

## A response to the Thai government



Last week *New Mandala* received [a letter](#) from Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Sek Wannamethee outlining why the government took exception to [a recent article](#) published to our website. Here the author of that piece, James L Taylor, responds.

An academic piece such as my recent [New Mandala article](#) should not be a threat to anyone, or any democratic institution. It is a viewpoint. Frankly I would not think such intellectual rumination and comment worthy of an official response: but, so be it.

As an educated person, from a reputable institution of learning in the UK, Khun Sek should know the value of a *discursus* from his master's classes, and have nothing to be concerned about if these views do not accord with the views of his, or his junta bosses. See also Khun Sek's response to Pavin Chachavalpongpun in [The Japan Times](#).

But, for those who have a sense of the underlying reality in today's Thailand, this is more the case of him saying that the pond is clear when it is murky.

Anyone reading my *New Mandala* contribution has the right to agree or to disagree as long it is supported by a reasoned position. If my argumentation is distasteful, too radical, or deemed to offend the “image” of the regime, may I humbly suggest that what is needed is tolerance to differing views, to reflection instead of a defence of the indefensible.

If the reader feels it is not true, then why should s/he be so concerned? People disagree maybe because they do not like [poststructuralism](#), or understand or agree with the philosophical opining of Deleuze. That’s also fine.

In modern Thai history, a narrative has seemingly been created that masks the truth, and any contra-views to those of the junta silenced, both indirectly and directly. Several people who could have contributed significantly to Thailand’s future have been forced to flee the country, many incarcerated, others with no choice but comply with an imposed normalisation because the alternative carries risks -- what Deleuze means by micro-fascism.

This environment must change if the country is to progress harmoniously.

No one should be afraid of expressing their views and opinions, only of living by lies, deceit and misrepresentation. This has created massive divisions in society. If Thailand is to move forward, then the silenced and the voiceless must be allowed a public space.

As a start, the regime should free all political prisoners and show to the world that Thailand is a compassionate and just nation, the “land of the free”. Would the late monarch not want this?

And, of course, Thailand should be a country that ensures a safe space for those people who wish to grieve the loss of the King, though a sentiment nurtured from the heart, not the head.

***Dr James L Taylor is Adjunct Associate Professor, Anthropology & Development Studies, University of Adelaide.***