

# Thailand and the Philippines Hit By Synarchist Destabilizations

by Mike Billington

Two Southeast Asian nations were thrown into upheaval on Feb. 24: the Philippines, where President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo issued a declaration of a State of Emergency, and Thailand, where Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra dissolved the Parliament and called new elections for April 2, three years before the end of his term. While both situations involve mass demonstrations and efforts to bring down the government through “people’s power,” the two situations are diametrically opposite in nature, as we shall show.

However, what unites these two crises is that the strings are being pulled in Washington. Dick Cheney and George Bush are in deep trouble in the United States, rapidly losing control over the Congress, where there is a bipartisan rebellion against the move towards dictatorship by the executive branch, under Cheney’s direction, and against the failure to deal with the rapidly collapsing U.S. economy. In an attempt to maintain power, Cheney is driving for a new war in Iran, and/or Syria, while also pushing destabilizations in multiple hot-spots around the world. With a long-term focus on a confrontation with China, both Thailand and the Philippines are choice targets, being nations on the Chinese rim whose governments are now friendly with Beijing.

It must be emphasized that the synarchist banking interests behind Cheney are not primarily concerned about which side comes out on top in these hot-spots—their intention is instability, and the increased U.S. military and economic leverage which results.

## A Thai ‘Edsa’

The destabilization in Thailand against Prime Minister Thaksin is explicitly modeled on the so-called “Edsa” revolutions in the Philippines of 1986 and 2001. In both cases, a Philippine military faction run by Gen. Fidel Ramos, under the direction of George Shultz and his network in Washington, seized power from an elected President (Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, and Joseph Estrada in 2001) on behalf of international synarchist banking interests. These military coups were declared to be “democratic” because a number of warm bodies from amongst the urban middle class had been induced to come out into the streets, to create the appearance of “people’s power.”

As *EIR* has reported (see *EIR*, Feb. 23, 2006), the attack

on Thaksin, who still enjoys overwhelming popular support from the population, especially in the rural areas, has been given the green light from Wall Street. *The Nation*, an English-language paper partially owned by Dow Jones, the owner of the *Wall Street Journal*, has turned its web-site into a command center for the anti-Thaksin demonstrations, and published repeated calls for violence and provocations which would generate blood in the streets, as the best method for bringing down the government.

On cue, Chamlong Srimuang, the former General turned leader of a Buddhist cult, has joined the fray. In 1992, Chamlong drove his “Dharma Army” followers into a bloody confrontation with the Thai Army in a protest which resulted in dozens of dead and wounded demonstrators, but “succeeded” in bringing down the military government of that time. On Feb. 20, this year, Chamlong withdrew his support from Thaksin and deployed his Dharma Army to join the demonstrations against the government.

*EIR* conducted an in-depth investigation of the May 1992 events, published on June 23, 1992, showing that the demonstrations and the provocations at that time were extensively organized and financed by USAID, through the government-run Asia Foundation, the Asia-America Free Labor Institute (AFLI), and others, opening Thailand up for the globalization mania of hot-money speculation, leading rapidly to the nation’s speculative destruction at the hands of the hedge fund speculators in the 1997-98 “Asian crisis.”

Chamlong announced that his cult followers would stay on the streets until Thaksin resigned, telling the press that if there were violence, “the government will have to take responsibility.” Another leading agent of U.S. subversive operations, Sulak Sivaraksa, who was a primary organizer of the 1992 coup, called Prime Minister Thaksin a dog during a recent rally in Bangkok.

## New Elections

Thaksin, clearly aware that the “democratic” opposition was acting according to an agenda which had no interest in democracy, and was only interested in regime change, called their bluff by dissolving the Parliament and calling new elections for April 2. The opposition parties recognize that Thaksin’s “Thai Rak Thai” party will win the election hands

down (although they are unlikely to achieve the historic results of the 2005 election, in which they swept 377 of the 500 seats in the Parliament). After a few days of intense pressure from the “democracy” movement at home and abroad, the opposition parties threw democracy overboard, and declared that they would boycott the elections, demanding neo-con-style regime change rather than democratic procedures.

Officially the U.S. government is remaining neutral, but, as several U.S. experts on Thailand told *EIR*, and as Lyndon LaRouche concurred, the U.S. target is China, and the destabilization of Thailand, a crucial friend of China in the region, fits into the renewed “China-hawks” scenario in Washington.

Thaksin is offering the opposition parties a compromise on the date of the election, but will not give in to mob rule or neo-con-style regime change subversion. He has ordered police to check participants in opposition rallies for weapons, while doing nothing to prevent their right to rally and demonstrate. He has also called for rallies in his own support.

The greatest danger is that elements within the military may decide that the threat of instability justifies a military intervention, even after a Thaksin victory in the elections—precisely as was carried out in the Philippine Edsa coups. Some press reports claim that Gen. Surayud Chulanont, a former Army Chief who was “kicked upstairs” by Thaksin when Surayud was pressing for a military confrontation with neighboring Myanmar in 2002, is looked to as a possible head of a caretaker government, if Thaksin is ousted.

## **The Philippines—Again**

The Philippines crisis is of a different nature. Arroyo was placed in power in 2001, when the military withdrew support for the widely popular President Joseph Estrada, all with smiling approval from Washington. Estrada has never acknowledged that he is no longer the President, and efforts to convict him of corruption charges have gone nowhere, although he has remained under house arrest for the past five years. Arroyo has never enjoyed majority support, while her economic policies have followed the demands of the IMF to the last detail, driving the economy into ruin, and the population into deeper poverty and hunger. She won the election in 2005 by a plurality against a divided opposition, but tape recordings of conversations she held with election officials, which appear to show her fixing the election, have undermined her credibility still further.

Efforts to bring impeachment charges against her were rebuffed by her allies in the House through parliamentary tricks, avoiding discussion of the merits of the charges. Arroyo and her controllers, General Ramos and Speaker of the House José de Venecia, are intent on removing all Congressional opposition to their policies by eliminating the Congress itself, through a change from a Presidential to a parliamentary system. In the meantime, Arroyo has issued decrees to undermine the power of the Senate to oversee the executive branch,

including an order preventing any government or military official from testifying before the Congress without her personal permission—even as the Congress was investigating evidence of vote fraud and other serious charges against her Administration.

The declaration of a State of Emergency on Feb. 24, the day before the 20th Anniversary of the Edsa coup against President Marcos, was based on claims that military commanders of the Army Rangers and the Marines were involved in a coup attempt, aimed at bringing the military to the streets on the day of the Edsa celebrations, calling on Arroyo to step down. Those two commanders have been removed, and six members of Congress have been detained, while arrest warrants have been brought against a total of 16 persons. The proclamation allows the arrest without warrant for actions as simple as “sabotaging the people’s confidence in government.”

The State of Emergency forced even most of Arroyo’s supporters to desert her. Vice President Noli de Castro called for the lifting of the Emergency. Senator Joker Arroyo (no relation) said: “The Constitution is no more as far as Gloria (Arroyo) is concerned. . . . Here in the Senate, Gloria has no friends.” General Ramos, nonetheless, refused to join the call for Arroyo’s resignation, indicating that Washington backed the Emergency, although calling for it to be lifted “as soon as possible.” The Emergency decree was lifted March 3.

The neo-conservatives in the U.S. Administration officially support the Arroyo regime, but the Heritage Foundation, which often speaks for the underlying policies of the Administration, has waged a campaign condemning Arroyo for being too friendly towards China. *Time* magazine reported on Feb. 26 that one of its reporters was present when a cohort of former President Cory Aquino’s brother called “an official in Washington,” assuring him that in the case of a coup against Arroyo, “You will still be our friend, not China.” If the Bush/Cheney Administration decides that Arroyo can not enforce their interests, both economic and military (the United States is anxious to regain basing rights in the Philippines), it could easily opt for regime change, and the subsequent instability, which is viewed as an asset to the “permanent war” policies championed by Dick Cheney.

The problem in the Philippines remains a lack of leadership. While there are those in government, and in the opposition, as well as in the military, who have good intentions in regard to reversing the nation’s current downward spiral, they are generally not willing to challenge the popular mythologies about “people’s power,” to tell the truth to the population that the 1986 and 2001 “revolutions” were made in Washington. While there are certainly good reasons to wish for new leadership in Manila, without a regime change in Washington, any action in Manila is unlikely to reverse the nation’s lack of sovereign control over its own affairs.

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