

Jakrapob on the state within the state

[A New Mandala reader has provided the following translation of “State within the state” by Jakrapob Penkair, *Thai Red News Weekly Magazine*, Year 1, Volume 16, 21 September 2009. The source for the translation is [here](#). Translator notes are added in square brackets.]

State within the state

This concept does not appear in progressive political science literature or research. It was used earlier to refer to the situation in Thailand during the period of the Cold War.

In fact, those who look into the structure and characteristics of the Thai politics and administration will know what this really means. This is not new knowledge. It was since the formation of the Thai Rak Thai party, when Thaksin became the Prime Minister in 2001 that we had tangible evidence that the “State within the state” in Thailand really exists. The evidence also indicates that people no longer have ownership or equal rights in this country as portrayed by current propaganda.

“State within the state” means that there is one “government” on top of another government in Thailand or Thai state, according to international legal definition. One is elected by the majority of people while the other never goes through any election process.

The real [behind the scenes] “government” is composed of the following elements:

1. Senior government civil and military officers nurtured under the patronage system of the previous authority. These officers take turns to be in power, sharing wealth and privilege. They sometimes compete and even fight among themselves.
2. Mechanism of absolute control by the state as among certain bodies and authorities such as Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), Special Branch of Royal Thai Police, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Royal Thai Army, Thai Airways, PTT, etc.
3. Income and revenue responsible groups including both the new rich and the old establishment rich as well as development of centrifugal networks to draw either old or new capital into the center.
4. Elements of academia, in particular those who know how to control the nation-state through the process of law – as among those academics with knowledge and skill to draft a constitution and other minor laws that have a hidden agenda or clauses that allow the status quo ante powers and elite privilege to continue.
5. Agreement with the superpower nations, in particular the USA in regards to protecting mutual benefits and to make sure areas of authority/interest doesn't overlap.

This kind of persisting interest “government” is therefore the real government of this kingdom because it has the absolute power to seek and maintain its power.

The elected government is only there for the sake of the country's image. It's like a mask that hides the real image hidden behind. The orders for the elected government will be made through telephone conversations or messengers, the same way as ordering a pizza delivery.

From the origination of PAD, formerly "we love the king" group, the judicial review, the adjudication to null the election on 2 April 2006, the car bomb to assassinate the PM of the elected government [Thaksin], the 2006 coup, the council for national security, the dissolution of TRT and PPP and most of all the lèse majesté cases were the products of the real "government" of Thailand. These are but a part of a much wider circuit of interests or products!

There is no possible way that the elected government will be able to fight against the real "government" that is resilient and works in clandestine ways. Besides, an elected government has real work to do and has to face various problems daily and has to bear all sorts of criticisms from all directions.

The apparatus of the real power or "government" in Thailand exists above electoral interests; bestowing enfranchisement or empowerment to voters through public referendum and a fair court system. From time to time this real "government" will come out to act like a guru to give a lesson to the elected government.

The missions of the real "government", the "state within the state", are quite clear. It will never allow a situation to occur where it will lose its power and benefits to democratic competition. Some other main duties of the hidden "government" are:

1. Create a distorted image for the political system; making the electorate feel that they cannot rely on a democratic system in place, for example because of vote buying.
2. Make the democratic government incapable, worthless and deserving to be destroyed, and if it appears worthy and gaining authority, the accusations are immediately raised on corruption, "dictatorship" and lèse majesté which can be deployed immediately to annihilate any oppositional voices.
3. Make the bureaucrat system [the *khaa-ratchakaan* system], the real operational system of the hidden "government"; higher in power than the population of the whole country and engender conditions to make people more ignorant and backward than the elite bureaucrats.
4. Constantly reinforce power by creating a competitive condition among the underlings and their operational staff; the ones who fail will be disposed of, while favorites are promoted without credibility or due responsibility to the feeling of others.
5. Constantly promote positive propaganda to build its self-image, as a standard of the morality and good virtue for Thai society; even if there are no productive outcomes, previous outcomes that were accepted will be repeated to familiarize the public so that they dare not challenge it.
6. Severely punish those who dare to challenge the status quo in public; as in "slashing a

chicken's neck to keep the monkey away" [Thai proverb].

7. Never disclose oneself no matter how much pressure; the leader of the hidden "government" would instead act indirectly when necessary to allow underlings to use their imagination to interpret what is wanted and how; any subversive orders will be passed down through codes and "boys" to avoid traces to the source.
8. Promises to the US, Chinese and British governments that as long as the real "government" is able to maintain its power, mutual benefits of all the three countries will be assured; this principle may be referred to as "I Live, You Live; I die, You die". Therefore it is clear that the full extraordinary Thai ambassadors to these three countries have been selected carefully and often given special tasks after their retirement too.

Currently, Thai politics is dictated by the hidden government, the "state within the state". The elected Abhisit Vejjajiva is also trying to take good care of itself like the meat in a shell fish, and unable to undertake any productive activities. The elected government that people truly wanted has been suppressed and unable to make itself an alternative choice. If people can choose their own government the real behind-the-scenes "government" will experience the moral law of impermanence; it will no longer be able to exist in the Thai state anymore. We may place blame on many petty details that caused so much suffering for the pro-democracy faction; however, in reality, this is all dog's shit. The real problem is the behind-the-scenes "government" that places self-interests first, that is regressive and outright wicked and cruel. It is clear that the heart of the Thai political problem is the "state within the state".