

US Government Role in Thailand's "Student Protests"

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The Southeast Asian Kingdom of Thailand has tilted too far toward China for Washington's liking.

The country – with nearly 70 million people and the second largest economy in Southeast Asia – counts China as its biggest trade partner, its largest source of [foreign direct investment](#), the largest source of tourism with China providing more tourists per year than all Western nations combined, and a key partner in developing infrastructure including the already under-construction China-Laos-Thailand-Malaysia-Singapore high-speed rail link that will only further cement these ties.

Thailand is also replacing its aging US military hardware with Chinese alternatives including Chinese-made [main battle tanks](#), armored personnel carriers, infantry fighting vehicles, [naval vessels](#) including the Kingdom's [first modern submarines](#), and jointly developed projects like [the DTI-1 multiple rocket launcher system](#). Thailand and China have also conducted [joint military exercises](#) in recent years.

To reverse this trend – the United States is attempting to destabilize Thailand politically and economically – topple the current government and place into power a political opposition led by abusive billionaires who have specifically vowed to roll back Thai-Chinese relations.

This has manifested in protests the Western corporate media has claimed are “student-led” and “organic” despite what are clearly centrally led protests with easily identifiable leaders tied directly to US government funding.

The protests are leveraging a nation-wide network created by US government organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), USAID, and other funding mechanisms to overwrite Thailand's indigenous institutions with Western-style alternatives across Thailand educational, labor, media, and political spaces.

The protests also have direct ties to US-backed opposition parties including those of fugitive billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra's Pheu Thai Party and corrupt billionaire Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit of Future Forward/Move Forward Party and even foreign opposition movements the US is funding in China's territories of Taiwan [and Hong Kong](#).

Thailand's US-backed Billionaire-led Opposition

Thailand's political opposition – while portrayed by the Western media as “progressive liberals,” is in fact run by two corrupt billionaires.

One – Thaksin Shinawatra – is a convicted criminal who currently hides abroad as a fugitive. Despite this – he still openly runs his political party Pheu Thai – as New York Times would note in their 2013 article, “[Thaksin Shinawatra of Thailand Wields Influence from Afar.](#)”

Thaksin also runs a number of nominee parties operating in lockstep with Pheu Thai – including Future Forward/Move Forward Party headed by fellow billionaire Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit.

Thaksin had served as Thai prime minister from 2001-2006 and openly and repeatedly served US interests at the expense of Thailand's own best interests.

These ties and interests included:

- In the late 1990's, [Thaksin was an adviser to notorious private equity firm, the Carlyle Group](#). He pledged to his foreign contacts that upon taking office, he would still serve as a “matchmaker” between the US equity fund and Thai businesses. It would represent the first of many compromising conflicts of interest that would undermine Thailand's sovereign under his rule.
- Thaksin was Thailand's prime minister from 2001-2006. Has since dominated the various reincarnations of his political party – and still to this day [runs the country by proxy](#), via his nepotist appointed sister, Yingluck Shinawatra.
- In 2001 he privatized Thailand's resources and infrastructure [including the nation's oil conglomerate PTT](#) – much to Wall Street's delight.
- In 2003, he would [commit Thai troops to the US invasion of Iraq](#), despite widespread protests from both the Thai military and the public. Thaksin would also [allow the CIA to use Thailand for its abhorrent rendition program](#).
- In 2004, Thaksin attempted to ramrod through a [US-Thailand Free-Trade Agreement](#) (FTA) without parliamentary approval, backed by the [US-ASEAN Business Council](#) who just before the 2011 elections that saw Thaksin's sister Yingluck Shinawatra brought into power, hosted the leaders of [Thaksin's “red shirt” “United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship” \(UDD\)](#) in Washington DC.

Since being ousted from power in a 2006 military coup, Thaksin Shinawatra has been represented by US corporate-financier interests via lobbying firms including, [Kenneth Adelman](#) of the [Edelman PR firm](#) ([Freedom House](#), [International Crisis Group](#), [PNAC](#)), James Baker of [Baker Botts](#), [Robert Blackwill](#) of [Barbour Griffith & Rogers \(BGR\)](#), [Kobre & Kim](#), [Bell Pottinger](#) ([and here](#)) and most recently by [Robert Amsterdam](#) of [Amsterdam & Partners](#).

Out of his country, but not out of power

BANGKOK

Exiled former premier helps run Thailand using Skype and social media

BY THOMAS FULLER

Millions of people across the globe have cut the tethers to their offices and enjoy working from wherever they want. But the political party governing Thailand has taken the idea of telecommuting into an altogether different realm.

For the past year and a half, by the party's own admission, the most important political decisions in this country of 65 million people have been made from abroad, by a former prime minister who has not set foot in the country since 2008.

Thaksin Shinawatra circles the globe in his private jet, chatting with ministers over his dozen cellphones, texting over various social media platforms and reading documents e-mailed to him from bureaucrats, party officials say.

It might be described as rule by Skype. Or governance by instant messenger.

Mr. Thaksin was removed from power in a military coup six and a half years ago and remains in exile because of a conviction for abuse of power, a highly politicized case initiated by the

coup makers. But that has not stopped him from helping run Thailand — by remote control.

Officially, his sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, is prime minister (he nominated her for the job in 2011). But from his homes in Dubai and London, from the gold mines he owns in Africa and during regular visits to nearby Asian countries, Mr. Thaksin, 63, has harnessed the Internet and mobile technol-

ogy to create one of the most unusual and innovative ways of governing a country.

"We can contact him at all hours," said Charupong Ruangsawan, the interior minister and secretary general of Mr. Thaksin's Pheu Thai Party. "The world has changed. It's a boundless world. It's not like a hundred years ago when you had to use a telegraph."

To illustrate the point during an inter-

view, Mr. Charupong took out his iPhone and scrolled through the list of Mr. Thaksin's phone numbers (Mr. Thaksin gives different numbers to different people, often depending on seniority).

"If we've got any problem, we give him a call," Mr. Charupong said.

The day-to-day governance of the country is carried out by Ms. Yingluck, who is genial, photogenic and 18 years younger than Mr. Thaksin. She cuts the ribbons and makes the speeches.

Ms. Yingluck has on occasion sought to play down her brother's role. Soon after taking office, when Mr. Thaksin joined the weekly cabinet meeting via Skype, reporters asked who was really the head of the government. Ms. Yingluck insisted that she was in charge and said that Mr. Thaksin had joined the discussion to offer "moral support."

But if there is one thing that allies and enemies of Mr. Thaksin agree on, it is that he is the one making the big decisions.

"He's the one who formulates the Pheu Thai policies," said Noppadon Pattama, a senior party official who also serves as Mr. Thaksin's personal lawyer. "Almost all the policies put forward during the last election came from him."

Sondhi Limthongkul, a leader of the "yellow shirt" movement that has taken to the streets many times to THAILAND, PAGE 4



Thaksin Shinawatra, the exiled Thai leader, checking one of his cellphones in Dubai.

Ahead of Thailand's 2019 elections Thaksin Shinawatra would create a myriad of nominee political parties in the event one or more of his core parties were disbanded by courts for the obvious fact he is a fugitive and those acting on his behalf are aiding and abetting a criminal.

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