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Thailand

How long will the newly elected Thai government, whether formed by People's Power Party or Democratic Party, last? In other words, when is the next military coup?

In fact, I have an even more frightening question: how long will the monarchy last? In Thailand itself, I could probably get arrested for merely publishing this sentence; even outside, people might think I have gone senile, since the Thai king is supposed to be venerated and has the loyalty of the army (which is in fact directly responsible to the King, not to the prime minister or defense ministry) so that any government that even talks about the topic would quickly fall, whether by a vote of parliament or by a coup. Yet, I believe my question is no longer a crazy one. For the election result not only showed the country to be deeply divided, with no one in government knowing how to solve the country's major problems; it also shows the weakened hand of the monarchy and its army.

Most of Thaksin's support is in the rural areas, in particular the north; the Democratic Party is entrenched in Bangkok itself; the party can easily bring demonstrators into the streets. In 1988 Chamlong Srimuang, a retired general and **former Mayor of Bangkok**, had a long series of bangkok demonstrations against the Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda, whose poor handling resulted in a bloody suppression at a local university and led to his downfall following royal intervention.

In fact, if two years ago the King had intervened early in the Shincorp crisis, say by ordering Thaksin to make a voluntary tax payment, or in the middle stage by asking Thaksin to go into exile without taking part in the election he had just called, I believe the coup could have been averted. Now after two years of chaotic conditions Thailand is back to the democratic but divided state, and the weakened control the monarchy has over the political situation is made obvious for everyone to see; whereas two years ago I don't think Thaksin would have dared to call the bluff of the royal intervention, when the next crisis occurs, and I am sure it will, the bluff would be called.

A few hundred years ago when the still reigning Chakri Dynasty was in its early days, a great monk prophesized that there will be no King Rama X; the current King, Rama IX, is over 70.

Now I am not superstitious, nor am I a follower of buddhism or monks. Nevertheless, this prophesy is highly relevant to Thai politics, because Thais are serious buddhists. The thought "will this prophesy turn out to be correct?" is in their back of mind. This certainly made the kind of disrespect Thaksin showed to the royal house a much more touchy issue - the royal house also has the thought in the back of its mind "you must be thinking there will be no Rama X". Further, the soldiers and army officers also have the same thought. It is not at all clear that they would obediently make the next coup when another one is called.

added on 31/5/08

just a few months have passed since the election, and talk is already rife about the possibility of another coup; the losing party has brought enough demonstrators into the streets of Bangkok to make people wonder whether the government can control the situation

part of the culture of democracy is that (a) the winning side wins fairly, and (b) the losing side accepts the people's verdict; The conduct of the election appears to have been fair, but Taksin's side has more money, and so the other side can always claim it has not been fair since they cannot afford the same expenditure..

Kings of Thailand:

Rama I, the Great (1782-1809), [Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke](#)

Rama II (1809-1824), [Buddha Loetla Nabhalai](#)

Rama III (1824-1851), [Nangklao](#)

Rama IV (1851-1868), [Mongkut](#)

Rama V, the Great (1868-1910), [Chulalongkorn](#)

Rama VI (1910-1925), [Vajiravudh](#)

Rama VII (1925-1935), [Prajadhipok](#)

Rama VIII (1935-1946), [Ananda Mahidol](#)

Rama IX, the Great (installed 1946), [Bhumibol Adulyadej](#)

Retrieved from "[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rama_\(King_of_Thailand\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rama_(King_of_Thailand))"

An anecdote

More than 20 years ago the Thai princess visited Singapore. It was rumoured that she was being match made to BG Lee, who had become a widower a couple of years earlier; I did not believe this - quite aside from whether the Thai royal family would think it a good idea, protocol would have required a prospective groom to go courting. It was also rumoured that she would be a better heir than her brother, and I have no idea how correct that might be; however, I saw the following in TV news:

She was at an award ceremony of some kind and about to hand out prizes; the first recipient came up the stage, and as is usually on such occasions, seized her hand to shake it..

The princess visibly changed colour; when the second recipient came up, she held the prize in two hands, handed it over, and immediately started clapping; there was therefore no chance for the recipient to shake her hand..

So indeed she was shown to be smart and able to rise to the needs of the occasion; the incident also reveals something about how the Thai royal family sees its place in the world..

Temasek - Shincorp Deal led to Thailand Coup

Since Temasek bought Takshin's telecommunication company things have gone from bad to worse in Thai politics. It bothered people that not only did Takshin get a very good price, by exploiting regulatory loopholes, Takshin was able to profit handsomely from the deal without having to pay tax. Attacks on the deal immediately arose, more along the line of "foreigners controlling facilities of national importance" than the self serving over cleverness. The tactic attempted by Takshin to disarm the critics, calling a snap election, again turned out to be over clever and only led to even greater trouble, with the Hatyai bombing and his absence finally giving the army the chance to take action. His apparently poor relationship with royal advisors must have emboldened the generals.(Some analysts have pointed out a series of actions by Takshin from 2001 onward to remove royalist sympathisers from government post, indicating a wish to change the monarchy to a genuine figurehead role in anticipation of royal succession.)

For many decades Thailand saw coups and civilian governments come and go while business and

life carried on more or less normally, though there has not been a coup since 1991 and people began to get used to the idea that prosperity has helped democracy to acquire firm roots in the country. Now "Asian Values" has re-asserted itself, but the coup's economic impact remains unclear. Undoubtedly the short term outlook of the Temasek investment and market value will take a knock and the long term prospects are still to be assessed.

Like the IMF/World Bank meeting still taking place in Suntec City, the Temasek deal is an example of Singapore's public sector entrepreneurs making deals with the world's rich and powerful. However, in Asia and most parts of the world, stability in the status of the rich and powerful is a still-to-be-established commodity. The coup has diminished positive impact of the meeting event for Singapore: delegates would leaving thinking "how long do good conditions last in Asia?"

temasek has got into additional problems in thailand; while I do not know much about the details of this issue, I would like to make a general comment

there are different factions in thailand; in the recent coup and preceding events, we had the palace faction against the taksin faction; the former believes it is upholding tradition and refinement, versus blatant commercialism; the latter believes it was promoting modernism and democracy, versus feudalism and mob rule; both have some valid points, and neither conducted things very well, making it necessary to settle things though the military

unfortunately, temasek got itself caught in the cross fire; further, it waded into deeper waters without knowing enough about the undercurrents, such as whether tangnoi was on good terms with the palace

27 Oct 2006 AFP

Temasek withdraws appointment of well-connected Thai adviser

Singapore investment firm Temasek Holdings has withdrawn the appointment of a figure close to the Thai royal family as its corporate adviser in the country, a company spokesman said.

State-linked Temasek last week announced it will open an office in Thailand, where its controversial takeover of telecoms giant Shin Corp from the family of ousted prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra is under scrutiny by Thai authorities. Temasek also announced at that time that M.R. Tongnoi Tongyai, a former adviser on foreign and technical affairs to Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej, had been appointed corporate advisor to the Bangkok office.

But the company said Friday Tongnoi would no longer be its corporate adviser. Tongnoi is currently the personal counsellor of Thailand's Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, according to media reports.

"After due consideration, Mr Tongnoi Tonyai and Temasek Holdings have mutually agreed that Mr Tongnoi will not be the corporate adviser for the Temasek office in Thailand," a Temasek spokesman told AFP on Friday without giving a reason.

48 hours later, the Office of the Crown Prince released its statement, published in full in The Nation newspaper.

29 Oct 2006 The Nation

The official statement

Statement from HRH the Crown Prince's Personal Affairs Office

Some press reports have stated that Temasek Holdings has approached MR Tongnoi Tongyai to be adviser to an office it is about to set up in Thailand. They have mentioned that was the personal secretary and adviser to HRH Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn, assigned to take care of royal properties in 2000.

HRH the Crown Prince's Personal Affairs Office would like to announce that the reports have caused misunderstanding and confusion as the claims are false and intended as a means to further MR Tongnoi Tongyai's own business interests. The claims have not only damaged the country but also destabilised international investment in Thailand.

In fact MR Tongnoi Tongyai is a cunning man and personally immoral. After being denied permission to extend his term as HM's Deputy Principal Private Secretary, he asked to be transferred to HRH the Crown Prince's Personal Affairs Office. HRH the Crown Prince was compassionate enough to engage him, and he was assigned to work suiting his professional abilities, translating and drafting English documents and occasionally writing letters.

However, he proved a shrewd deceiver, habitually passing himself off as closely linked to HRH the Crown Prince, and he worked to a hidden agenda, often without transparency, which caused discontent among his colleagues at all levels. He was unswayed by the kindness of HRH the Crown Prince in having given him an opportunity to prove himself.

On the contrary, he took advantage of his position to make false claims for his personal gain, claims which led to his being approached by Temasek Holdings to be an adviser. His behaviour has shown him ungrateful for HRH the Crown Prince's mercy and has damaged both the institution and the country.

HRH the Crown Prince's Personal Office considers MR Tongnoi Tongyai a perverse abuser of power for his own benefit. His acts have misled the public and harmed HRH the Crown Prince's Personal Affairs Office, which thus finds itself obliged to publicise the facts of the matter.

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Favorite quotes:

"History repeats, first time as tragedy, second time as farce" - Marx **历史重复, 一次悲剧, 一次闹剧 - 马克思**

"Those who forget their history are condemned to repeat it" - Santayana **忘记历史注定重复历史 - 山塔亚那**

"Those who remember their history are also condemned to repeat it" - Yuen **记得历史也注定重复历史 - 阮宗**

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"Oscar Wilde was wrong about cynics knowing price not value; cynics know value is always less than price" - Yuen

foundation new-ybsampler.blogspot.com 王尔德说错了；愤世的人不是知价不知值，而是知道价高值低 - 阮宗光

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