

# Thailand's Establishment Supports Chaos

Thursday 9 October 2008, by [UNGPAKORN Giles Ji](#) (Date first published: 7 October 2008).

Since late in the evening of October 6, the ultra right-wing mob that calls itself the People's Alliance for Democracy has laid plans to lay siege to the Thai parliament.

They came prepared with iron bars and crash helmets.

Their plan, as always, was to create chaos in the hope that the military would stage a coup or that the ruling party would once again be dissolved by the courts. Their claim is that the present government led by the Peoples Power Party or PPP — ex-Premier Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai in another name— is illegitimate.

The PPP and the previous Thai Rak Thai have consistently won large majorities in elections, proving that they are popular with the poor, who make up the majority of the population. This support from the poor is not surprising, since the party was the first elite party in 30 years to offer a universal health care scheme and public funds to develop the rural economy.

The PAD's claim that the government is somehow "illegitimate" is based on the belief that the poor do not deserve the right to vote because they are too stupid. This belief is shared by the opposition Democrat Party, which supported the 2006 military coup and is now supporting the actions of the PAD by boycotting parliament. Previously the Democrats boycotted the 2006 elections because they knew that the poor would not vote for their monetarist and neo-liberal policies. The Democrats when in office set police dogs on peaceful protestors from the Assembly of the Poor. That protest was nothing like the PAD riots of the past few weeks. The Democrats also used public funds to bail out the banks in the 1997 crisis. The poor were told to fend for themselves.

The PAD is calling for the defense of the military constitution of 2007, which has already restricted the electorate's right to vote for the Senate. They want to bring about a Suharto-style "New Order", in which only half of the parliament will be elected and the Prime Minister need not be an elected MP.

On the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> October, the police cleared one side of parliament using tear gas. This was to allow MPs to enter the building. The police made it clear that the PAD would continue to be allowed to protest outside the other entrance to parliament. However, the PAD responded by attacking the police with sharpened flag poles, homemade guns and their own tear gas grenades. In any other parliamentary democracy, the PAD leaders and their rioting supporters would have been arrested. They have been illegally occupying Government House for over a month. Yet the police have been told to "lay off the protestors" by people in high places.

Every public institution and organization in Thailand is now compromised by this inter-elite conflict and the losers, as usual, are the poor: workers and small farmers. The monarchy has failed to defuse the situation. The queen has openly sided with the PAD mob. The courts are practicing double standards, attacking Thaksin and Thai Rak Thai/People's Power Party corruption while ignoring illegal coups, mob violence and corruption by opposition politicians and the military.

The military as always is on the side of the conservative royalists. The police are unable to act and

the government lurches from crisis to crisis. The majority of academia is hopelessly compromised by its support for the coup and their support for decreasing the democratic space. Democratic principles have been thrown out the window by professors who teach “democratization” and the need for “the rule of law.”

Even the People’s Movement has shown itself not to be up to the job. Instead of building an independent political position at the side of the poor and oppressed, sections of the NGO movement supported the coup, the military constitution and the PAD. Rosana Tositrakul, the so-called NGO Senator, elected from Bangkok, has joined into ultranationalist fanaticism, especially over the ancient Khmer temple on the border with Cambodia that was almost conflated into a border skirmish.

These people must bear responsibility for the recent injuries of both Thai and Cambodian troops in a needless border dispute. Rosana also disrupted parliament today, working with military-appointed senators. She believes that the poor are too stupid to be allowed to vote. Yet all these people bang on about the need for “good governance” and “accountability”. Who are they themselves accountable to?

The Thai economy is facing the full force of the global economic meltdown. It needs measures to protect the poor, income redistribution and a welfare state and peace for the three southern provinces. Thaksin and his top military men should have been clapped into prison long ago over human rights abuses in the south and the so-called War on Drugs, in which hundreds of people, many of them innocent, were killed.

Yet this is never mentioned and Thaksin and his wife are seeking asylum in Britain while poor people from all over the world are sent home to die by the British government.

We need to reform society to bring about progressive changes. This means expanding democracy, not allowing Thailand to slide back into the dark ages of dictatorship. But the task will only take place by forces in the Peoples’ Movement – the left, the NGO networks, social movements and trade unions coming together to outline our own reform strategy. We cannot rely on the corrupt human-rights abusers in the government, nor the fascists of the PAD and their allies to achieve these aims.

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