

The
EXTRAVAGANT CRUELTY
of the
VAJIRALONGKORN JUNTA

4 YEARS
of
NON-STOP VIOLATION
of
DEMOCRACY, LAW and HUMAN RIGHTS

A critical appraisal of current political events in Thailand

Prepared by
ACT4DEM ry

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PREAMBLE

In 1782, six years after the united states of America declared themselves independent of the Kingdom of Great Britain, General Maha Kasatsuek took hold of absolute power in Siam, to become known in the West as Rama 1, the first king of the Chakri dynasty. 150 years were to pass before the Khana Ratsadon (People's Party, founded in 1926) was able to subject the Chakri to a constitution, after a bloodless coup on 24 June 1932. King Prajadhipok (Rama 7) eventually abdicated in 1934 and his nephew Ananda (Rama 8) took his place, until found shot dead in bed in 1946. Ananda's younger brother Bhumibol as Rama 9 then headed-up the dynasty and so-called constitutional monarchy, until his death in 2016. Bhumibol's only son Vajiralongkorn is now Rama 10, the tenth Chakri monarch to assume to reign over the peoples of Thailand.

Thailand could not avoid being embroiled in the conflicts that led into the Cold War, drifting initially to alliance with Imperial Japan and later to alliance with western forces, notably in connection with the formation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954, which was headquartered in Bangkok.

The dynastic order of the Chakri was all too aware that power and retention of privilege depended on ability to raise and re-instate King Bhumibol as far as possible above the people, and on ability to use and deploy the armed forces against the people. After the surrender of the Japanese, the Chakri began to focus on building a militarised propaganda machine to deify Bhumibol, to making his deification their main means for holding the people in obeisance and for legitimizing autocratic laws and their military crackdowns on public dissent.

'Bhumibol-the-Great' was the product of a royalist propaganda machine designed with intent by a royalist military elite to legitimise royalist ambitions and actions.

During his seven decades as Head of State, from 1946 to 2016, King Bhumibol (Rama 9) gave his personal approval to no less than eleven military *coup d'état*, in other words for seven decades he presided over a highly-staged, non-stop, militarised, royalist, political melodrama.

In all of Chakri history no Chakri architect or leader of any of the many murderous Chakri coups and purges has ever been brought to justice. The co-opting of the military to crush the people whenever awareness of human rights appeared to threaten their concocted, chauvinist conception of a divine right to rule is the most abiding hallmark of Chakri history.

In 1950 Field-Marshal Phibun - not a true monarchist but a full-fledged militarist and the first of Thailand's long line of post-war military dictators - decided to respond to the call from United Nations Command to reinforce the US presence in Korea.

The military contingent sent to Korea was dubbed 'Queen Sirikit's Command Force' and incorporated later into the 2nd Infantry Division of the Royal Thai Army as the 21st Infantry Regiment, to become known thereafter as Queen Sirikit's Muskateers, or just the 'Queen's Guard'. The formation of this regiment marks the beginning of the monarchy's post-war drive to regain command and control of the armed forces and, thereby, of any movement to democracy. On almost all of the many occasions when the people have risen *en masse* to oppose the Chakri, the 'Queen's Guard' has been mobilized, along with the 'King's Guard', to lead the military crackdown. General Prayuth, Thailand's current dictator, previously Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army and chief architect of the 2014 military coup, is himself a product of the Queen's Guard.

Only the very first of Thailand's 20 constitutions, that of 27 June 1932, has been able to state that "Sovereignty belongs to the people" - without being adulterated by monarchists. In the constitution written by the leaders of the 1947 Monarchist Coup "Sovereignty belongs to the people" was relegated to Section 3 and superceded by "Thailand is an indivisible Kingdom" and by "Thailand adopts a democratic regime of government with the King as Head of

State” and by “The King as Head of State shall exercise such power through the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers and the Courts in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.” In effect “Sovereignty belongs to the people” was reduced to ‘sovereignty belongs to the people under the monarchy’.

The 1947 Monarchist Coup Constitution saw the first appearance of “No person shall expose the King to any sort of accusation or action.” This constitution also provided Bhumibol with a privy council with the power to appoint two-thirds of the senate, and it gave him the right to oversee administration of the enormous wealth of the Crown Property Bureau (CPB).

At every moment in the political chronology between 1932 and 2021 the dynastic order of the Chakri has chosen to act primarily in its own self-interest, to not submit to the will of the people.

All of Thailand’s 20 constitutions have had to be drafted under extreme duress from royalist militarists. The most recent 2017 Constitution was dictated by General Prayuth’s junta with direct interference from King Vajiralongkorn. It gives Vajiralongkorn the freedom to do absolutely whatever he pleases. He is now Head of State, Head of the Armed Forces, personal owner of the King’s Property Bureau (the lately re-named CPB) and, as a private person, the largest holder of shares on the Thai stock-exchange.

The monarchist elite is not unaware that it is an anomalous, precarious anachronism. In facing an increasingly conscious and politically aggrieved population, the monarchy saw only one road to survival - to as near to absolute power as possible. The politically vacuous military coups of 2006 and 2014 against democratically elected parliaments and governments had but one desperate purpose: to rescue, secure and consolidate the power of the monarchy over the people. The monarchy knew that since Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn could never be acclaimed a king of kings, the passing of his father meant that they had to ensure that he became the royal dominator and, sure enough, the dynastic order of the Chakri under Vajiralongkorn is now demonstrating conclusively that it has no real intention of signing-up to democratic norms of civility. Nonetheless, there are signs that even die-hard monarchists are starting to realise that the current, crude connivance of the Palace and the military is dragging their country down.

After so many decades of struggle the people are asking themselves where are the **constitutional safeguards** that can prevent the whims of this somewhat sick Chakri king, with his cronies in the military, police and corporate elite, from walking over their democratic aspirations and hopes of real social welfare? Why, after 70 years and 20 constitutions, are the safeguards still not in place? In other words the great majority are finding themselves having to take note that while subservience - rallying around the power of dazzling wealth - might bring some reward it provides no safeguard.

From all walks of life people are beginning to understand that the Chakri dynasty has lost, if ever it had, any right to govern their lives.

CHILD OF THE DIVINE

The only son of King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit, Prince Vajiralongkorn Mahidol was born on 28 July 1952 in the Amphorn Sathan Villa of the Dusit Palace, which is his main residence today: a huge complex in Central Bangkok, currently being revamped to a cost of over 500 million Euro.

When his father passed away in October 2016 Vajiralongkorn inherited the gilded mantle of Thailand's divine king-of-kings. All sectors of Thai society were, if not downright fearful, extremely apprehensive of what the ascendancy of this playboy prince might mean for them.

In 1966, aged 13, Vajiralongkorn was sent to boarding school in the UK, and in 1970 to boarding school in Australia to prepare for entry into the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in Canberra. He was eventually accepted by Duntroon in 1972, the year he was proclaimed Crown Prince. Upon graduation from Duntroon in 1975 he received the rank of Captain in the Royal Thai Army. Thenceforth he devoted himself to military training, to fighting anti-monarchists and to what became an increasingly extravagant, hedonistic life-style. Below is brief overview of his military engagements.

- 1972 Royal Military Academy, Duntroon, Australia.
- 1975 Graduation with a BA in Military Studies, University of New South Wales.
- 1976 Training with Special Air Service Regiment, Western Australia.
- 1978 Graduation from Royal Thai Army Command and General Staff College.
- 1980 Wide-ranging special warfare training, including helicopter and fighter pilot training (e.g. Arizona 1982-83).
- 1981 Lt. Col. 1st Infantry Regiment.
- 1984 Commander, King's Bodyguard.
- 1986 Commander, Special Warfare Command.
- 1990 Royal College of Defence Studies, UK.
- 1992 Commander, Volunteer Defense Corps, Ministry of Interior.
- 1994 Flight Instructor for F-5 E/F fighters.
- 2004 Honorary Commander, 3rd Infantry Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, Royal Guard.
- 2005 Honorary Commander, 1st Engineer Regiment, 2nd Engineer Battalion.
1st Communications Battalion, Royal Guard.

With the Royal Thai Army he has held or holds all of the highest possible ranks: general, admiral, air chief marshal. With licence to fly a range of aircraft from helicopters to F-16s to Boeing 737s he is an experienced pilot, also a supervisor of military training manuals. In real terms the Crown Prince emerges as a hardcore militarist.

For all people in Thailand the next years of Vajiralongkorn's life were a tumultuous and painful awakening. Vajiralongkorn was, most certainly, fully aware of the planning of the 2006 military coup and directly engaged in the planning of the 2014 military coup.

- 2006 Royalist military coup to overthrow the democratically elected government.
- 2007 Vajiralongkorn establishes royal harem in Germany.
- 2010 'Bloody May' military crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations (almost 100 protesters killed, most by the bullets of military snipers).
- 2014 Royalist military coup to overthrow the democratically elected government.
Royal Security Command Force Act hands military power to Vajiralongkorn.
- 2016 Death of King Bhumibol. Vajiralongkorn ascends to the Chakri throne - as Rama 10.
- 2017 Direct interventions by Vajiralongkorn in the new 'Prayuth Constitution';
Vajiralongkorn takes ownership of the vast wealth of the Crown Property Bureau.
- 2019 Public coronation (3-day event in May).
Vajiralongkorn takes personal command of the 1st and 11th Infantry Regiments and steps to ensure the all army and police are loyal and under his direct command.
- 2020 Youth revolt with 10 demands to reform the monarchy.
Wanchealarm Sartsaksit abducted and disappeared: the 10th dissident victim of Rama 10;
Vajiralongkorn takes direct control of Royal Thai Police;
Vajiralongkorn returns to Thailand from Germany (October 9).
- 2021 Youth uprising confronts the violent absolutism of the monarchy.

Some people say that Vajiralongkorn, immersed in pomp, pageantry and militarism, with unlimited access to immeasurable wealth and immune from prosecution, really does believe that he is a divine person of divine heritage.

What concerns an ever increasing number of people is the mountain of hard fact that states very clearly that Vajiralongkorn is as far from divine as far can be, that he is a menace to the spirit of human rights, a threat to democracy, to the future of Thailand and the well-being of the ASEAN and to any person or body that crosses his path: a dangerous entity.



On 17 July 2019, General Prayuth brought his junta's 36 appointed ministers to vow allegiance to the king at the Amhorn Sathan Hall in the Dusit Palace.

Uniform fetishism

Besides his military training manuals Vajiralongkorn has also supervised manuals on royal protocol, covering, for instance, deportment, saluting and the dress code of not only his newly created Royal Security Command Force but also of the Royal Thai Police and his Royal Volunteer Force. The greater the number of people he can get into his uniforms the safer he feels.

RETURN of the ROYAL HAREM

The Thailand of Bhumibol, King of Kings, was forged by militant, royal denial of people's rights to self-governance, by decade after decade of unrelenting, royalist propaganda, by a royalist education curriculum purposely designed to produce people that could be labelled by the monarchy as too childish to know how to govern themselves. All aspects of life were saturated with the absolute goodness of his absolute wisdom. Every breath of air was a gift from the king, every breath against him, by law, a crime punishable with years of imprisonment.

Nonetheless gossip about relationships within the royal Palace was commonplace and to some extent this served the interests of the Palace, by providing the masses with a softball distraction that helped to undermine debate of real issues and questions.

Queen Sirikit was a high-born blue-blood good at protecting her own interests, and rumours of Bhumibol amours remained mere hearsay, but scandalous stories about the rise and fall of their son's women could not be contained.

The gossip swirling around Vajiralongkorn's private life has long been rife but remained



somewhat innocuous while Bhumibol sat on the throne: so what if the son of a demi-god was “A bit of a Don Juan” as his mother noted. Nonetheless all sectors of Thai society were conscious that their next-to-be god-king was an unsavoury character that seemed to fancy himself as a reincarnation of Rama 5 the Harem King.

As widely predicted, since becoming Head of State, Vajiralongkorn has made his choice regarding his style of kingship abundantly clear: to listen only to himself, to enrich himself, to not listen to the cries of the people, to double-down on discontent and dissent, to play hardball with anybody that refuses to crawl at his feet and to demand that state power be centred around his own thoroughly debauched, militarised persona.

Is it necessary to discuss the impact of Vajiralongkorn's private life on political life?

The answer has to be an unequivocal yes, because, uncontested, the social limitations of this harem king, this king over state, army, police and judiciary, can cause political life in Thailand to become so embittered that Thailand itself becomes a failed state, a place where hope becomes but a cynical reflection of what it could have been.

In 1913, in the reign of Rama 6, for those who indulged or aimed to indulge, the practice of polygamy took a turn to the worse. Polygamy was starting to make the task of maintaining the civil registry too complicated, and men were limited to taking only one legal wife. The legalistic change did not target the practice of polygamy as such, but it did lead to a trend of diminishing polygamy as women in general chose to not be regarded in society as (unregistered) second or third wives.

Whether or not limiting men to one legal wife, and thereby also their potential to accumulate and secure wealth, has played a role in building Thailand's outsized sex industry, by increasing pressure on dirt poor villagers to allow their daughters to earn money in the sex trade, needs some investigation. Blame can be laid on the 50 000 or so US military personnel that occupied Thailand during the Cold War, but they cleared-out in 1976 and cannot be blamed for everything forever.

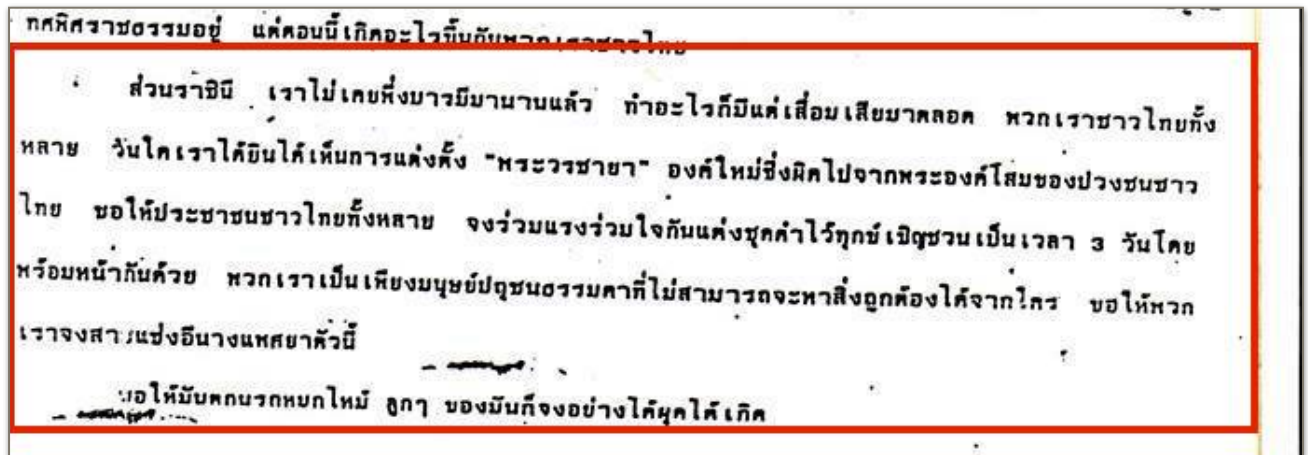
Whatever the pros and cons of Thailand's laissez-faire attitude to the sex trade, there is no denying that a lot of women in all age groups are being mentally and physically injured. The women of Vajiralongkorn's royal harem have been and remain no exception.

The stories around the falling from grace of Vajiralongkorn's women contain far more fact than fiction. Ignoring the relevance of the facts is not a good idea. Not challenging the phenomenon of a military junta that supports a 'divine' Head of State who gives himself the right to maintain a personal harem at public expense proclaims that men have the right to enslave women for sex.

In 1991 Vajiralongkorn decided to get rid of his first wife. She refused to step aside so he took her to court. Being the niece of his mother this made her family very angry. The row was so bad that his father, Bhumibol, decided he had to step in, and bestowed her with a title: 'Her Royal Highness Somsawali Phra Worarachathinaddamat - Mother of the First Niece of the King', but the family remained angry.

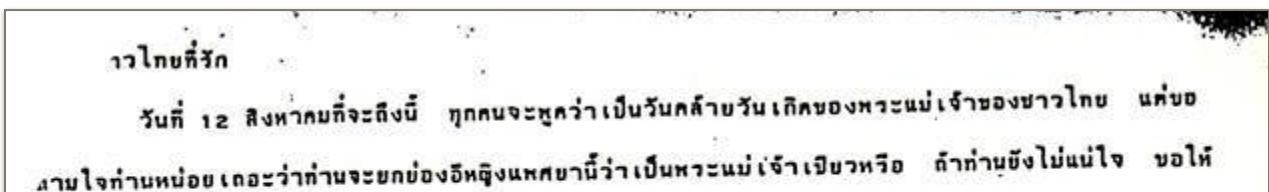
In 1994, when Vajiralongkorn made his long-time mistress Sujarinee his second wife, the Somsawali family quietly released several leaflets into the public sphere expressing their disgust (in June and August).

The first Somsawali leaflet (undated and unsigned) made reference to the official Royal News coverage of Vajiralongkorn conducting Royal Activities on 20 July 1994 - with his mistress now wife and their 5 previously illegitimate children in tow. Quoting from the pamphlet . .



“ . . . **They** can do like this! **They** are the nation’s evil couple. Does he think he can be king without being cherished and respected by the people. Their extreme stupidity, extreme evil, how can we the people respect them. If he becomes the king and rules the city, it will be more horrible and evil than it is now. Please help, please do whatever you can to prevent this stupid man and woman from being promoted to higher position.”

The last Somsawali leaflet was a lengthy attack on Queen Sirikit . .



“ The coming 12 August, everyone is saying that it’s the birthday of the mother queen of Thai people. But let me ask your heart, whether you can take this bitch as your queen mother...

Sometime she dress like a whore, wearing a pant to receive salute from the line of honouring soldiers, including civil servants dressing in white - she is just doesn’t have manner... her dressing style get worse every day, the older she is the mad she become. Who can still think that you can called this crazy woman the mother queen.”

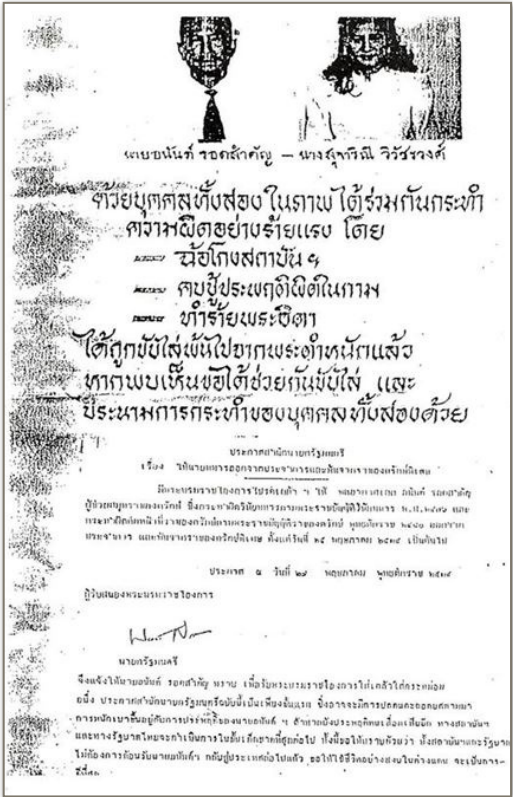
ตัวนี้จะหยุดทำชั่ว กลับคืนตัวหนักขึ้นไปอีก ทำตัวให้อยู่เหนือหัวเจ้าอนุหัว บางครั้งแต่งตัวเหมือนหญิงกลางเมือง นุ่งกางเกงเดินควรวางแถวกองเกียรติกยศ ซึ่งมีข้าราชการแต่งชุดขาวเต็มขมมาขึ้นรับ - ส่ง มันช่างเป็นคนไม่รู้กาลเทศะเอาเลย การแต่งตัวนั้ละชุดออกมาเหมือนลิเกหลงโรง เป็นอันกลับตัว ทำให้ผู้เป็นเจ้าของประเทศไทยคือประชาชนอับอายต่างชาติ เขาจะพูดเสียงเดียวกันว่าทำไมเราจึงแต่งตัวเหมือนนักร้องมันเท่าลายแต่ไหน การแต่งตัวนั้วันจะหนักมือเขาไปทุกวัน ยิ่งแก่อิ่งบ้า โกรธบ้างที่ยังคิดว่าตัวเองจะเรียกก็มีว่านี่ว่าพระเจ้า

“ . . . For the Queen (Sirikit) we never rely on her since a long time ago. Whatever she does only damages our reputation. All Thai people, if any day there is appointment of a new princess wife, which is not princess Somsawali of the Thai people, please dress in black to protest for 3 days . . . ”

Princess Somsawali, paralysed and in a wheelchair, is now the UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador for HIV Prevention for the Asia Pacific.

In 1996 Vajiralongkorn decided to dump Surjarinee - his second wife who had born him 5 children. He himself threw her clothes out of the front gate of the Nonthaburi Palace, and stuck a poster with photos of her and one of his guards on the wall of the Palace accusing them of fornication:

“Both people in the photos conducted serious offenses. Deception of the Monarchy Institute. Adultery and sexual misconduct. Abusing the princess royal. Both have been evicted from the Palace. If you see them please help to chase them away and condemn these two persons. 27 May 1996.”



While Vajiralongkorn was throwing her clothes out of the palace, Surjarinee was with their daughter and four sons in the UK, where the boys were in school. She and the children were eventually granted asylum in the US.

A 1997 seven-page letter written in English by the 4 deserted princes in defence of their mother describes what really went on:

“ . . . It would not be exactly accurate to say that it started in May of 1996... The truth of the matter was that our father had never loved or treated our mother as his wife. She lived in a state of servitude, and every time he found another women we would be forced out of the house only to be summoned again when it pleased him. But now father plans to get rid of our mother permanently. And what was a better way to do that than to somehow prevent her from ever going back to Thailand, our home country again. To achieve his plan, His Highness came to England secretly and took away our little sister. She would be useful to him in that would falsely accuse our mother of abusing her. . . ”

Most certainly Thai people have connected the cruelty that Vajiralongkorn showed these four sons to his absence of interest in or care for ordinary people.

2009 saw release to the Internet, under authorship of 'Hi S', of a long dramatology that underlined the tragic nature of the incestuous power plays taking place behind the walls of the Palace, and of the brawling between the women seeking favour with the Crown Prince. It was called the 'The Canned Fish Factory'.

In 1993 Vajiralongkorn had begun an affair with a singer called Srirasmi. In 1996 he took her into the Palace and in 2001 he made her his third wife. With her he had one son - Prince Dhipangkorn, the present Chakri Heir Apparent, currently at school in Germany.

Of all his women, Srirasmi, with her charm and helpful manner, is the only one to have touched the heart of Thai people. In 2014 Vajiralongkorn decided that she too must be terminated.

Srirasmi's uncle was the Director of the Central Investigation Bureau, the most powerful police body. In October 2014 his chief assistant was murdered. This assistant left a note to say that if found dead it would be by order of the Royal Security Command Force. The pattern here exemplifies internal Palace-style disciplinary action: a murder precedes a mass arrest followed by rapid neutralisation or termination of significant opposition: the no-nonsense *coup de grâce*. Two days after the murder Srirasmi's uncle was arrested, along with several other senior police, and accused of *lès majesté* and 'corruption and fraud in the name of the monarchy'. All were imprisoned and, who knows, maybe still are. Accused of the same, a few days after the uncle's arrest, the whole Srirasmi family was arrested. In December Srirasmi was stripped of her titles. She was promised a 5 million Euro royal payout (paid or not who knows), then placed under house-arrest, had her head shaved and forced thenceforth to dress in the white costume of a Buddhist nun. Her father, mother, sister, brother and brother-in-laws were imprisoned for around two years and, since their release, have vanished from sight.

From 2007 Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn began to spend an increasing amount of time in Germany, where he set-up harem over-looking the Alps in Bavaria. While his Royal Command Security Force was getting rid of Srirasmi and her family in Thailand, he was enjoying his favourite concubine, an air-hostess called Suthida. In May 2019 he made Suthida Thailand's latest queen.

With his harem well established near Munich he began to favour one of the girls called Koi, a nurse to his son. In August 2019 she too was up-graded. Koi is now Royal Consort Sineenart, the first royal concubine to appear as an officially designated Royal Consort since 1900.

The current battle royale between Queen Suthida and Koi is providing the tabloids with a non-stop drama: round one to the queen, round two to Koi . . . maybe.

Royal Consort Koi was deposed on 20 October 2019 and sent to prison. But Koi is a fighter too. On 28 August 2020, after 8 months in prison, Vajiralongkorn sent one of his Munich-based 737s to fly her back to the harem.

The king and queen and Koi have since been appearing together in public as a couple of three. In the villages people watch on to see if Koi will be able to fully displace a fallen queen.

But Vajiralongkorn has no interest in choice between just two women. Since 27 January 2021 he has promoted 32 young women to the higher military ranks of his Royal Security Command Force, his customary method of supplying his harem with fresh faces. The fresh faces that he honours with the bestowal of 'royal surnames' are the most likely to end as concubines. Such women are required to serve him, the queen and whoever is his consort. Of the 32 women who have entered his personal service since January this year 14 have acquired royal surnames, with 11 now using the name Sirivajirabhakdi, 2 Tippayavajirabhakdi and 1 Borirakphumin.

There is concern not just for the rights and wellbeing of the women in his harem, but also for the 14 000 people who form the Royal Household Staff, which is also, now, under his direct personal command. In his own decrees he states that: ". . . the king can do anything to his courtiers, to promote or demote, as he wishes . . ." In his court there is no such thing as women's rights or labour rights. According to the decrees he issued for Royal Household Management in April and May 2017, the laws of human rights do not exist. The decrees are

written to ensure that the huge staff of the Royal Household is immune from laws of human rights.

Needless to say the crude, extravagant, violent and murderous habits, behaviour and actions of Thailand's new Head of State has stirred strong public resentment. What clear thinking woman, what mother, wants a Vajiralongkorn as Head of State?

Hardcore corruption within the institute of the Thai monarchy and hard-core corruption in the machinery of the Thai state are inseparable. This incestuous, political relationship is fully exhibited by General Prayuth's demand that the electorate - the tax-payers, the sponsors of the military - must kiss the feet of the person who, as head of state and army, is all too willing to send them to the gallows if they don't.

The young women of Thailand have begun, finally, to awaken to understanding that they have the right to take action to liberate themselves from the spider-web and innate cruelty of the Chakri monarchy, from humiliation through forced subjugation to the antiquated patriarchy that Rama 10 has chosen to exemplify.



A poster of Vajiralongkorn's women that floats around on social media.

MONARCHO-MILITARISM defined

The term monarcho-military is a lexeme that is hard to find in any lexicon, but it can be found in political literature from the distant past describing the exact same political conditions that the youth of Thailand is facing today.

With the population of Thailand becoming rapidly, collectively, increasingly aware of what right to representative government means in practice, the twilight of old King Bhumibol presented the Chakri dynasty with a real challenge.

Whatever the criticism of Thaksin Shinawatra, to a great extent the parliaments and governments that were elected through landslide victories in 2001 and 2005 had set Thailand on a course that looked and felt like, this time around, the country might emerge as a real democracy finally. Put another way, the challenge of democracy to the supremacy of the Chakri monarchy over democracy had become very real.

Would the monarchy demonstrate, finally, that it respected the sovereignty of the people, the right of the people to democratic representation?

In 2006 and 2014 there was nothing other than self-centred pride and plain greed to stop the monarchy from respecting the outcome of electoral process and procedure but, predictably unbelievably, it chose yet again, under Vajiralongkorn, emphatically and pro-actively, to glue itself even more firmly to the pretence of being the nation's godhead - to remaining the nation's bully-boy godfather, to denigrating all but ardent royalist.

Imbued and imbued with the sanctity of Chakri divinity, Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn was fully conditioned to having right to do whatever he pleased, to vacationing without end in democratic Germany. He saw what it pleased him to see, nevertheless, as a highly-trained, hardcore militarist, he understood enough of the world to see that keeping the Chakri afloat as the overlords of the Thai nation-state needed strategy and political cunning.

The elite overseers of the Chakri monarchy did not lack political cunning. With decades of experience in suppressing democracy under their belt, they were masters of their game and not shy of ruthless execution, but the world around them was changing. Opposition to Chakri hegemony was becoming more diverse and the fact that their wayward king-in-waiting had no popular appeal presented a major complication. This time around the Chakri would need to engage all of their cunning and royal trickery, and the Crown Prince himself, aware that his only reliable base lay within the military, knew that remaining supreme meant aiming for maximal personal power.

Success would hinge, as always, on the loyalty of the armed forces and, this time around, especially on the royalist elite's capacity to threaten and instill fear. The monarchy had to ensure that the commanders of the army and police would march in step and in tune with the monarch.

Planning for how the monarchy could hold onto power through the transition from Bhumibol to Vajiralongkorn was well into the pipeline in 2005, becoming manifest in the 2006 military coup and 8 years later in the 2014 military coup, and brought to final realisation in 2016 with a series of royal decrees issued by Vajiralongkorn immediately after his father passed away.

Creeping shadows of feudalism

The question as to why the development of democracy in Thailand - one of the great gardens of the world that had managed to evade direct colonisation - has faltered so painfully has only one answer. Since absolute monarchy was abolished in 1932 the Chakri have refused to muster the courage to admit and accept that sovereignty belongs to the people.

In 1946 the mysterious death of Rama 8 was used as an excuse to defame Pridi Banomyong, the recognised father of democracy in Thailand. Since then Chakri monarchists have never ceased attempting to sabotage and block the process of democratisation. The only factor enabling Rama 9 to compete with Louis XIV for longest reigning monarch was because he

approved or endorsed no less than 11 military *coup d'état* - in 1947, 1948, 1951, 1957, 1958, 1971, 1976, 1977, 1991, 2006 and 2014.

In almost every instance these were royalist military coups that resulted in the forced dissolution of governments and political parties and the ripping-up of the constitution. Today Thai people suffer under the 20th constitution to have been written-up under the jurisdiction of a military junta. The average life of the constitutions of the Chakri Kingdom has been 4.5 years. As of today 70 million people in Thailand remain as before as but dust under the feet of a king of the Chakri dynasty.

Below is a cable from 9 October 1976 that throws some light on the creeping, low-key feudalism that plagued the development of democracy during the Bhumibol decades. The cable was sent after a meeting between Malcolm MacDonald, one of the UK's most senior diplomatic representatives, and King Bhumibol three days after the gruesome massacre of students at Thammasat University protesting the return to Thailand of Dictator Thanom.

Confidential

To immediate FCO tel no 418 of 9/10/76

Infor routine to Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Jakarta, Vientiane, and Washington
Saving to Manila and Hanoi.

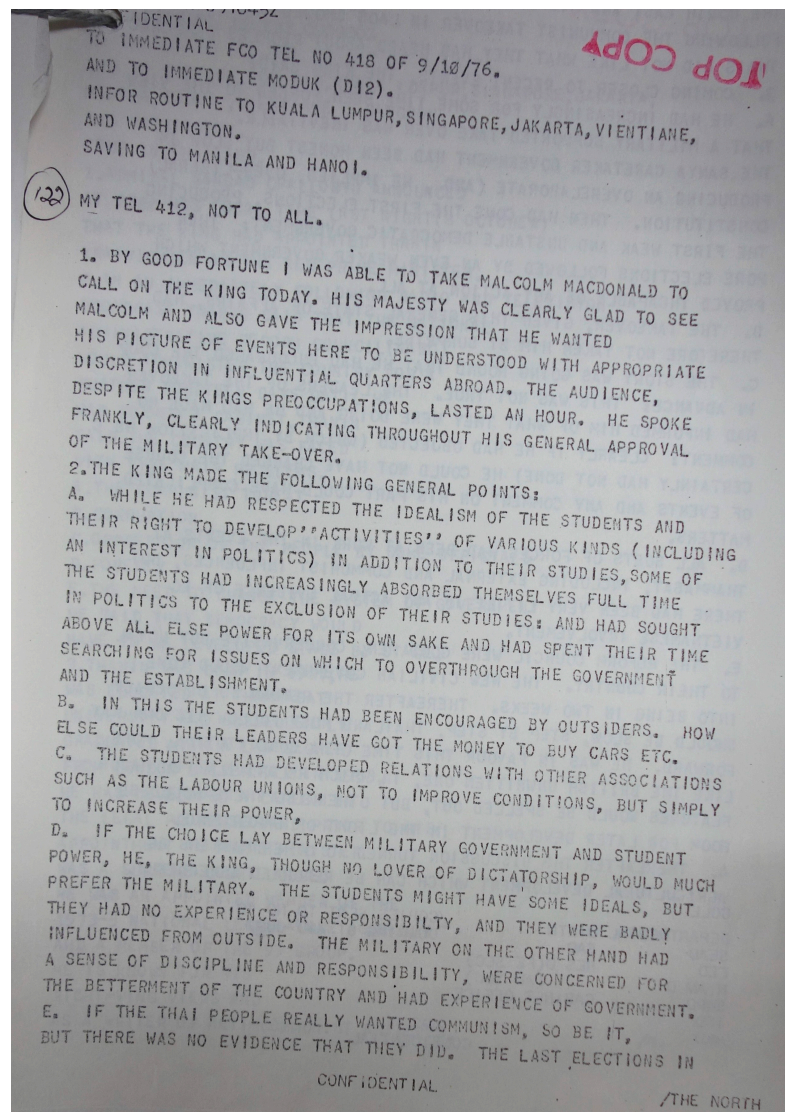
My tel 412, Not to all.

1. By good fortune I was able to take Malcome Macdonald to call on the King today. His Majesty was clearly glad to see Malcolm and also gave the impression that he wanted his picture of events here to be understood with appropriate discretion in influential quarters abroad. The audience, despite the Kings preoccupations, lasted an hour. He spoke frankly, clearly indicating throughout his general approval for the military take-over.

2. The king made the following general points:

- A. While he had respected the idealism of the students and their right to develop "activities" of various kinds (including and interest in politics) in addition to their studies, some of the students had increasingly absorbed themselves full time in politics to the exclusion of their studies: and had sought above all else power for its own sake and had spent their time searching for issues on which to overthrow the government and the establishment.
- B. In this the students had been encouraged by outsiders. How else could their leaders have got the money to buy cars etc.
- C. The students had developed relations with other associations such as the labour unions, not to improve conditions, but simply to increase their power,

D. If the choice lay between military government and student power, he, the King, though no lover of dictatorship, would much prefer the military. The students might have some ideals, but they had no experience or responsibility, and they were badly influenced from outside. The military on the other hand had a sense of discipline and responsibility, were concerned for the betterment of the country and had experience of government.



E. If the Thai people really wanted communism, so be it, but there was no evidence that they did. The last elections in the North East and his own conversations with villagers there following the communist takeover in Laos showed that the Thais did not like what they had heard about peoples democracy.

3. Coming closer to recent events, the king said:

- A. He had increasingly for some time been forced to the view that a military supported take over was inevitable. The Sanya caretaker government had been honest but slow in producing an overelaborate (and, he implied, over-liberal) constitution. Then had come the first elections, producing the first weak and unstable democratic government: then more elections followed by an even weaker government which proved incapable of any action at all.
- B. The takeover, given this general state of affairs, had therefore not taken him by surprise.
- C. The story was going round that he had encouraged the coup in advance: this was not true. The leaders of the takeover had informed him of what they were doing and he had made no comment: clearly if he had objected (which by implication he certainly had not done) he could not have changed the course of events and any comment on his part could have complicated matters.
- D. All sorts of forces had been at work in the events at Thammasat, including external and communist influences, but there had been very little if any actual evidence of eg Vietnamese involvement.
- E. The reform council were good men, conservative but loyal to their country. The new civilian government would come into being two weeks. Thereafter the return to democracy should be slow, step by step, Thailand must follow its own way forward. He was in favour this time of a constitution, more like the British unwritten one, in which relatively few major features would be spelled out, but otherwise there would be room for later development in the light of experience.

4. Thereafter the discussion turned to other matters eg agricultural development which can be reported seperately.

Departmental distn.

/Copies sent to No. 10 Downing St and ODM/

CONFIDENTIAL

(Note: this cable was published on the Internet by Andrew MacGregor Marshall on 13.03.2013.)

After a further 45 years of continuous subjugation to this sanctimonious, hypocritical step-by-step stepping to nowhere, Thai people are now at breaking-point, fully savvy to understanding that the monarchy with its king as Head of State has but one over-riding purpose: to keep the people coralled in a gilded cage within which justice has but one over-riding purpose: to maintain their gilded cage.

The ROYAL SECURITY COMMAND FORCE - a monarcho-military device.

Well aware that he had no popular base, that under his leadership the kingship and the monarchy could disintegrate, Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn knew he had to be pro-active, that scuttling the growing demand for real democracy required a drastic version of traditional Chakri powergaming, with acquisition of absolute power, or as much power as possible, the singular goal.

With his military mates he came up with a plan that centered on what can be described as a 'monarcho-military device' - the creation of a new royalist unit within the Ministry of Defence with a latent potential to be able to take control of all armed forces. They dubbed this device the Royal Security Command Force.

In the late aftermath of the 2006 military coup - that aimed to break Thaksin Shinnawatra's hold on the electoral majority, the government of Thailand found itself under the weak leadership of his sister Yingluck Shinnawatra.

In the period leading up to the collapse of her government Yingluck fancied that she might be able to court the support of the Crown Prince. In April 2014, just a few weeks before Prayuth launched his 2014 military coup, her government provided Vajiralongkorn with the stamp of approval he required to 'legitimise' the setting-up of his Royal Security Command Force (RSCF) - within the Ministry of Defence under his direct command.

On 20 May 2014 General Prayuth declared martial law and launched his military coup. Four days later King Bhumibol gave General Prayuth formal recognition as the leader of his (the king's) junta: yet another gaggle of military men that had themselves decided to call themselves the National Council for Peace and Order.

From this moment on Vajiralongkorn's RSCF has been taking and playing an absolutely central but largely under-cover role in Thailand's political theatre, providing the macabre means, threat and bargaining chip to enable Vajiralongkorn and his generals to manipulate and cajole at will their monarchist base: the 'servants of the king' in the armed forces, senate, parliament, ministries and royalist institutions.

Immediately after the king had begotten, from Yingluck, the green light for his new Security Command Force it metamorphosed into a whole set of different units, one of the most consequential of which has been and remains his Ratchawallop King's Security Guard School, which is situated in the grounds of the Taweewattana Palace, one of the most feared places in Thailand (see below). The curriculum of this school includes training manuals ordered by Vajiralongkorn himself on, for instance, sword marching, bare handed and weapon postures, how to handle an assault rifle and armed-forces flags.

In 2014 the strength of the RSCF was around 5000. With the the core of the Force now more than double that strength it has become not only a threatening force to those struggling for democracy but also to the military itself. These days the jungle telegraph is whispering that His Royal Highness is aiming to transform some 300 000 armed-forces personnel into a massive royal guard force to protect, in effect, the monarchy from democracy, also from the army itself.

The Royal Courtiers Administration Act 2017

In 2017, within days of Vajiralongkorn having ascended the throne, the Vajiralongkorn-Prayuth duet pushed through a so-called Royal Courtiers Administration Act to 'legalise' Vajiralongkorn's direct commands and decrees for strengthening his, the king's, military power-base.

On 19 September 2019 Vajiralonkorn issued a so-called "Royal Decree for transferring Royal Thai Army regiments and their budgets under the Ministry of Defense to the Royal Security Command Force under the King's Royal Household Ministry 2019", which aimed in particular at placing the 1st and 11th Infantry Regiments under his direct command.

For decades the 1st and 11th Infantry Regiments had been taking key roles in ensuring the success of the royalist military coups. The 1st Infantry Regiment is traditionally the home-base of military coup leaders, including General Prayuth. The Headquarters of the 11th Infantry Regiment is traditionally the place where politicians and activists struggling for democracy are sent for "Attitude adjustment". Hundreds of politicians, academics and activist have been interrogated and tortured in the grip of these two regiments.

For a long time the top dog of Thailand's *royal military attitude adjusters* was General Prem Tinsulanonda, known widely as 'Pappa Prem'. Prem had followed the usual trajectory of army commander-in-chief to, in 1980, non-elect Prime Minister, providing Thailand with 8 years of 'preocracy'. In 2001 he took over the chairmanship of Bhumibol's Privy Council. With regard to the long post-war process of strengthening the marriage between the Palace and the army he was perhaps Thailand's most influential general - an invaluable royalist asset, all the way up to his death on 26 May 2019 (aged 99). Prem was the person who could smooth the ruffles and wrinkles between the monarchy, military, royalist elite and nationalists.

As noted above, in both his conduct and his practice, Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn had grown to become nothing more and nothing less than an outright militarist. With Bhumibol and Prem gone there was no one left in Thailand that could temper the new king's crazed character.

Broadly speaking the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) that took control of Thailand after General Prayuth's 2014 military coup has become now what it was designed to be: *His Majesty's junta*, an integral part of the royal court.

Meet the Vajiralongkorn junta

Queen Suthida Bajasudha Bimollaksana (43) is Deputy-Commander of the Royal Security Command Force. As Suthida Vajiralongkorn Na Ayudhya she was appointed to the rank of General in December 2016.

Below is a list of some of the senior military and police who, either directly selected or with the backing of Vajiralongkorn, comprise the core of the Royal Security Command Force that has now occupied and taken control of the political theatre in Thailand.

Air Chief Marshal Sathitpong Sukvimol (72), King's Royal Guard since 2001. He was appointed Personal Secretary to the Crown Prince in 2011, more-or-less Vajiralongkorn's right-hand man. He holds many positions, including all key positions in the management of the king's affairs and Royal Household. As Chairman of the King's Property Bureau (formerly Crown Property Bureau under the Minister of Finance) he manages the King's business affairs.

General Prayuth Chan-ocha (67), the leader of the 2014 military coup and current Prime Minister, has spent his whole military career as a Queen's Musketeer with the 21st Infantry Regiment, serving the queen and Vajiralongkorn from a young age. Prayuth was chosen - by Vajiralongkorn - to lead the 2014 military coup, as were his 3 main co-conspirators: General Pravit, General Anupong and General Apirat.

General Pravit Wongsuwan (76), also from the 21st Infantry Regiment, a former C-in-C of the Army, also former Minister of Defence and one of the leaders of the NCPO. There have been many protests against Pravit for corruption, but he survived all with Prayuth's backing. Pravit is important to the king's junta because of his ability to keep the generals and commanders coordinated.

General Surayud Chulanond (78), one-time close aide to Prem Tinsulanonda, member of Bhumibol's Privy Council (2003), and former C-in-C of the Royal Thai Army. Bhumibol appointed Surayud to be the Prime Minister after the 2006 military Coup. He is presently Acting-Chairman of Vajiralongkorn's Privy Council.

General Apirat Kongsompong (61), the son of General Sunthorn Kongsompong, the leader of 1992 military coup. C-in-C of the Royal Thai Army from 2016 - 2020, one of the leaders of the 2014 coup and close to Vajiralongkorn. He is currently the Deputy Director of the Palace Bureau and Deputy Chairman of the Board of the King's Property Bureau.

General Jakkrapob Bhuridej (52), is from the Air Force, close to Vajiralongkorn, Commander of the King's Security Guard and Board Member of the King's Property Bureau and several other royal organisations. He is Commander of the so-called Royal Volunteer Force and Royal Volunteer School, which together form Vajiralongkorn's 'Royal Volunteer Project'.

The men who currently command the Royal Thai Army, Air Force, Navy and Police, respectively **General Narongphan Jitkaewthae**, **Air Chief Marshal Airbull Suthiwan**, **Admiral Chatchai Sriworakan**, **Police General Suwat Jaengyodsuk**, are all pals of General Apirat since their time in the Armed Forces Academy Preparatory School. They were selected, appointed and brought together by Apirat to ensure that the armed forces remained loyal to the monarchy, after he, Apirat, moved on.

And a couple more!

In April 2019 Vajiralongkorn appointed the younger brother of Air Chief Marshall Satitpong (see above), **Police Lieutenant General Torsak Sukwimol**, to direct his personal **Royal Police Guard 904**, the policing branch of his Royal Security Command Force.

In July 2020 the Royal Police Guard 904 was re-named the Special Police Security Unit and placed under the **Central Investigation Bureau** of the Royal Thai Police.

In September 2020 Torsak was made the director of the Central Investigation Bureau, and the younger brother of General Jakrapob (see above), **Police Major General Jiraphob Bhuridej**, was made Deputy Director.

Now, in September 2021, since from Vajiralongkorn's perspective the police - with their walls of containers, chemically-spiked water-canon, rubber-bullets and arrests - appear to have been successful in quelling the protests, he has raised General Torsak to Second-in-Command of the **Royal Thai Police** and General Jiraphob to Commander of the Central Investigation Bureau.

In this way, through such re-shuffling, Vajiralongkorn has taken control of not only the armed forces but also the police, and enabled himself to direct police operations against anti-monarchists and the on-going Youth Revolt.

These are the men-in-uniform forming the core of the Vajiralongkorn junta: the latest fascistic military cabal to attempt to command and control everything, everybody and every aspect of government and life in Thailand.

There are many terrible scandals revolving around General Jakrapob, his brother Police Major-General Jiraphob Bhuridej and his brother-in-law General Thitirat Nonghanphitak, Deputy-Commander of the Royal Security Command Force, concerning the abduction, disappearance and murder of Thai dissidents and of royalist moderates in the inner court.

Vajiralongkorn's Royal Thai Volunteer Project and Royal Thai Volunteer Force (RTV)

Since taking control of his father's Royal Thai Volunteer Project for promoting the monarchy, Vajiralongkorn has been attempting to shift the project even more to the mainstream, with a special focus on reviving the Chakri tradition of encouraging the formation of paramilitary royalist brigades, especially in provincial towns and villages, as a means for maintaining dominion. Using the existing royal volunteer project as his umbrella, Vajiralongkorn has launched a Royal Thai Volunteer Force (RTV) with the above, much feared, General Jakrapob in command, with the aim, more or less, to unite the whole country, in uniform, as the supposedly 'volunteer' paramilitary wing of his increasingly militarised regime.

During the Cold War everybody everywhere, especially in the countryside, was subjected to 'royal projects'. All 'servants of the king', parliamentarians, ethnic groups and minorities, all workers, soldiers and farmers had to show enthusiasm for love-the-king projects led by royalist, paramilitary set-ups under a variety of names, but led predominantly by the so-called 'Village Scouts' and the 'Red Gaur', the latter being somewhat equivalent to the Nazi Party's SS, the paramilitaries who were, for instance, at the centre of the 6 October massacre of students at Thammasat University in 1976 (referred to in the Malcolm Macdonald cable above).

Vajiralongkorn's RTV projects openly combine promotion of the monarchy with paramilitary training. RTV training centres have been springing-up all over Thailand, starting in the grounds of the Dusit Palace, the Taweewattana Palace and all Royal Guard bases in Bangkok.

Under Vajiralongkorn the Royal Thai Volunteer Force is being pushed with determination, money and resources, and given hard infra-structure. Most of those participating are doing so because they are under pressure to do so, or too scared to not participate, as was it so with the Hitler-Jugend.

In summary

Thai people may know but the wider world needs to recognise and understand that the mental energy driving Vajiralongkorn's Royal Thai Volunteer Force does represent a real threat to the future of democracy in Thailand and the ASEAN.

What is treated here is just the latest tragic chapter of an awfully long story that could and should have ended long ago, so that today all and any attempt by the Chakri palace to palm off this current drive to total control over the life of the people as 'Thai democracy' needs to be and must be shunned and ridiculed.



Whatever the reasoning in the king's own mind for his public appearances in the Alps, German supermarkets and other places in scant, tasteless outfits, it is best not to forget that he knows what he is doing when he gives the word to have opponents terminated.

The majority of people in Thailand are sick of Chakri monarcho-militarism, of being forced into having to adjust to the constant roll-out of cruelly absurd, completely unnecessary, royalist-provoked pandemonium. Regular folk are sick of having to think about whether or not to clad themselves in tunics and uniforms that are designed to please not a loveable demigod but a disgustingly conceited demagogue, sick of being forced to commit their precious time and energy to having to conform with, or having no choice other than to confront, the selfish ambitions of a royalist elite, sick of being tortured mentally if not physically.

FROM MILITARY COUP TO JURIDICAL COUP

Date	Announcement, order, decree, act	Counter-signed by
7 December 2004	General Vajiralonkorn to Command of the 1st Infantry Regiment King's Guard.	PM. Pol.Lt.Col. Thaksin Shinawatra
3 April 2012	Formal recognition of the Thawee Wattana Palace Prison (Bangkok)	Pol. Gen. Pracha Promnok, Minister of Justice
4 April 2014	Royal Security Command Force Act (under the Ministry of Defence under command of Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn.)	PM. Yingluck Shinawatra
22 May 2014	Confirmation of General Prayuth as Leader of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) by King Bhumibol.	Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha
6 April 2017	Royal Proclamation of (NCPO's) 2017 Constitution	Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha
28 April 2017	Royal Courtiers Administration Act	Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha
10 May 2017	Royal Courtiers Administration Decree	Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha
14 July 2017	Crown Property Bureau Act to repeal the Crown Property Bureau Acts of 1936, 1941 and 1948.	Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha
15 July 2018	Sangha Act places Vajiralongkorn above the Head of the Sangha with power to promote or demote the leaders of the Sangha and full control of 400,000 buddhist monks.	Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha
2 November 2018	King's Property Bureau Act. (Article 6: the management, maintenance and procurement of benefits and any action with respect to the property of the King shall be as he wishes.)	Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha
15 January 2019	Palace order to police to select 1300 top-performance police to to the Royal Police Guard 904.	Air Chief Marshall Satitnona Sukvimol
8 February 2019	King Vajiralongkorn orders Princess Ubolrat to withdraw from politics.	King Vajiralongkorn
7 March 2019	Constitution Court dissolves the Thai Raksachat Party	Constitution Court
23 March 2019	Politically corrupt General Election under General Prayuth	Election Commission
19 Sept. 2019	Royal Decree transferring army regiments (1st and 11th Infantry regiments) and budgets of the Royal Thai Army, Ministry of Defense, to the king's Royal Security Guard.	Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha
1 April 2020	King appoints 5 new Constitution Court judges to the NCPO Constitution Court.	Pornphet Wichitchalachai, chair of the Senate
23 July 2020	Royal Thai Police changes the name of the Royal Police Guard 904 to Special Operations Command (quietly by order of the King).	Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha
25 July 2020	Royal Thai Police place Special Operations Command under the Central Investigation Bureau of the RTP (quietly by order of the King).	Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha
24 Sept. 2020	King promotes loyal police generals (originally from his Royal Police Guard 904) to the command of the Central Investigation Bureau (leading to heavy tactics against the youth).	Gen. Prayuth Chan-Ocha
21 February 2020	Constitution Court dissolves the Future Forward Party	Constitution Court

The 2014 military coup, Thailand's 13th since 1932, was led by General Prayuth, C-in-C Royal Thai Army, with the full knowledge and support of Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn. It had two main aims: to splinter the popular power of Thaksin Shinnawatra and shore-up the power of the monarchy over democracy. It was a typical Chakri coup but sophisticated in the sense that its rapid mutation into a full-on juridical coup was thoroughly pre-planned.

True to Chakri custom, the 2014 coup ripped-up the 2007 Constitution, the last remnant of the so-called 1997 People's Constitution.

General Prayuth's 2017 Constitution permitted his junta - the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) - to remain in power by allowing the NCPO to appoint all 250 members of the senate, and by giving this NCPO-appointed senate the right to elect the Prime Minister. In other words the NCPO gave the NCPO the right to appoint the leader of the NCPO to be the Prime Minister.

The NCPO plan - to enable Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn and his aides and abettors to capture the maximum amount of state power upon his ascension to the throne - aimed intentionally at opening-up the legalistic loopholes in the framework of Thailand's supposed-to-be constitutional monarchy.

With endless promises of a general election, in August 2016, the public was dragged and tricked by General Prayuth into participating in a referendum on his NCPO draft constitution. In other words dragged and tricked into being forced in desperation to approve the lack of merit of Thailand's 20th constitution since the abolition of absolute monarchy in 1932.

It took another 2.5 years before Prayuth felt that his junta's manipulations, and the illicit political infrastructure he was attempting to establish, could withstand a general election. The election came finally in March 2019, but in the meantime, referendum be damned, Vajiralongkorn and Prayuth had plenty up their sleeves they needed to get done.

Having managed to get their Constitution approved by 51% of the 59% that participated in the referendum, one quarter of the electorate, the junta felt safe enough to give Vajiralongkorn the go-ahead to amend the Constitution. In other words safe enough to implement the next stage in their overall plan to capture maximum possible power.

To Section 15 which stated that "The appointment and removal of officials of the Royal Household shall be at the King's pleasure" was added "The organisation and personnel administration of the Royal Household shall be at the King's pleasure, as provided by Royal Decree."

Section 16, dealing with appointment of a Regent, was re-written to state that "Whenever the King is absent from the Kingdom or unable to perform his functions for any reason whatsoever, the King may appoint one person or several persons forming a council as Regent. In the case where a Regent is appointed, the President of the National Assembly shall countersign the Royal Command." In other words the text went from the King must appoint a Regent to the King can if he wants.

These alterations remained hidden from the public until the new Constitution was announced, by royal proclamation on 6 April 2017, as the new law-of-the-land. The fact that the Constitution text presented to the referendum had been doctored by the king made people even more angry.

To outsiders these alterations to the wording of the 2017 Constitution may not appear significant at first glance, but they were and are of huge consequence. In particular the alteration that permitted Vajiralongkorn to take direct personal command of the Royal Household, as will be explained below.

In Thailand the people have no idea or knowledge of what discussions or (absence of) juridical mechanisms lead to the enactment of royal acts and decrees. Such acts and decrees only reach the attention of the public as done-deals through the so-called Royal Gazette - as if from a mystical void where the people, the electorate, do not exist.

Following the passing into 'law' of the new Constitution, the NCPO moved, immediately, to further adopt a series of Vajiralongkorn's royal acts and decrees.

On **28 April 2017** the Government Gazette announced that a **Royal Courtiers Act** had been enacted. Bingo! *Fait accompli!*

This Royal Courtiers Act enabled Vajiralongkorn to take direct, personal command and control of the administration of all the government agencies engaged in serving the royal court, agencies that were previously administered by ministries and departments of the civil service. These agencies included for instance the . .

1. Royal Secretariat - previously under the Royal Household;
2. Bureau of the Royal Household - previously under the Prime Minister;
3. Royal Guards Department - previously under the Ministry of Defence;
4. Royal Security Command Force - previously under the Ministry of Defence;
5. Royal Police Guard 904 - previously under the Royal Thai Police.

On **10 May 2017** the Royal Gazette announced that a **Royal Courtiers Decree** had been issued to deal with the management of the Royal Courtiers Act in detail.

Even for Thais the actual significance of these royal enactments was slow to dawn. In effect they gave Vajiralongkorn the keys to the power he needed to be able to use his kingship to re-establish Thailand as an as near to absolute monarchy as possible.

In short, through the NCPO's 2017 Constitution, the monarch - the supposed-to-be fatherly figurehead of a constitutional monarchy - was able to make the Palace, not the Parliament, the absolute epicenter of political decision-making. It handed direct command and control of both the Royal Thai Army and Royal Thai Police to the Palace.

These enactments also granted Vajiralongkorn the right to personally determine the salaries, benefits and perks of the approximately 14 000 personnel employed by the 5 agencies above - to preserve and protect the king, and gave him right to rule Thailand from abroad without needing to appoint a Regent.

Taken together, for Thailand, the aims of the 2014 military coup, the extent of NCPO manipulation of democratic procedure and the eventual scale of the theft of wealth and power from the people, represent unforgivable insult and injury to the concept of human rights and Thai citizenship.



General Prayuth Chan-Ocha (centre) poses with the leaders of the 2014 coup, the commanders of the army, navy, air force and police, 22 May 2014.

THE COST OF THE VAJIRALONGKORN JUNTA

Theft of the nation's capital wealth

The value of 'crown property' in Thailand, accumulated largely over the last 70 years, is vast beyond belief. It includes nearly 40 royal palaces dotted around the country (to impose royal patronage), huge amounts of land including huge tracts of real estate in Central Bangkok, it includes major banks, insurance companies and corporations, construction companies, luxury hotels, shopping malls etc.

The total wealth of what was the Crown Property Bureau, of what is now the King's Property Bureau, is too great to estimate accurately, but lies between 35 and 60 billion Euro.

Throughout the long reign of King Bhumibol the administration of this vast national wealth was carried out under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance, by directors appointed by the king but in accord with the Crown Property Bureau Acts of 1936, 1941 and 1949. In theory Bhumibol had unlimited access, but the CPB was regarded, by the people and in general by government too, as a national resource.

On 14 July 2017 Vajiralongkorn cancelled the CPB Acts of 1936, 1941 and 1949 with the enactment of his own Crown Property Bureau Act. He then, on 2nd November 2018, enacted the **King's Property Bureau Act** which cancelled the name of the Crown Property Bureau and made himself, King Vachiraklao Chaoyuhua (the short version of the official name he received on his coronation on 5 May 2019), the 99.9% owner of the KPB.

In other words Vajiralongkorn robbed the nation, and arbitrarily appointed his close courtiers as the shareholders of the many businesses that came with this grand theft.

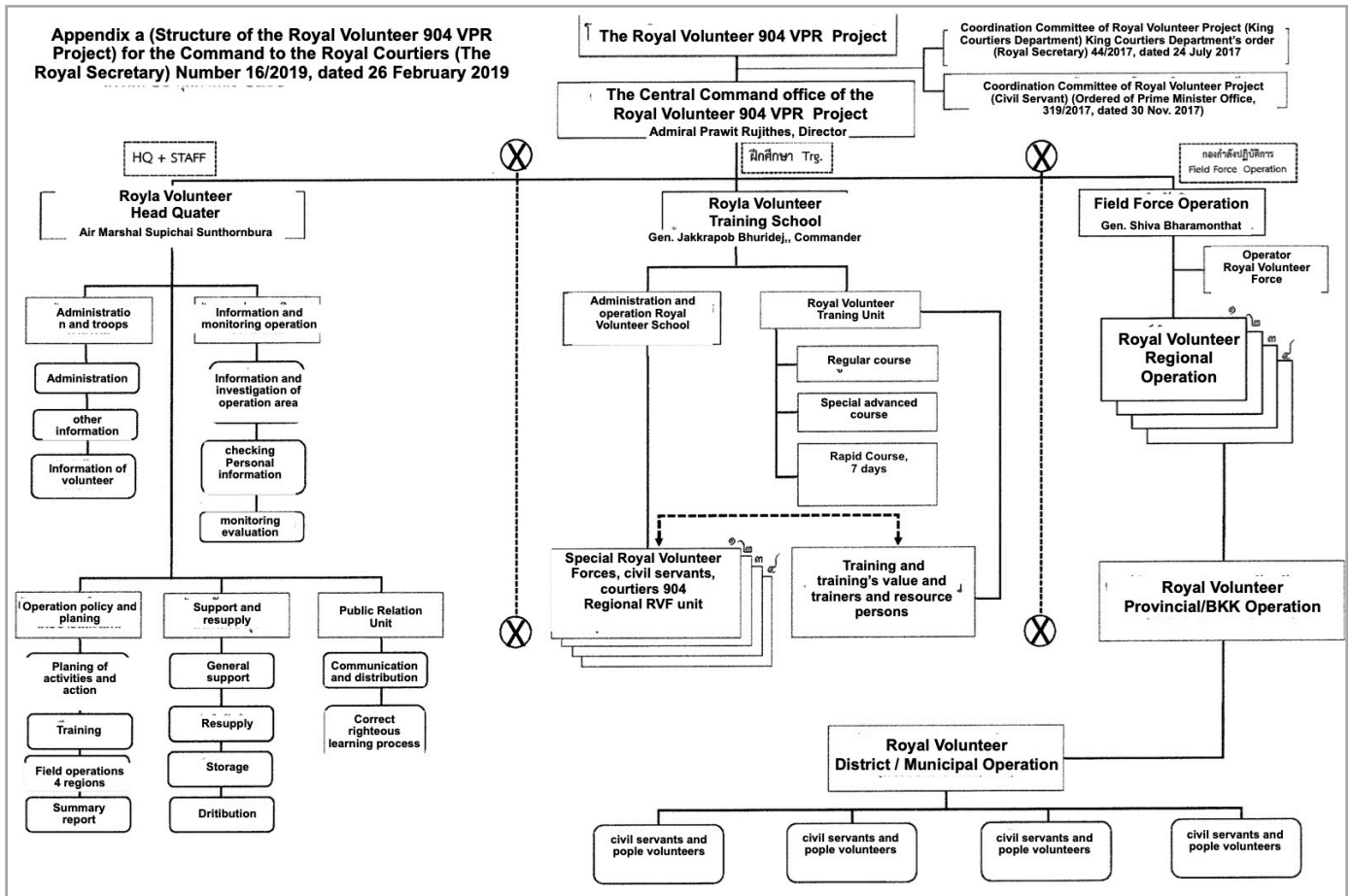
The cost of the Royal Thai Volunteer Force (RTV)

Examination of the **2021 National Budget** shows that at least 8,000 million Baht (210 million Euro) of public money has been allocated to financing the spider-web of Vajiralongkorn's Royal Thai Volunteer Project (RTV), but not only this.

Examination of budget expenditure also reveals the practice of channeling money from a wide variety of budget categories into RTV activities. The channeling of public money into the RTV from the multi-billion Baht budget for promoting and implementing Bhumibol's 'Sufficiency Economy Philosophy' stands out as a prime example. Another example, in 2020 the Ministry of the Interior distributed 13.68 million Baht / 354,080 Euro to RTV activities in 76 provinces - namely for the construction in each province of one kilometer of road to honour of the king.

Examination of the RTV command structure and operation shows quite clearly that Vajiralongkorn's RTV has direct power over all bureaucracy in Thailand.

Appendix a (Structure of the Royal Volunteer 904 VPR Project) for the Command to the Royal Courtiers (The Royal Secretary) Number 16/2019, dated 26 February 2019



(Note: 904 is Vajiralongkorn security detail code during Bhumibol's reign. His father was 901, mother 902 and sister 903.)

In every ministry and institution all civil servants and their families, all police, military people, teachers, students and villagers are *required* to organise photoshoot activities and deliver the photos to the Palace to please the Vajiralongkorn kingship.



To grasp the manner and extent to which these photoshoot activities are starting to dominate life in Thailand please google จิตอาสา or Royal Volunteer Spirit Program or the Royal Bureau website <https://www.royaloffice.th/en/royal-thai-volunteers/> <https://www.royaloffice.th/จิตอาสา/เรื่องควรรู้/โครงสร้างจิตอาสา/>

Non-government organisations seeking financial support from the government cannot be successful if they do not integrate their activities with the philosophy of the Royal Volunteer Spirit programme. Under Vajiralongkorn’s junta civil society is being gradually forced to trade integrity for government funding, and to appear in yellow and blue uniforms to demonstrate their ‘Volunteer Spirit’.



POLITICAL FRAUD

At enormous cost to the taxpayer the Vajiralongkorn junta is attempting to use and to force the military, police and civil-service to execute the yoking-in and bringing to heel of the whole population. The monarchy's greatly increased ability to control and manipulate the army and police gives the king and his court huge power while enabling the king to appear aloof and innocent - above the dust and debris of his own sad theatre.

This is the feudal business of today's Chakri monarchy - stealing the wealth of the people in order to be able to demand worship for donating a fraction of that stolen wealth back to the people in state-choreographed publicity stunts, of which the RTV photoshoots represent a prime example.

The monarchy's attempt, promoted by Prayuth, to use the KPB-owned company Siam Bioscience to monopolise the production of Covid vaccines presents a classic example of the monarchy's exploitation of privileged access to public money, of, in this case, attempting simultaneously to profiteer and present itself as the saviour of the nation, and, in so doing, generating an outrageous fiasco in the face of the people.

The people's resentment is fully legitimate

With the king and his Royal Security Command Force sitting atop the royal pyramid, Prayuth heads a cabinet of proven royalists, backed by a rubber-stamp Senate chosen by Prayuth. The fact that the voices of the parties in the Parliament, those that have survived being disqualified, have no power, no relevance even when they do dare to oppose the junta's policies, is building deep public resentment.

The fact that while the people struggle with the misery of the Covid pandemic, the king is spending millions of euro of public money, as if money had no other purpose, on luxurious palace facilities, on lavish royal events and on his women, is building deep public resentment.

The fact that the youth of Thailand are fully aware that the King stands behind the excessive force being used by the police to suppress their need to express their feelings is building deep public resentment.

Simple common sense is informing people that this attempt by Vajiralongkorn to bring Thailand under the total control of the monarchy can only eventually both implode and explode with unknown but potentially lethal consequences - for Thais, for neighbouring populations and for the ASEAN.

Condemnation to another 20 years - No thank you

On 8 October 2017 Maha Vajiralongkorn Badinthon Thepayawarangkun announced a **20-year National Strategy** for 2018 - 2037 - with General Prayuth Chan-o-cha 'The Receiver of the Royal Command'. The strategy aims primarily at ensuring that the population of Thailand can be held subjugated to monarcho-military over-rule and guaranteeing that Vajiralongkorn can become and remain the Great Dominator of Thailand for the rest of his life.

Just here it is necessary to go back half a century - to the government that was formed in the name of 'protecting the monarchy' after the 1976 military coup. This government attempted to introduce a 12-year strategy but, as soon as it had done so, true to Chakri political custom, the military leaders of the coup quickly scuttled the government so that the 12-year strategy could be implemented directly by the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army, who then placed himself at the head of the Government. This was General Prem Tinsulanonda casting the die for General Prayuth 50 years later, the political mould that the youth of Thailand today knows that it must break.

Following-up upon the last ten years of aggressive denial of democratic procedure, Vajiralongkorn's 2017 announcement of a 20-year strategy came as a punch to the gut to all Thais past and present who have struggled for democratic justice. Here, yet again,

confronting the population, was an imposed, completely top-down, non-democratic, elitist strategy to maintain monarcho-military over-rule:

“to protect and promote the Monarchy for the happiness of all Thai people and to make Thailand secure, prosperous and sustainable, as a developed country within this period of time, according to the guidelines of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy advocated by King Bhumibol. And . . . to prepare a National Economic and Development Plan, National Reform Plan, National Security Policy, including preparing a master plan or Strategy for developing and solving various problems . . .” etc.

Since the 2006 military coup, in the total absence of any democratic checks and balances, Vajiralongkorn has been able to acquire unrestricted access to the wealth of what was the Crown Property Bureau and to the National Budget. With his cabal of military generals controlling the government he can secure public money for whatever he wants, for any of his ‘fun activities’ like the royal ‘Kok-Nong-Na Project’ (Highland-pond-field project) or any of his many more menacing projects like his ‘Jit Asa Royal Volunteer Project’.

The royal milking of the national budget

To be able to face the Covid pandemic General Prayuth created a Covid Emergency Fund of 1 trillion Baht / 27 billion Euro which he financed with money taken from money borrowed from many sources.

2022 National Budget for protecting, honouring and preserving the monarchy

Ministry / Department	Millions of Baht	Millions of Euro
Ministry of the Royal Household	8 918,04	241,03
Honouring the Monarchy	11 190,28	302,44
Protection and security for the Royal Family	12 803,20	346,03
Royal Volunteers	1 803,37	48,74
Royal Volunteers from Loan	8 339,00	225,38
King's philosophy of sufficiency economy	6 090,39	164,61
Direct support to the King's projects	3 179,80	85,94
Projects of the ministries that follow the King's ideas and suggestions	22 848,30	617,52
Praboromarajchanok Institute	2 351,10	63,54
Honouring Queen Sirikt	76,88	2,08
Projects of Princess Ubonrat	142,00	3,84
Projects of Princess Sirindhron	9 218,73	249,15
Projects of Princess Chulabhorn	6 525,03	176,35
Royal foundations	823,78	22,26
Total	94 309,89	2 548,92

In the already approved-by-Prayuth 2022 National Budget the allocation for protecting, promoting and supporting the monarchy is around 94 billion Baht / 2.5 billion Euro (see below). Never satisfied, the greed of King Vajiralongkorn spotted the Covid-19 Emergency Fund as an opportunity for him to gain a little extra financing. On 9 June 2021 the Move Forward Party, which attempts to oppose the military junta, released information that 8,339 million Baht / 225 million Euro had been siphoned off the national Covid Emergency Fund into Vajiralongkorn's Kok-Nong-Na project. <https://prachatai.com/journal/2021/06/93444>

An examination of the 20,000 pages of the 2022 National Budget Plan of 3,1 trillion Baht / 83,784 billion Euro, which incorporates some 34 ministries and institutions, reveals the allocation of public money to around 500 royal projects directly connected to protecting, promoting and honouring the monarchy, with allocations totalling 94 310 million Baht / 2 549 million Euro. This vast national expenditure does not include the vast sum of the hidden allocations for the 'royal missions' already embedded in the work of the ministries.

By way of comparison with regard to public accountability, in 2021 the EU committed to the looking after and the shifting of 650 million people onto a sustainable base-line with a budget of 164 billion Euro. The Vajiralongkorn junta is planning to use 92 billion Euro to ensure that 70 million people remain on their knees as subjects of the Chakri monarchy's perception of what, for the people, is sufficient.

The royal concept of what is sufficient

By the time of Bhumibol's death his so-called Sufficiency Economy Philosophy had to some extent been incorporated in all branches of government, most notably by the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Public Health and the command of the Royal Thai Army.

After 20 years of having to tolerate King Bhumibol's patronising 'theory of sufficiency', the people of Thailand are now, under Vajiralongkorn, for whom nothing is sufficient, being forced to accept a further 20-years of having a bunch of elite monarcho-militarists determine for them what is and is not sufficient.

The junta's 20-year strategy is not a care economy built around concern for social welfare, it is a strategy dominated by a paranoid concern for the preservation of privilege that is dependent on the maintenance of monarchy over democracy.

The Chakri extravaganza

Irrespective of the economic downturn and mounting crises resulting from the military's take-over of government in 2014, and the all-around increase in political confusion, corruption and mismanagement of all aspects of government, Prayuth's military cabal continues to flood the person of the king with whatever money he imagines he needs, all for non-essential expenses that should be blocked completely. This royal theft of public money is questioned by the opposition parties and by the public, but neither have any power to stop it happening.

For instance, between 2019 - 2022 the royal family was allocated the vast sum of 463 million Euro for purchasing and maintaining 5 helicopters and 4 aeroplanes for transporting their guests (see below). Such expenses, when budgeted as they are in the name of royal or national security, are by law totally immune to criticism.

In the National Budget, under "Protection and Security for the Royal Family", one finds truly vast sums of public money allocated to pure royal extravagance, for instance the nearly 600 million Euro that has been taken from the budget of the Ministry of Interior for the construction of Dusit Palace - Vajiralongkorn's *Château de Versailles*. The list of these publicly-funded royal extravaganzas has no end - the

Bhumibol-Sirikit Valuable Wood Centre - 200 million Euro, the Bhumibol Cremation Museum just a few millions etc.

Prayuth's pre-occupation with bankrolling the support of the monarchy is causing severe, long-term damage to the future of Thailand's public welfare. Besides providing the King with all that he asks, the junta is doing the same with all senior members of the Chakri family. For instance, total allocations to the Red Cross between 2014 - 2022 amounted to 70 368 million Baht / 1851 million Euro, a sum equivalent to half the budget for Ministry of Public Health in 2022. Nearly 2 billion Euro is a vast sum for any international NGO let alone national. How come? For the simple reason that Princess Sirindhorn, the younger sister of Vajiralongkorn, acts as the 'CEO' of the Red Cross in Thailand, and the monarchy feels the need to profile itself as a champion of public health . . superior to the Ministry of Public Health. But that's not all, with Sirindhorn acting as CEO, the Red Cross in Thailand practices using the vast amount of public money it gets to invest in profit-making, in marketing vaccines, blood and whatever else is sellable. It is of critical importance to understand that, because this profiteering is conducted under royal patronage, the royal CEO is not obliged to make her accounting public.

'Royal and royal VIP air transport budget'

Expenses plan	2020	2021	2022	Budget years (Million Euro)	Total in millions of Baht
2 Helicopters to follow Royal outings	786,15	967,34	531,29	2019-2022	2 816,29
3 Helicopters for the Royal Family	890,23	142,55	248,35	2018-2021	3 174,36
An aeroplane for VIPs	878,13	325,07	126,01	2018-2021	3 357,56
3 aeroplane for VIPs	555,76	969,07	471,31	2019-2022	2 649,20
Royal Aircraft port, Donmuang	148,35	76,93		2019-2021	281,80
Royal Aircraft port, Donmuang	107,85	41,53		2019-2021	187,50
Expenses of the royal helicopters and maintenance (yearly, for 3 years)	1 586,53	1 969,44	1 567,55	2019-2021	5 123,52
Expenses of Royal Houses	1,83	1,83		2019-2021	3,66
Total of budget from 2019 - 2022				463,00 €	17 593,89 THB

Princess Chulabhorn, the youngest sister of Vajiralongkorn, is also an all-time big-time spender of public money who likes to build an image of herself as a patroness of public health. For her 60th birthday in 2017 General Prayuth gave her 42,342.89 million Baht / 1114 million Euro for her Chulabhorn Royal Academy, which focuses on public health with no public accounting of how money is spent. Furthermore, the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Interior both channel financial resources into public health under her name. Proper investigation into the flow of all this public money is not possible. Circumstantial evidence indicates that much of it is consumed by the running of her unaccountable private charities and the unaccountable construction, maintenance and running of her two huge palaces - the Chakkribongkot Palace near Bangkok and her new Thipwiman Palace on a vast area of land in Khaoyai National Park.



SUBJUGATION OF THE SUBJUGATED

No sane person would place their trust in the leadership of a person like Vajiralongkorn, and no person should or must, but decades of royalist focus on how to suppress, quench and usurp the meaning of human rights has meant that those claiming a hereditary right to rule Thailand are grand-masters of political manipulation. Witnessed by the whole world, the blatantly illicit, on-going, retrogressive manipulation of domestic politics in Thailand does mean that those who understand that there can be no sustainable development without democracy, do need to give the popular, youthful revolt in Thailand their full-hearted support.

There are multiple reasons why the world needs to be more forthright in admitting what it knows, that the 2014 military coup represented a determined attempt by an autocratic hereditary potentate to block the progress of democracy and force all aspects of governance to submit to monarcho-military control.

Right now it is of immense all around importance to recognise, to admit, that the military junta's so-called 20-year National Strategy is little more than a pre-fabricated charade to ensure that Rama 10, with his uniformed minions, can cage and rule supreme over the democratic aspirations of all who live in Thailand.

The return of the police state

Gaining full control of the policing of Thailand was one the Prayuth junta's top priorities in 2014 - an essential objective in their attempt to bring Vajiralongkorn's "*We love you all*" brand of monarcho-fascism to reality.

To summarise briefly some of what has been described above.

It was around 2012 that Vajiralongkorn decided to establish his own personal disciplinary action facility in the grounds of the Taweewattana Palace. In the whole miserable saga of the last 10 years the Taweewattana Prison has functioned like a hidden implement or turn-stone for dispersing fear in the ranks. The Crown Prince, king to be, then set himself to work on a project to establish his own Royal Security Command Force (RSCF) under his own personal command within the Ministry of Defence. Just one month before General Prayuth launched the 2014 military coup he managed, finally, to procure the formal governmental consent he needed to do what he was doing: building his own private army. Then, alongside his disciplinary Taweewattana Prison facility he established his own military training facility, the *Rachawallop* King's Security Guard School. Senior personnel from the army, police and civil service were then selected and ordered to attend his 3 - 6 month training programme, before being returned either to their original units to do the king's bidding, or directly into the king's own RSCF - or to his disciplinary facility. In this way this school and this prison have been functioning as key instruments in enabling Vajiralongkorn, as divine King and Head of State, to usurp the power of command & control over the Royal Thai Army and Royal Thai Police.

Some further clarification with regard to Vajiralongkorn's take-over of the Royal Thai Police:

Reminder: In the days of Bhumibol each senior royal had an identity code given by the Royal Security Police under the command of Royal Thai Police Bureau. Bhumibol was 901, Queen Sirikit 902, Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn 904.

On **25 Jan 2018** Vajiralongkorn took the **Royal Security Police** - that existed to protect his father - out from under the command of the Central Investigation Bureau, placed himself in direct command, changed its name to **Rachawallop Royal Police Guard 904** and took steps to greatly increase its strength.

In 2019 it was opposition MPs from the Move Forward Party that first revealed documents showing how 1300 'top-performance police' were selected and drafted to strengthen the Vajiralongkorn's *Rachawallop* Police Guard 904 and, also, how police personnel who refused to participate in the selection had to face unjust disciplinary action: demotion, transfer to remote areas, frozen salaries, prison, torture etc.)

On **25 July 2020** he changed the name of his now much enlarged *Rachawallop* Police Guard 904 to **Special Security Police**.

On **24 September 2020** he appointed the chief of his Special Security Police to C-in-C of the **Central Investigation Bureau**, the strongest department within the police force. This enabled him to make sure that the senior commanders of the Royal Thai Police were loyal to the crown.

Vajiralongkorn knew well enough that he was strongly disliked and distrusted by a large swathe of the population. All the above shuffling of names and commanders was executed at arms length while he was resident in Germany, before his return to Thailand in October 2020 - to ensure that when he did return the Royal Thai Police force was fully subject to his command and to that of trusted members of his inner circle.

(*Note:* The strength of the Royal Thai Police is around 200 000, the strength of the Royal Thai Army is up around 450 000. The number of people in prison is around 300 000.)

Following Vajiralongkorn's return to Thailand in October 2020, or more precisely following his appointment of the C-in-C of the Central Investigation Bureau, the police began using much heavier tactics and equipment to block and suppress the nation-wide uprising of Thailand's youth that had been more-or-less on-going since February 2020. Thenceforth the highly imaginative and essentially peace-abiding protesters had to face Vajiralongkorn's police using toxic water-cannon, tear gas, rubber bullets . . . and pathetic barricades of stacked containers.

The role of Prayuth

With his whole military career devoted to serving the Palace, General Prayuth was appointed by Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn to lead the 2014 military coup. In other words tasked with

ensuring that the monarchy could not be side-lined by a functional democracy when King Bhumibol died.

For Prayuth monarchy and nation are indivisible, the safety and happiness of the royal family above all. Gladly did he respond to all demands from the Palace with unquestioned delivery of huge sums of money. Gladly did he allow all decrees and acts proposed by Vajiralongkorn to become law without question or hindrance. Gladly did he allow the king to steal from the state to fill his own pockets. Gladly did he meet the youth of the nation with water-canon, for he had nothing else to offer.

The youth know that he has nothing to offer, know that he cannot survive without the king's backing, know that he must go.

YOUTH UPRISING 2020 - "Let it end in our generation."

The political turmoil that struck, hit, shocked and rocked Thai civil society in the wake of the 2006 military coup's destruction of its progress to democracy, the people's recognition that the 2014 military coup was an attempt to nail-down the lid on their democratic hopes and aspirations, with the decrees, acts and actions of Vajiralongkorn confirming their inner fears of being caged with no escape, when on 23 February 2020 General Prayuth, using his ill-acquired power to control the Constitutional Court, succeeded in banning the youthful Future Forward Party that, backed by 6 million voters had won 80 seats in the Parliament, the frustration of the natural spirit of the youth of Thailand had to find expression.

The apprehension of the youth of Thailand - expressed in their imaginative use of their right to protest a potentially dystopian future, of their right to protest against their future being stolen by autocrats who have been seduced and over-taken by the power of their military weaponry, by men who have lost touch with the meaning and purpose of human life - is an apprehension now common to all youth all around the world. Thus it has been that the bold leaders of the youth uprising in Thailand in 2020 are they who finally broke the yoke that bound them to subservience to the Chakri monarchy, who released and enabled the youth of Thailand to join at last with their brothers and sisters around the world in the fight against resurgent autocracy.

Since February 2020 there has been, all across the country not just in Bangkok, more than 150 protests demanding the end of non-democratic, dictatorial politics.

Nation-wide these protests emerged in universities, technical colleges, secondary schools and even primary schools. They pointed out that, 15 years after the coup that destroyed the democratic hopes of their parents, General Prayuth was still bent on clinging to power with the blessing and support of a Chakri king, still denying their right to determine their own future, that his claim to represent 'Peace and Order' was dead, null and void.

There was a youthful, naive hope that the king might listen, and abundant good reason to hope he might listen, but what had become in reality the Vajiralongkorn junta simply refused point-blank to acknowledge the level of frustration. Refusing to listen it took deliberate, oppressive action, driving frustration and anger ever deeper into the fabric of the Thai society. For the first time in Thai history the full wrath of the people started to focus on the monarchy itself.

In an attempt to block the growth of protests - which had the empathy of the society, Prayuth used the Covid pandemic as an excuse to declare a one-month State of Emergency on 14 March 2020. The streets went quiet for a few months but the abduction and 'disappearance' of the political activist Wanchalerm by the king's men in Cambodia on 4th June reignited large-scale protest on 18 July. Prayuth re-introduced a State of Emergency which, with protests on-going since then - against him in particular - he has been renewing every month and, recently, for longer periods.

The youth identified around three main demands:

1. Dissolution of the Prayuth government and the return of elections.
2. Drafting of a people's constitution that honours, freedom, equality and human rights.
3. Reform of the monarchy.

With awareness growing that Prayuth was nothing without the support of the King the focus of the protests moved to the monarchy itself. On 10 August 2020 the “United front of Thammasat and Demonstration” (Thammasat University) stepped forward with 10 specific demands to reform the Monarchy:

1. Revoke Article 6 of the 2017 Constitution that forbids any accusation against the King. And add an article to allow parliament to examine wrongdoing of the King, as was stipulated in the constitution promulgated by the People’s Party.
2. Revoke Article 112 of the Criminal Code, to allow the people to exercise freedom of expression about the monarchy and amnesty all those prosecuted for criticizing the monarchy.
3. Revoke the Crown Property Act of 2018 and make a clear division between the assets of the King under the control of the Ministry of Finance and his personal assets.
4. Reduce the amount of the national budget allocated to the King in line with the economic conditions of the country.
5. Abolish the Royal Offices. Units with a clear duty, such the Royal Security Command, should be transferred and placed under other agencies. Unnecessary units, such as the Privy Council, should be disbanded.
6. Cease all giving and receiving of donations by royal charity funds in order for all assets of the monarchy to be open to audit.
7. Cease the exercise of the royal prerogative over the expression of political opinions in public.
8. Cease all public relations and education that excessively and one-sidedly glorifies the monarchy.
9. Investigate the facts about the murders of those who criticized or had some kind of relation with the monarchy.
10. The king must not endorse any further coups.

Whatever the situation at this moment, the courage of the Thammasat students in presenting these 10 demands has undoubtedly changed forever the course of history in Thailand.

Thai Lawyers for Human Rights have reported that during the 8 months between the resurgence of the revolt on 18 July 2020 to the end of March 2021 there have been at least 581 arrests, with 268 youth charged with various offences, at least 82 people of these under *lèse Majesté* laws. Since then there have been many more - more every day.

Since February 2021, when the youth determined to return to the streets in recognition of the need to demonstrate solidarity with the people in Myanmar - boldly in contravention of Prayuth’s Covid lockdowns, around 30 leaders have been jailed, mostly under the laws of *lèse majesté*.

For a year now there has been a jo-jo game between the protesters and the criminal courts, with the criminal courts refusing bail to those arrested and then rescinding under public pressure. Many of the leaders in jail have resorted to hunger strikes, with support from their mothers, families and friends demonstrating outside the courts. In the provinces beyond Bangkok public protest is often aimed at provincial judges who are clearly obeying not the law but the orders of the Palace. Under public pressure Prayuth engaged in a childish method of appeasement, allowing protest leaders to be released, one by one, very slowly over time.

Parit ‘Penguin’ Chivarak (23), an outstanding youth leader, was on hunger strike for 53 days. His mother and friends shaved their heads and kept vigil outside the court. He was released on bail on 11 May 2021 for 5000 Euro, and re-arrested and jailed again on August 9. He is asthmatic, has contracted Covid in the crowded jail and (at time of writing) is being denied

proper treatment. 2500 - 5000 Euros is the money that friends have to collect if bail is granted. Many youth leaders have been charged with multiple offences. Altogether the Prayuth junta has dished-out some 700 criminal charges against the youth, of which some 200 are connected to 'insulting' the monarchy, in other words charges that criminalise young people for requesting the King to stop abusing power.

CARROT & STICK KINGDOM

With his treatment of his wives, children and concubines, his extravagant, lavish life-style, his dishing-out of savage punishment, with rumours abounding around his involvement in the deaths of courtiers and critics, Vajiralongkorn had acquired a mafioso-like reputation long before being crowned.

Upon ascending the throne he began immediately to rule as if he owned it all. On 10 October 2020 he abandoned his debauched life in Germany and returned to Thailand. To do what? To oversee the crushing of the youth uprising, to build-up and consolidate his paramilitary forces and to supervise the 600 million Euro re-vamping of his 200 hectare Dusit Palace complex in the centre of Bangkok.

Since Vajiralongkorn's return to Thailand the Palace has organised some 200 ritualistic events to pump up the king's imago. Most are pompous public happenings at which the king appears with the queen, maybe with his consort in tow, surrounded by hundreds of uniformed civil-servants and guards and a few hundred people in yellow who have been ordered to attend by their local authority - to sit on the ground, wave little flags and chant 'Long live the king'. Such events are always accompanied by a large number of ostentatious limousines and, away from Bangkok, several royal planes and shiny helicopters. Every one of these jamborees costs the tax-payer several hundred thousand Euro.

CONCLUSION

The Chakri monarchy under Rama 10 is pushing Thailand into an increasingly unhealthy state of existence, forcing people to chew on whether to submit to military autocracy or rise in revolt.

The youth, the students, are saying - no more compromise, no more subservience to totally corrupt governance and twisted justice. They are saying to themselves - and to all - that "It must end in this generation" . . . and the sooner we end 'It' the better for all.

South-east Asia has absolutely no need of more cases of resurgent feudalism. The ASEAN needs Thailand as a vibrant democracy and a vibrant democracy is what Thailand longs to be.

All power to the people fighting the selfish, cruel, blind stupidity of Valiralongkorn and Min Aung Hlaing.

Listen to the young people, they will find the way, let them lead.

Solidarity with the youth of Thailand and Myanmar.

* * *

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This ACT4DEM text was
written by *Junya Yimprasert*
assisted by *Richard Thompson Coon*

For contact with ACT4DEM:

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