

Bad excuse for the coup

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Bad excuse for the coup #1

TU Poli Sci offers one of the typical excuses for the coup that we have heard so far, that is, without the coup, bloodshed was likely to take place.

Apart from the coup, there were at least TWO, not one, more options to avoid the bloodshed. IF Thaksin's opponents anticipated the bloodshed, and if they think that avoiding it is most important, there were two options, not including the coup, to abort it.

1. Thaksin should have stepped down, as many had called.
2. The PAD could have backed off instead of marching on the possible bloodshed.

The second option was equal to the first one, only to the other side of the possible clash. To call only the first one, but the PAD itself pressed ahead despite foreseeable bloodshed, it was bloodthirsty. It is a premeditated clash. Several years ago Khamnoon and Phipob accused me of this false for the Oct 6 massacre. Now it is their turn to explain.

In fact for the same reason I did not understand the weird analysis by the PAD several times before the coup, that if Thaksin did not step down, bloodshed could take place. All the PAD could have done to avoid such a tragedy was to back off. Had the PAD were an observer of a conflict between two other parties, it would have been fair for them to call for either one or both sides of the possible clash to step back. But in this case, they were one side of the possible clash, how could they demand and blame the other, but not themselves? If they sincerely want to abort the looming clash, all they could have done was backing off. They never did so. Like Thaksin, the PAD wanted to win so badly and above anything else. They had played all the cards but cannot lose. They did not care if their action were instigating bloodshed.

The blame for possible bloodshed therefore should go to both sides for refusing to back off.

The next issue is: which one was better to prevent bloodshed:-

- A. The coup
- B. Back off and not escalating the confrontation. This would have been one stone for two birds, to avoid the bloodshed and to avoid the coup that claims to prevent bloodshed.

Which one is more damaging to Thai democracy and society in the short and long terms: the coup or backing off? The answer to all the questions is back off, back off, and back off, if sincerely care about bloodshed.

If they anticipated the bloodshed, but still pressing ahead and with the hope for the coup to prevent the bloodshed ... it was a horrible, dangerous and inexcusable decision -- plain and simple -- and no need to find excuse for the coup that they truly called for.

I have seen a story of Thaksin's plan for a clash as the pretext for his coup. The story makes the coup group a savior. But if our memory is not too short, a story of assassination plot against people in the high place was circulated as an excuse for the Suchinda coup in 1991. Old soldier's trick never dies. Unfortunately there are always credulous people who are ready to believe in order to justify their own actions that share the same goal with the coup.

(Note: If anybody wonders if I apply the above argument to reconsider the Oct 6 massacre. Yes. The above argument is informed by the costly lessons from the past. Sorry if those lessons are lost; 30+ years of democratization are wasted. The coup and these excuses make my lost friends merely historical dust.)

Bad excuse for the coup #2

Another typical excuse for the coup that we have heard in the past few days has been made by several intellectuals -- the coup is a necessary evil, it is the only solution to solve the crisis.

If the crisis means the possible bloodshed, I have argued against such excuse in #1. But if the evil or crisis means the vicious Thaksin regime and Thaksin himself who refused to fall, my

argument against such excuse here.

Whose evil, necessary for whom, and whose only solution? The excuse shamelessly assumes that only Thaksin's opponents matter in Thai democracy. **Thaksin did not come to power by weapon. His election victories were valid. No significant irregularity that would change the results of his two landslide victories. Academics, including myself, can argue against his populist policies, his horrible handling of the crisis in the Malay Muslim region, and so on. But Thai people elected his party and the "Thaksin regime."**

Democracy anywhere in the world is never a rule of the educated, the smarter, the urban, or the better-informed. **It is a rule by popular mandate. No matter if/ how ignorant people are, the elected government has the rights to rule. It is true that democracy does not mean only election. But election is THE ultimate and inviolable source of legitimacy to rule.** The higher moral or good ethics is not. The higher education is not. The better access to information is not. Nor are weapons or any unelected aristocrats.

Democracy is never without corruption and abuses of power. Look how horrible of Bush government right now. Democracy does not mean the intellectual elite will always get what they think is right. On the contrary, in most democracies in the world, the poorly-informed majority wins. It has been like this in every democracy for hundred of years. **THIS, not the coup, IS THE NECESSARY EVIL. Yet democracy grows as the results of the unwavering struggles within the bound of constitution and rule of law. This is the ONLY SOLUTION to establish a strong democracy.** There is no other way.

Thaksin was evil only to his **elitist** opponents. The coup is necessary only for **them who had failed to topple him before**, even by undemocratic means. It is the only solution for these people who are desperate to win at any cost by any means. This excuse is shamelessly an elitist arrogance and prejudice **that denies the rights of people who elected Thaksin as worthless and negligible. They are the majority of people but whose voices do not count.**

This excuse is utterly **anti-democratic**. It is also **มั่งง่าย คิดสั้น**.

Bad excuse for the coup #3

Another typical reason by the anti-Thaksin people that becomes a typical justification for the coup is that Thaksin govt was so evil and could sink the country into the abyss. The coup is therefore a rescue.

Is Thaksin was really the worst crisis in the world, as the king put it and often quoted by Thaksin haters? Has anybody ever offer a substance to validate such an assessment? Is Thaksin regime as bad as Marcos, Suharto or the regime in Burma? Was the crisis so bad that it is about to take down Thailand into hell? The assessment of this kind is unavoidably subjective and debatable with no ending. The argument is therefore interpretive rather than empirical one.

As corrupt and abusive the Thaksin govt was, it was not as bad as so many other dictatorial regimes in Thai history or in the world. There is no possible explanation why it deserves to be toppled by any **undemocratic means**. Thaksin opponents, including **many academics**, lost their sense of perspective and their good judgment because they were consumed by hatred.

My views have usually been discredited by the argument that I am far away, not understanding well what is going on in Thailand, never experienced the real thing, and so on. In this case, it is the contrary, that is, being too close can be a problem. Being too close to a crisis, too intimate to the trouble, hearing, talking about it days and nights for months, one can be consumed by it. **If one does not have a very strong principled stance and strong mind, it is easy to lose a good judgment and lost a sense of perspective (how to understand it in historical term and how to compare it with other corrupt regimes). Being too close is not always good. Being further away is in fact not bad at all for the assessment of an evil in this case. At least it requires me less strength to see things more calmly.**

One may argue that each crisis is particular and cannot be compared easily. I absolutely agree. For this reason, the rhetoric "worst crisis in the world" is meaningless. But the rhetoric has been powerful. Many academics, PAD leaders and the PAD propaganda machine used it as fact to misleading and scare people. Thaksin could be the worst only in their narrow world, in their

narrow perspective of history, especially in their own mind that is already consumed by hatred. Was Thaksin govt worse than the 30+ years of Suharto, the 20+ years of Marcos, and the 40+ years of military rule in Burma, all came to power by coups and bloodshed – therefore deserving a coup to topple him? Was his govt worse than 16 years of Sarit-Thanom-Prapass and deserved a coup? NO WAY. Anti-Thaksin people, [including many leading academics lost their perspective](#), and adherence to principles, because they are consumed by hatred.

I totally disagree with Aj Saneh that the constitution was torn down by Thaksin before the coup. It was violated, ignored, and tampered with; probably similar to what Bush was doing now. But the constitution was still there to provide opportunities to fight the abusive regime. In fact many fights were successful and more were waging, thanks to the constitution. Saneh's assessment and the like are misleading and exaggerated to justify the coup backhandedly.

In my view, moreover, Thaksin the Evil has been created by the opponents too far too much too long until they themselves are consumed and haunted by it. They DEHUMANIZED Thaksin so much -- please do not forget how the dehumanization in Oct 6 that justified the killings-- that they themselves were too scared to let the Evil live a day longer. The assessment of Thaksin among the anti-Thaksin people were overwhelmed with hatred but not enough head. Aj Prawase should have applied many things he preaches to himself and the PAD. Hatred and ignorance are two of the three main types of Tanha.

Thaksin's control of media is a good example of being haunted by the one's own exaggeration. Yes, he did interfere and tried to crush its opponent media. He tried to control the media-scape by all means. Such were abuses of power. But it was never able to control or manipulated to such extent that differing views were shut down. Critics were frustrated for being shut up but they were never being shut down. Anti-Thaksin publications were among the best selling titles. The Nation, Matichon, let alone the Manager and ASTV, were never closed down. Abuses of power and attempts to interfere with media are wrong and must be fought against. But Thaksin the Evil was not able to close our eyes, ears and mouths. The struggles against the interferences had been going on and could go on. The coup is not necessary. Who would dare to say that media freedom and freedom of expression with no fear is better under a coup regime? The coup is a [มั่งงาย](#) way out.

Thaksin was said to control the judiciary and other accountability system by money and fear until the system doesn't work. For money, probably true. If true, it is a wrong-doing and he should be charged. Hope one does not say that the entire judiciary was bought out. If not earlier, moreover, in recent months the judiciary seemed working in favor of the opponents already, due to the royal intervention in April. Why was the coup needed?

As for fear, would a coup regime free the judiciary and people from fear? Thai judiciary has always been coward. It shamelessly surrenders to any and all power throughout history. (Did you see what Mr. Jaran Pakdeethanakul said -- the coup's order is equal to the King's one since the king approved and appointed the coup leaders! What a horrible reasoning!) Thai judiciary has always been smart in knowing which way the winds blow. Its recent defiance to Thaksin – a.k.a. Tulakarnphiwat -- was merely the result of their collective cowardice and surrender to another power – following the different winds. In fact Thaksin's regime of fear, if ever, was collapsing before the coup. That was why many were in his face in the shopping malls and street-sides. Despite that the PAD's undemocratic means (such as M.7) failed to topple Thaksin, popular pressure had yielded some results. For what is the coup needed?

We must fight a wicked government, but not by wicked means. We must not fight a crime by committing another crime. We must not fight a demagogue by authoritarianism. As I have said so many times: bad + wrong will never result in any thing good or right. Down the hill it only goes.

Bad excuse for the coup #4

The coup supporters have come up with an innovative excuse -- this one is a good coup.

I confess that I am first at lost by this excuse and don't know how to respond. It is so ridiculous that I do not think it deserves a counter argument.

OK, the excuse proposes that there is a good and a bad coup. Apart from the previous three reasons [1) avoid bloodshed, 2) necessary evil and only solution, 3) from the worst crisis of the

world], there is one extra qualification for a good coup, that it is the unique situation of the crisis in Thailand that no other place has experienced.

This reasoning cannot be wrong, but it explains nothing. It doesn't say how unique and in what ways such uniqueness justifies the necessity of the coup. If one says that a coup is a Thai way to solve the crisis, it is equivalent to saying nothing. It is a farce.

In fact I have a very serious argument that the coup is not as much anti-Thaksin as being a royalist coup. If being royalist is good, then it is a good coup. But if one thinks it is not good, then it is a bad coup. It depends on one's politics and ideology.

This coup is not only for toppling Thaksin. It is a royalist coup with purposes. If one is not so naive, Prem's fingerprints and footprints are all over the place for us to see. Below is part of an article I have written for a newspaper outside Thailand.

"The accusation that Thaksin disrespected the monarchy masks a far deeper tension between Thaksin and the palace that ... cannot be discussed openly in Thailand. Over the years Thaksin had replaced Prem's and the palace's people in the military and in key bureaucratic agencies with his own men. He even patronized some princes and princesses. His financial influence over these royals was alarming --especially given the acute situation currently faced by the throne.

"King Bhumibol is now 79 years old and in fragile health. Because he has been on the throne since 1949, few in Thailand know any other king but him. Given his importance to the life of the whole country, no matter how the transition takes place, it will be one of the most critical moments in modern Thai history.

"Moreover, in the past fifty years, the royalists have orchestrated the elevation of the king to a super-human or semi-god on earth. Most Thais, and many foreign journalists and experts, have been taken in by the myth of the king as an earthly saint who stays "above", i.e. beyond, politics. In fact, the palace and royalists have frequently intervened in politics by playing the role of the disinterested moral authority above, i.e. purer and higher than, the humanly dirty politics. The more successful is the monarchy's role in modern democracy, the harder it is to be replicated. Things must be put in order before the next reign begins. Thailand is indeed at a critical and delicate juncture.

"To secure the desirable transition and continue such special role of the monarchy in social and political life, the royalists need three things: an heir who is popular with the public; a government that is obedient, even submissive, to royalist leadership; and finally, the ultimate key to the first two, a Privy Council that can command popular respect and with power to play the role of kingmaker in the coming transition to a new monarch.

"Thaksin threatened the royalist plan. To the royalists, he seemingly sought to adopt for himself the role of kingmaker. The royalist coup consolidates power to General Prem and the royalists, putting their plan on track. Will Thailand return to democracy under the guidance of an unelected Privy Council? The constitution that the royalists put in place will reveal the character of government and parliamentary system they have in mind. The anti-Thaksin coup is ultimately the re-assertion of the royalist rule for the transition."

This is perhaps the more important reason for a coup despite signs of weakening "Thaksin regime" before the coup. The coup is not as much about toppling Thaksin as for "Premocracy".

Is this a good or bad coup? It is up to your political and ideological taste.

Bad excuse for the coup: epilogue

George W Bush has been ridiculed around the world including by many Thai intellectuals. Bush deserves it. But the excuses for the coup as offered by its supporters, which include many big and small academics, are ultimately based on the same principle held by the Bush regime.

Bush administration has implemented the phone tapping operation secretly without the court's permission. The US held "terrorist" prisoners at Guantanamo Bay Base without charges or trials for years. Now it tries to redefine the Geneva Convention regarding the enemy combatants. All of these disregards of laws and US constitution are done in the name of protecting the Americans and their freedom. Bush said many times that these measures are necessary for the

protection of Americans and their freedom which are more important than anything else.

Anything else = rule of laws, constitution, judicial system, freedom, and democracy?

The bottom line is -- the end justifies the means; fighting the crime by committing another crime. The US fights terrorism by terrorizing the world. They protect freedom by fear. They claim to fight for civilization, but they do so by uncivilization.

The Thai necessary evil and the only solution -- the coup-- is in fact not very unique after all. It is a kin to the thoughtless measures by the Bush administration and other regimes around the world. They are born of the same short-sighted and self-defeating principles. Needless to say, the "us or them" thinking is also scarily common among the Bushies and the opponents to Thaksin.

Those democratic people in the People Sector, including many leading academics, and George W. Bush whom they despise are not much different in this respect.

By the way, for those who think Thaksin is the worst crisis in the world and deserved to be ousted by a military coup, do you think how bad the Bush administration is? Don't you think it creates much worse disasters throughout the world than Thaksin? Does Bush deserve a military coup or some drastic measures to get rid of him as a necessary evil and the only solution to rescue the world? Now you may understand how those "terrorists" think as well.

There is NO excuses for the coup.

Response to Aj Jon

Although I am not sure which group I am, since I have been accused of being both, it suffices to say I did not feel relieved at all when I learned about the coup. I was upset and sick to my stomach. I was so angry, shaken, and almost threw up.

What else could be worse than the feeling that 30+ years of my and many other lives and the losses of so many have wasted? Suddenly a whole chunk of life seemed evaporated. The virtue of this coup may be debatable. But to me, it threw away at least 14 years of history of Thai democracy into historical dustbin. As much as 33 years of history are in jeopardy.

That's enough about our different positions.

I disagree with Aj Jon's call for unity among the "people sector". The call is based on the assumption and expectation that a unity of the "people sector" is good and it is possible. No matter how well intended the expectation is, it is an illusion. Worse, such expectation turned out to be a huge obstacle in the fight against a larger cause when the so-called people sector cannot agree on that issue such as the PAD during the recent crisis. Many were tagged along only for the sake of saving the unity of the people sector. Those who disagreed and refuse to yield were trashed. The assumption of unity was a serious mistake. Instead, we should let the differences and debates go like in any other community of differences.

Having said so, I do agree with Aj Jon's call for respect and civility in the exchanges of opinions. Some people said respect and civility are being *ดัดจริต*, being aristocratic, *sakdina*, and so on. I disagree with that view. In a community of political differences, civility and respect is even more important than many realize. Why?

If we want the exchanges of opinions, discussions, ideological fights, who would want to exchange with people who have no respect for us. Worse, lambasting usually intimidates people. Who would want to show a different view, let alone an engaging debate, if they are intimidated? Who would want to get lambasted? Somebody may have thick enough skin, but we should not require thick skin to be prerequisite for exchanges of ideas. Only the like-minded and the brave ones are not scared, or even enjoy trash talking and scolding at other people. The exchange of ideas then degenerated.

Don't we think lambasting is a form exercising power? Do we want a discussion when one

wields power and the other is scared? Do we achieve a good discussion? Some might argue, if so why scolding at elected politicians? I agree with that, though such an argument is only partially valid. There may be one who is not afraid to challenge the coup but is scared by cockroaches. Lambasting here can be more intimidating than the coup! Who knows -- there may be somebody who showed up at Paragon last Fri but who was too scared to join a debate on some web boards?

I am scared and intimidated by the web board culture too. Some may say I am coward, not having enough courage for the exchange on this web board, let alone a struggle for the larger cause. Well...I admit that fighting some larger causes seems less a tax to me than a debate here. It is really scary even to me.

I myself is nasty sometimes. : :PP I hope it is not too bad. 🙄:P But I think Aj Jon's call on this point is reasonable. Again, this is not for unity of the "people sector". But it should be a political culture in any community and society with differences.

We should try as we can and tolerate who cannot. But please do not justify lambasting. It is not helpful, but can be poisonous, to any community of differences. Civility and respect to others are not the same as ด้ดจรรรท. Please do not conflate them. Civility and respect doesn't mean flowery words or pretension to be nice or acting calm and unemotional. We can be respectful while being ourselves -- normal person with opinions and feelings. In fact I believe most, if not all, already are. All of us are smart enough to make strong and rigorous arguments with respect and civility, and without having to lambaste others.

There are not many people whom I respect so much for spirit, courage, and integrity, despite our different views on things. Aj Jon is one of them. Our views and reactions to the coup may be different this time, my respect to Aj Jon is the same. Sometimes politics and ideology should take a back seat to many other aspects of life..

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