

South-East Asia Geopolitics and Washington's Creeping Front Against Thailand

By [Tony Cartalucci](#)

Global Research, January 19, 2014

altthainews.blogspot.ca

Region: [Asia](#)

What began as just biased, slanted reporting is now taking shape as a concerted and focused campaign to back the regime of unelected, exiled dictator Thaksin Shinawatra and his proxy regime run by his own sister, Yingluck Shinawatra. The West, the United States in particular, has been taking an increasingly harder stance against anti-regime protesters seeking to permanently oust Thaksin Shinawatra's regime from Thai politics.

Biased reporting came from the [BBC](#), [Reuters](#), the [Wall Street Journal](#), the [New York Times](#), and the [Council on Foreign Relations](#) (CFR), just to name a few – but despite the wide variety of sources, there was one concerted message – the protesters were “elitist” and “anti-democratic,” trying to perpetuate a “class divide” by seeking to oust a “democratically elected” government supported by the “rural poor.”

One of the most recent pieces published by the Western media, however, broke the mold and went one step further. An editorial board piece in the Washington Post titled, [“Thailand's anti-democracy protests should provoke a harsh rebuke from the U.S.”](#), states in no uncertain terms that the US should condemn ongoing protests against unelected dictator Thaksin Shinawatra and his nepotist-appointed proxy regime led by his sister, Yingluck Shinawatra. The Washington Post argues:

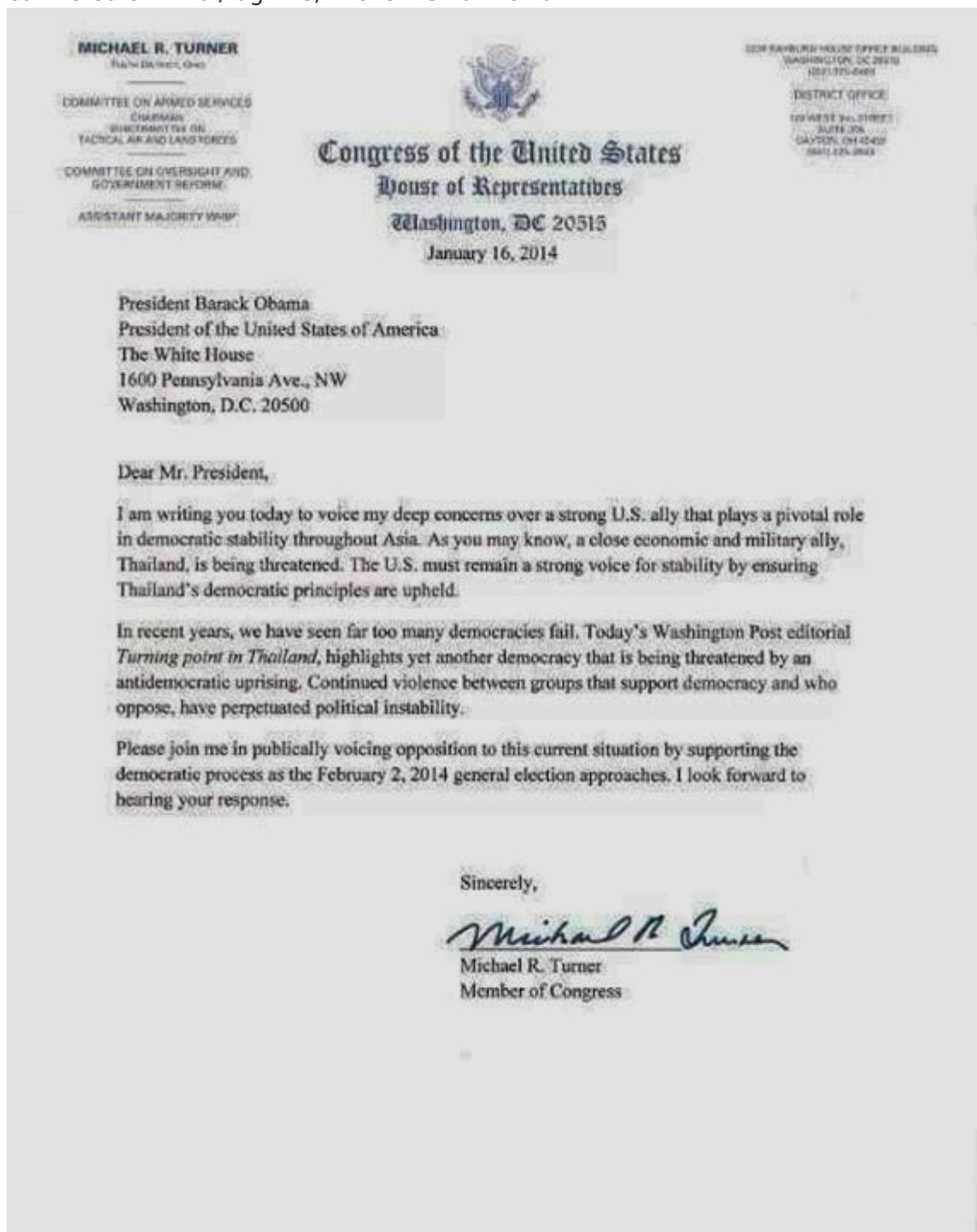
Popular demonstrations against democracy are becoming an unfortunate trend in developing countries where elections have challenged long-established elites. The latest case is Thailand, where thousands of people took to the streets Monday to demand that the country's freely chosen government step down, that an unelected council take its place and that elections scheduled for next month be canceled. The protesters' strategy appears to be to disrupt Bangkok to the point at which the government will feel compelled to resign or be removed by the military.

Similar tactics have succeeded in bringing down two previous governments led by former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his supporters since 2006, while a third was forced out by a dubious court decision. This time, Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, Mr. Thaksin's sister, is standing firm, as she should. But she could use more support from the United States in rejecting an undemocratic outcome to the crisis.

Of course, [nothing about the Washington Post's comments is truthful](#).

Additionally, according to the Bangkok Post article, [“Yingluck stands by Feb 2 poll”](#), the regime showed reporters a letter from US Republican Congressman Michael Turner to

President Barack Obama, citing the Washington Post op-ed, condemning ongoing protests as “undemocratic,” and calling on him to voice support for [the regime’s sham elections](#) in which major opposition parties are boycotting, and the ruling party is openly run by a convicted criminal/fugitive, Thaksin Shianwatra.



Worth repeating, until the Western media begins reporting it perhaps, is the fact that while Thailand is technically under the premiership of Thaksin’s sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, by his party’s own admission, Thaksin is still literally running the country. The election campaign slogan for the last general election in 2011 was literally, “Thaksin Thinks, Puea Thai Does,” Puea Thai being his political party. Forbes would report in their article, [“Thaksin in Exile: Advising Sister, Digging for Gold,”](#) that:

Regarding his behind-the-scenes role in the party and policy, he is not shy: “I am the one who thinks. Like our slogan during the campaign, Thaksin thinks,

Pheu Thai acts.”

The New York Times admitted in an early 2013 article titled, “[In Thailand, Power Comes With Help From Skype](#),” that:

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 been in self-imposed exile since 2008 to escape corruption charges.

The country’s most famous fugitive, Thaksin Shinawatra, circles the globe in his private jet, chatting with ministers over his dozen cellphones, texting over various social media platforms and reading government documents e-mailed to him from civil servants, party officials say.

The NYT piece would also report:

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

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 technology 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 interview, 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



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

JUMANA EL HELLOCHI/REUTERS

THAILAND, PAGE 4

Image: [The New York Times openly admits](#) that Thailand is currently run by unelected convicted criminal/fugitive Thaksin Shinawatra. Clearly any proxy government or elections in which it participates in are illegitimate by both Thai and international standards. [Thaksin’s foreign ties](#) are what have afforded him impunity regarding an otherwise cartoonish, 3rd world dictatorship.

....

There is no question that a convicted criminal hiding abroad from a 2 year jail sentence, multiple arrest warrants, and a long list of pending court cases, is illegally running Thailand by proxy. Being unelected, Thaksin Shinawatra is by all accounts a dictator, and his “government” a regime, [however cleverly they try to dress it up](#).

Elections in any other nation on Earth, including the United States, featuring a convicted criminal openly running a contending party would be unacceptable – and in Thailand as well, they are equally unacceptable. Protesters therefore are standing up against overt criminality, not “against democracy.”

[As reported many times before](#), current anti-regime protesters are not trying to end “democracy.” They are simply trying to end the abuse of the democratic process by an overt criminal. Elections must be carried only after Thaksin Shinawatra and his entire political machine have been safely and completely dismantled.

But the criminal and illegitimate nature of the current regime is not the only grievance protesters have. There is a more dangerous aspect of Thaksin Shinawatra and his political machine that protesters believe warrant his immediate and complete removal from Thailand’s political landscape – his unprecedented human rights abuses, including mass murder and multiple assassinations, both successful and otherwise:

- In 2003, he initiated what he called a “war on drugs.” [Nearly 3,000 were extrajudicially murdered in the streets over the course of just 90 days](#). It would later turn out that more than half of those killed had nothing to even do with the drug trade. In this act alone, Thaksin earned himself the title as worst human rights offender in Thai history, and still he was far from finished.



- In 2004, he oversaw the killing of 85 protesters in a single day during his mishandled, heavy-handed policy in the country’s troubled deep south. The atrocity is now referred to as the “[Tak Bai incident](#).”
- Throughout his administration he was notorious for intimidating the press, and crushing dissent. According to [Amnesty International](#), 18 human rights defenders were either assassinated or disappeared during his first term in office. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) claimed in its report, “[Attacks on the Press 2004: Thailand](#)” that the regime was guilty of financial interference, legal intimidation, and coercion of the press.



Image: Anti-Thaksin activist, protest leader, and media mogul Sondhi Limthongkul's van after being shot at by over 100 rounds in a failed assassination attempt carried out in broad daylight in 2009. Sondhi is just one of many of Thaksin Shinawatra's enemies that have faced assassination.

....

- In April of 2009 gunmen would fire over 100 rounds into the vehicle of anti-Thaksin activist, protest leader, and media mogul Sondhi Limthongkul [in a broad daylight assassination attempt](#). He was injured but survived.
- On April 10, 2010, heavily armed professional militants deployed by Thaksin Shianwatra and his "red shirt" front [targeted and assassinated Colonel Romklao Thuwatham](#) who was at the time commanding crowd control operations near Bangkok's Democracy Monument.
- In August of 2013, businessman and [outspoken Thaksin opponent](#) Ekkayuth Anchanbutr was [abducted and murdered](#).
- Just this week, on January 17, 2013, [a grenade was lobbed into a peaceful march through city streets](#) killing one and injuring nearly 40. Protest leader Suthep Thuangsuban was a mere 30 meters from the blast – clearly intended for him.

Journalists, human rights groups, and activists of all kinds fear a return of the atmosphere of terror and intimidation sown during Thaksin's time in office and are determined to prevent this from ever coming to pass. One must wonder why these egregious human rights violations, the worst in Thai history, weren't mentioned, let alone addressed by the Washington Post or US Congressman Michael Turner.

Washington Post, Michael Turner, are Covering for Wall Street's Proxy of Choice, the Shinawatras

Could both US Congressman Michael Turner and the Washington Post not be aware of any of this? Could they have missed the New York Times and Forbes articles blatantly admitting the overt criminality and illegitimacy of the current proxy regime ruling Thailand? Does

Turner or the Washington Post honestly believe a proxy regime openly run by a convicted criminal and human rights violator who was not on the ballot nor even in the country, constitutes a “freely chosen” and/or legitimate government?

Of course not.

In fact, the Washington Post’s own 2011 article titled, “[Thaksin’s sister is front-runner to become Thai prime minister](#),” would openly admit the last general election was, “a referendum on Thaksin.”

Clearly, the Washington Post is intentionally deceiving readers to protect the Thaksin regime in which the corporate-financier interests that steer Washington Post’s editorial board have invested heavily.

To see just how heavily invested Wall Street and Washington are in Thaksin Shinawatra and his proxy regime, one must consider over a decade of Thaksin Shinawatra’s servile obedience to these foreign interests:

- 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.
- 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](#).
- Also 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 the 2006 coup that toppled his regime, Thaksin has been represented by US corporate-financier elites via their lobbying firms including, [Kenneth Adelman](#) of the [Edelman PR firm](#) ([Freedom House](#), [International Crisis Group](#), [PNAC](#)), James Baker of [Baker Botts](#) ([CFR](#), [Carlyle Group](#)), and [Robert Blackwill](#) ([CFR](#)) of [Barbour Griffith & Rogers \(BGR\)](#), [Kobre & Kim](#), [Bell Pottinger](#) ([and here](#)). Currently, [Robert Amsterdam](#), of the [Chatham House corporate member Amsterdam & Partners](#), serves as both lobbyist for Thaksin Shinawatra as well as his “red shirt” mobs, the UDD.
- During the most recent political crisis, the Western media has lent its full support to defending the Thaksin regime against protesters, as can be seen in reports by the [BBC](#), [Reuters](#), the [New York Times](#), CNN, the [Wall Street Journal](#), and now the Washington Post.

The Washington Post’s condemnation of what it outrageously calls “anti-democracy militants,” is in defense of a loyal proxy, not “democracy.” That the Washington Post would also defend the [terrorist Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt](#) alongside Thaksin Shinawatra in its latest editorial, is both telling and troubling.

While the Washington Post claims the US has done little to back the Muslim Brotherhood, sources indicate that a campaign of US-backed covert violence and terrorism is already underway to undermine the military government in Cairo. And while the Washington Post

may publicly lament that Washington is not condemning harshly the protesters in Bangkok, we can be sure that covert support has already been ongoing for quite some time – just as rhetorical support from the likes of the Washington Post has.

Already, the only militancy seen, has been [a nightly campaign of violence directed at, not by, the anti-regime protesters](#). That the Washington Post and US Congressman Michael Turner's letter also omit this suggests silent complicity with the regime who is carrying out these acts of terror.

To ignore [the greater geopolitical dimensions in which Thailand's current political crisis is unfolding](#), would ultimately be folly.

The original source of this article is altthainews.blogspot.ca
Copyright © [Tony Cartalucci](#), altthainews.blogspot.ca, 2014

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Tony Cartalucci](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca