: 13). The responses to question 14 of the survey regarding the circumstances under which the respondents feel that certain human rights violations would be acceptable also seem to indicate that there are "degrees" of tolerable behavior by certain people, as far as the respondents are concerned.

From Chapter 6, the respondents' answers indicate that many believe the essential tools for upholding human rights include the following: the provision of knowledge and education, the establishment of legal frameworks, the "subsidizing of health, welfare and living expenses while establishing the legal framework", the sure implementation of action against violators, while "openly publishing criticisms concerning problems of human rights violations", and for those institutions responsible for the protection of human rights to join together in order to pool their financial and human resources for optimal results so that the people are "..made aware and can understand human rights issues" to the full. It may also be interesting to note that while the respondents acknowledged a sense of inequality between the social classes, their responses to the intrinsic issues of a linkage between human rights and political systems and on what should be done to improve the human rights situation were relatively uniform, from the unemployed to monks, wealthy business people and politicians, in terms of promotion of awareness through education and enforcement of action against the violators.

In concluding, the research findings from this study indicate that Thai articulations of their perceptions of democracy and human rights are less developed than in many Western democracies. The assumption of an

implicit link between democracy and human rights nevertheless appears to hold, even in the Thai case. The survey findings do not indicate that the Thai case is a counter-example, but support an hypothesis that democracy and human rights are inter-dependent and mutually-reinforcing.

However, Thai ideas, expectations and perceptions about democracy differ significantly in comparison with the purported extent of the institutionalization of democratic processes in Thailand. While the human rights survey results indicate that people really want fairness and justice when they call for democracy, they do still expect limitations on their freedoms beyond what is usually accepted in democracies probably borne of traditional value systems including concepts of merit and subsequent power in Thai society. For the Thai, while human rights seem to be outside the traditional value and social systems of hierarchy and expected reciprocity, at the same time, their usefulness is not completely denied, particularly their utility in keeping abuses of power, authoritarian and unfair tendencies in Thai society in check, somewhat removed from the concept of human rights as *individual entitlements derived from human needs and capacities* (Beetham & Boyle, 1995: 54) which are the *equal and inalienable rights each person has simply as a human being* (Donnelly, 1991: 67).

It is the author's personal view that, for both "democracy" and "human rights" to really take profound root in the 21st century, rather than just being seen as "useful" in certain cases and/or on an arbitrary basis, the human rights survey respondents' answers with regard to how human rights can be fostered and defended through support for education is indisputable and that the extent to which education can be widely implemented will play a

pivotal role in shaping Thailand's future generations, especially how they will be able to cope with human rights issues irrespective of the "success" or "failure" of democracy.