

# Thailand: US Meddling in Asia Backfiring

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*Comments made in wake of US-backed proxy regime's fall in Thailand further alienate the waning superpower.*

First [in Hong Kong](#), now in Thailand, ongoing US plans to install proxy regimes to extend hegemony across Asia-Pacific have fallen into disarray.

The latest row comes after US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel made comments condemning the recent coup that first deposed, then saw the impeachment of ex-Thai prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra over a vast array of corruption and abuse of power charges.

Russel was quoted by [an official US State Department transcript](#) of a speech he gave in Thailand as saying:

...a narrow, restricted process – carries the risk of leaving many Thai citizens feeling that they've been excluded from the political process.

That's the reason why we continue to advocate for a broader and more inclusive political process that allows all sectors of society to feel represented, to feel that their voices are being heard. I'd add that the perception of fairness is also extremely important and although this is being pretty blunt, when an elected leader is removed from office, is deposed, then impeached by the authorities – the same authorities that conducted the coup – and then when a political leader is targeted with criminal charges at a time when the basic democratic processes and institutions in the country are interrupted, the international community is going to be left with the impression that these steps could in fact be politically driven.

Russel's comments about "Thai citizens feeling that they've been excluded" is the preamble Shinawatra's own political front often uses to justify acts of terrorism and armed insurrection that have left hundreds of people dead. It is also a familiar line used to justify engineered US-backed violence in other nations aimed at regime change.

Russel's claims that Shinawatra's criminal charges were "politically driven" beg belief. For the US to defend a prime minister openly serving as a proxy for a convicted criminal hiding abroad, and who presided over a regime that recklessly destroyed the economy while literally murdering its political opponents in the streets, is a clear breach of diplomatic protocol and unbecoming of the alleged purpose of the US State Department itself.

Indeed, the US State Department exists to represent the will of the American people abroad, not to impose it upon others.

The Thai government quickly condemned the comments, and a large public backlash followed, aimed at what is now increasingly seen as direct US meddling in Thailand's internal affairs.

#### What the US Sees in the Shinawatras

Yingluck Shinawatra came to power in 2011, running openly as a proxy for her brother, Thaksin Shinawatra, a convicted criminal who fled abroad to evade a 2 year jail sentence as well as a myriad of other pending criminal court cases. The election motto for Thaksin Shinawatra's "Peua Thai" political party was literally, "Thaksin Thinks, Peua Thai Does," an overt admission that a convicted criminal is still, quite literally attempting to rule the country.

To explain why the US has breached diplomatic protocol, and is targeting Thailand's national sovereignty by meddling in its internal affairs, it must be noted that Thaksin Shinawatra himself has been a long-time family friend of the Bush political dynasty, [was a member of the Carlyle Group](#), and since being ousted from power himself in a similar military coup in 2006, has been openly represented by some of the largest corporate lobbying firms on Earth, including, [Kenneth Adelman](#) of the [Edelman PR firm](#) ([Freedom House](#), [International Crisis Group](#), [PNAC](#)), James Baker of [Baker Botts](#) ([CFR](#), [Carlyle Group](#)), [Robert Blackwill](#) ([CFR](#)) of [Barbour Griffith & Rogers](#) ([BGR](#)), [Kobre & Kim](#), [Bell Pottinger](#) ([and here](#)) and currently [Robert Amsterdam](#) of [Amsterdam & Partners](#) ([Chatham House](#)).

While in office Shinawatra took up a decidedly pro-US stance, economically and geopolitically. To the protest of the Royal Thai Army and the Thai people themselves, Shinawatra [sent Thai troops to aid in the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq](#). He also authorized the US CIA [to use Thai territory to carry out their abhorrent "rendition" program](#). Shinawatra also attempted to ram-rod through [an unpopular and quite illegal free trade agreement with America's Fortune 500](#).

Also during his time in office, Shinawatra committed a series of atrocities against the Thai people themselves. First, 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 at all to do with the drug trade. In this act alone, Thaksin became the single worst human rights offender in Thai history. The following year, he would violently put down protests in Thailand's troubled southern provinces killing 85 people in a single day, now known as the "[Tak Bai incident](#)." In addition to these two notorious atrocities, according to [Amnesty International](#), 18 human rights defenders were either assassinated or disappeared during his first term in office. Among them [was human rights activist and lawyer Somchai Neelapaijit](#). He was last seen in 2004 being arrested by police and never seen or heard from again.

Shinawatra also conducted a campaign of terror and murder against his opponents. In April of 2009 gunmen would fire over 100 rounds into the vehicle of anti-Shinawatra 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. Thaksin's "[red shirts](#)" [would go on to clash with the military for weeks](#) before ending their riot with mass city-wide looting and arson. And in August of 2013, businessman and [outspoken Thaksin opponent](#) Ekkayuth

Anchanbutr was [abducted and murdered](#).

For those familiar with the true nature of US foreign policy, the US buttressing a brutal but obedient dictator is an all too familiar tale, one that continues today with the US State Department openly working to undermine the legitimacy of the current Thai government and its efforts to fully uproot the Shinawatra regime along with the US-backed networks of sedition that helped Shinawatra retain its tight grip on the levers of Thai political power for over a decade.

That this grip appears to have been loosened, indicates that America's ability to interfere with impunity has diminished.

Russel's comments were not made to a receptive Thai public – most of whom welcomed the military coup deposing the Shinawatra regime. Even in 2011, a meager 35% of Thailand's total electorate voted for Shinawatra's party, and of those who bothered to vote, Peua Thai failed to earn the popular majority. According to [an Asia Foundation poll conducted in 2010](#), a mere 7% of Thailand's 70 million citizens, identified themselves strongly as "red," the color associated with Shinawatra's political front.

The myth that the military overthrew a "popularly elected democratic government" could not be any further from the truth – and such myths have only gained traction thanks to the enormous and continuing support Shinawatra [and the networks supporting his political power](#) receive from the West's immense media monopolies.

Despite these monopolies, the backlash Russel's comments have earned both himself and the United States' agenda in Thailand is disastrous. No longer do many Thais see the current political crisis as merely a battle between Thaksin Shinawatra and Thailand's traditional political order, but instead, as an existential battle against a foreign agenda that has created and to this day continues to prop up Shinawatra and a vast network aimed at overturning both Thailand's existing political order, and its sovereignty in the process.

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