

Thailand, International Oil, and the Future of Energy

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The Southeast Asian nation of Thailand is currently wrestling with a particularly contentious issue involving international oil concessions. In essence, foreign oil monopolies, particularly Western corporations including Exxon, Chevron, and British Petroleum (BP) have been given access to Thailand's oil and natural gas supplies, to explore, develop, and exploit for billions in profits year to year.

Much of this money, it is alleged, ends up leaving the country. What remains is often divided up amongst a handful of special interests leaving little if anything at all left for the actual people and nation that has provided this vast source of energy and riches.

Also of particular contention is the domestic energy market itself. Being run mainly by foreign and local energy monopolies, many suspect the price of energy for consumers is arbitrarily or criminally manipulated. This in turn has a direct impact on the quality of life of Thailand's 70 million people as well as an impact on the overall economic development of the country.

Raising suspicions further were [admissions by the Saudis](#) that they have been intentionally rigging global energy prices as a means of "pressuring Russia regarding Syria."

The New York Times in their article, "[Saudi Oil Is Seen as Lever to Pry Russian Support From Syria's Assad](#)," admits:

Saudi Arabia has been trying to pressure President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to abandon his support for President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, using its dominance of the global oil markets at a time when the Russian government is reeling from the effects of plummeting oil prices.

In reality, Saudi Arabia is adjusting prices as per the demands of Washington and Wall Street, and in addition to pressuring Russia regarding Syria, it is also part of a plan to undermine and eventually overthrow the government of Russia itself. And if energy prices can be used as a weapon against a nation as big as Russia, surely they could be used as a weapon to manipulate, undermine, and endanger the sovereignty of Thailand.

Clearly then the world has misplaced its trust in these corporations and the governments they are apparently partnered with, using energy not for the greatest good of humanity, its

development, and progress, but rather for their own self-serving hegemonic ambitions around the planet.

Arbitrarily dropping energy prices through the floor to attack Russia, means that prices can also arbitrarily be raised to bolster bottom lines. The vast majority of society as a consequence must suffer market instability caused by these self-serving price manipulations. Artificially low or high prices have a direct impact on all other aspects of the economy, setting off a chain reaction of events all of society must adjust to – for better or generally, for worse.

This flagrant abuse by corporations and governments of their virtually uncontested control over the energy sector, then, makes the talking points of those in Thailand speaking up against recent talks over oil concessions valid. Any concession must take these realities into consideration and put in measures to rein in abuses, price fixing, corruption, theft, and environmental devastation.

For the current government in Thailand's part, concessions have been put on hold after a growing crescendo of vocal opposition. What comes next remains to be seen.

Fight Oil Monopolies or Replace Them?



Energy is the foundation of modern society. Everything from manufacturing to commerce, to the daily life of every member of society requires energy – both in the form of electricity and in the form of fuel for transportation. Energy, therefore, is a matter of national security.

Open matters of national security instinctively would never be left open to the meddling of foreign interests – be they governments or immense corporations. Dependence on foreign entities for matters of national security present obvious compromises few nations would be willing to make. Then why is Thailand and other nations in ASEAN and around the world so willing to sacrifice national security at the behest of these immense foreign special interests?

The answer is power and wealth. Big-oil and the corporate-financier interests they are entwined with have many tools with which to excise from any given nation their objectives. Despite the best efforts of many nations to protect their energy independence, big-oil possesses ways of persuading them otherwise.

Nations that insist on standing up to these special interests, particularly Russia, Iran, or Venezuela, have suffered decades of attempts to undermine and overthrow each of their

respective sociopolitical and economic orders. Other nations like Iraq or Libya, have been destroyed and left in ruins entirely.

Perhaps then the key is abandoning this centralized model of energy production altogether. Through an orderly transition from a petrochemical-based economy to one built upon increasingly decentralized alternatives, the vast unwarranted power and wealth of big-oil can be slowly but surely undermined into a force of external and domestic belligerence more easily managed and defended against.

The future of energy, therefore, does not lie in the hands of national and international power brokers, but instead in the hands of local communities which can start today to establish supplemental alternative power sources until they garner the experience and resources to replace entirely existing energy infrastructure with locally produced and controlled energy and fuel. The additional benefit of such a decentralized model of energy production is that the profits too, will be decentralized.

No longer will jealous, bitter battles need to be fought over the distribution of income that results from immense, centralized, energy enterprises. The temptation of both corruption and greed will be decentralized and minimized.

Already in nations around the world, energy cooperatives – local groups who invest together into an alternative local power production system – are becoming a reality. As technology marches forward, the ability for such cooperatives to grow in number and efficiency will move forward as well.

National governments, particularly in developing countries in Southeast Asia, stand the most to gain in the long term from both minimizing to the best of their ability exploitation at the hands of foreign energy monopolies, while encouraging local communities to replace entirely their dependence on these monopolies. The prize for these governments is a future in which foreign energy interests are no longer endowed with the ability to lean on them at the expense of their own nation's peace, stability, and prosperity. This "leaning" also gives way to opportunities for foreign-backed opposition movements to seize power, further endangering the sovereignty and interests of any given nation.

For those protesting Thailand's concessions today, they should perhaps consider a second track to pursue in parallel – one in protest of concessions that put Thailand at a disadvantage, and another seeking to end Thailand's dependency on energy monopolies altogether.

Energy is a matter of national security. As such, those protesting oil concessions in Thailand, and those hearing the protests, should be able to agree that the current energy paradigm is far from ideal. Finding a middle ground on current concessions would be a start, and agreeing on a longer-term, permanent solution to absolve Thailand of dependence on foreign corporations and their unwarranted power and influence should be a favorable final goal all parties can agree on.

The beauty of Thailand's potential ability to navigate and escape from the edge of the black hole that is international big-oil, is that it will provide a model for other nations to follow.

Such a journey is surely fraught with great risk, but in the end may deliver salvation.

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