

The Passing of Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej

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The passing of Thailand's head of state, the 88 year old King Bhumibol Adulyadej, marks a historically significant event in Thailand's history. For most Thais, they have known only one king their entire life – King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

The significance of Thailand's monarchy to Thai people is difficult for Westerners to understand. Unlike Western monarchies who rule from above, Thailand's monarchy has historically ruled through service to the people. It is in recognition of this service that drives hundreds of thousands of Thais into the streets of Bangkok to participate in the beginning of funeral rites this week.

The depth and scope of this service includes not only the political boundaries and stability the monarchy provided when politicians and political parties clashed within the nation, but also service in driving long-term infrastructure projects regarding irrigation, energy, and agriculture shortsighted politicians refused to pursue.

Many aspects of Thai agriculture, from the introduction of new crops to the concept of cooperatives and localizing rice mills, were introduced through initiatives promoted and funded by the Royal Family itself. King Bhumibol Adulyadej's royal palace in Bangkok was many years ago converted into a demonstration and training center where today, foreigners and Thais alike can augment their skills and diversify their economic activity.

Politically, the monarchy's ability to reside above contests of political power and the deep respect Thais hold for the institution, creates a set of boundaries that have prevented dangerous – even violent political struggles – from expanding into the sort of destructive conflicts seen previously in neighboring Cambodia or currently expanding across the Middle East.

For Thailand's enemies who seek to undermine political stability or overthrow Thailand's political order, their primary obstacle and thus target has always been the nation's revered, powerful monarchy. The passing of Thailand's Bhumibol Adulyadej presents a perceived vulnerability Thailand's enemies will undoubtedly seek to exploit to weaken Thailand and thus by doing so, disrupt regional stability.

Thailand's Importance to Southeast Asia

Thailand is a prominent Southeast Asian nation, home to 70 million people, a dynamic and diverse economy ranging from agriculture to manufacturing, and remains the only nation in the region to have eluded Western colonization.

It has played a pivotal role throughout history, leveraging colonial powers against one another before the World Wars, a battlefield during World War 2, a contributing factor to

France's loss of Indochina and host to US military forces during the Vietnam War.

Since the conflict in Vietnam, Thailand has slowly and incrementally pivoted away from its role in US regional hegemony toward a more balanced place in the region.

Today, as the US performs its own "pivot toward Asia," [Thailand's geopolitical shift](#) has become even more pronounced as it seeks to evade US pressure, influence, and domination.

Thailand's arsenal - once dominated by aging American hardware - now hosts Chinese, Russian, European, and even Middle Eastern defense systems. The nation strives to cultivate multiple relationships so as to not be dominated or overly dependent on any single one of them - which has been the key to Thailand's longstanding sovereignty throughout history.

Currently, Thailand along with the rest of Southeast Asia, serves as a source of trade and cooperation with Beijing. Contrary to popular belief, both China and Southeast Asia conduct the majority of their trade within Asia itself. The stability of the region is therefore essential to each and every nation within the region.

For the US who seeks [to encircle and contain China](#), the destabilization of the region is key to hindering China's rise and preventing the all but inevitable waning of US "primacy" in Asia Pacific.

Attacking along China's peripheries, either by coercing, destabilizing, or overthrowing and replacing the governments of China's neighbors in Southeast Asia is essential to eventually coercing, destabilizing, or overthrowing and replacing the government of China itself.

Target Thailand

Thailand is just one of several nations currently being destabilized by the US. For each nation in the region, the US pursues similar strategies with only minor differences depending on socioeconomic and culturally factors. The presence of US-funded opposition groups and a virtual army of faux-non governmental organizations (NGOs) exist in each and every nation in Southeast Asia.

In Thailand in particular, the primary target is Thailand's monarchy and its military - two institutions the US sees as obstacles to ever placing an obedient client regime into power. The US believes this precisely because over the past 15 years, through their proxy Thaksin Shinawatra, they have tried and failed to seize power by proxy because [of two military coups](#) and massive street protests organized by Thais rallying around their historical institutions.

The average Thai is acutely aware of - if not the current geopolitical and domestic political dynamics of Thailand's present - the fact that the military and monarchy now and throughout Thailand's ancient history have been the primary reason the nation remains unconquered.

Attacks, or perceived attacks on either of Thailand's revered and respected institutions is perceived by the vast majority of Thais as an attack on Thailand itself.

Thus, throughout the media, those networks including CNN and the BBC who regularly and intentionally target the military and monarchy are reviled by Thais. In 2010, when CNN correspondent Dan Rivers mischaracterized street violence carried out by Thaksin Shinawatra's political party, Thais campaigned against CNN until Rivers was eventually sent home.

Today, the Western media seeks to exploit the sensitive transition period as Thais mourn the passing of King Bhumibol Adulyadej - and have already launched a campaign to undermine the heir, Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn.

Making or Breaking Relations with Thailand

Those networks perceived as exploiting or disrupting Thailand's sensitive transition will immediately be identified by Thais as "enemies" of not only the monarchy, but the nation it has historically served.

For Westerners who live in nations where institutions from as large as government to as small as family are mired in dysfunction, the concept of an entire nation existing as a large "extended family" is alien to them. However alien such a concept may be, the consequences of misunderstanding this concept can cost some nations their influence and standing, not only in Thailand but in Southeast Asia in which Thailand resides a central and influential nation.

Those nations whose media avoids sensationalism and gossip, as well as verified US-engineered propaganda, will come out the other side of Thailand's transition a stronger ally than ever. It appears out of all nations and regions, it will be China and Thailand's other Asian neighbors who enjoy this status, while the West and even Russia appear disinterested or incapable of fostering closer ties. A recent article published by Russia's RT, for example, will undoubtedly be perceived by Thais as a collective attack on them. While the article was likely written, edited, and published by a handful of unprofessional journalists - citing the US State Department and paid lobbyists - it will inadvertently reflect poorly on Russia collectively. Just like CNN and the BBC are reviled and the national influence of the US and UK negatively affected by their actions in Thailand and Asia, careless networks in Russia like RT will become a vector of similar backlash directed at Russia itself if such unprofessionalism is not rectified.

Should the West as well as Russia seek better ties with Thailand, they must take the time to carefully understand the nation and shape policy to meet it, rather than insist on imposing cultural, political, and economic prejudices entire empires throughout history have tried and failed to impose upon the Thai people.

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