

# PERSPECTIVE

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## Thailand's Elected Junta: The Pluralistic Poverty of *Phalang Pracharat*

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*Left: Deputy Prime Minister and Phalang Pracharat Party Leader General Prawit Wongsuwan*  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prawit\\_Wongsuwan\\_Thailand%27s\\_Minister\\_of\\_Defense.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prawit_Wongsuwan_Thailand%27s_Minister_of_Defense.jpg). *Right: Prime Minister and Defense Minister General Prayut Chan-ocha*  
Source: [https://th.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E0%B9%84%E0%B8%9F%E0%B8%A5%E0%B9%8C:Prayuth\\_2018\\_cropped.jpg](https://th.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E0%B9%84%E0%B8%9F%E0%B8%A5%E0%B9%8C:Prayuth_2018_cropped.jpg).

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Thailand's Phalang Pracharat Party is a "junta party" established as a proxy for the 2014-2019 junta and the military, and specifically designed to sustain the power of the generals Prawit Wongsuwan, Prayut Chan-ocha and Anupong Paochinda.
- Phalang Pracharat was created by the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), and although it is extremely factionalized, having 20 cliques, it is nevertheless dominated by an Army faction headed by General Prawit Wongsuwan.
- The party is financed by powerful corporations and by its intra-party faction leaders.
- In 2021, Phalang Pracharat has become a model for other militaries in Southeast Asia intent on institutionalising their power. In Thailand itself, the party has become so well-entrenched that it will be a difficult task removing it from office.

## INTRODUCTION

March 2021 marked two years since a controversial election outcome<sup>1</sup> brought to office Phalang Pracharat — the political party championed by Thailand’s 2014-2019 junta and armed forces. Phalang Pracharat is not only seen as a party but also the extension of junta rule by other means. It has overseen the reemergence of political space while delivering pork barrel benefits to Thais, and has been called a “junta party”.<sup>2</sup> This is not unusual as almost every coup leader in Thai history has created such a nominee party in an attempt to participate directly in the political arena: Khana Ratsadon in 1933, Seri Manangkhasila in 1955, Sahaphum in 1957, Sahaprachathai in 1969, Samakkhitham in 1991, and Matchimathippatai and Phuea Phaendin in 2007.<sup>3</sup> But Phalang Pracharat has been much more successful than past junta parties. How so? How has this party specifically sustained the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) and military control in post-junta Thailand? Exactly what is Phalang Pracharat? The answers lie in understanding how this party has been able to maintain its essence as a hybrid half-civilian, half-military Leviathan which has set back efforts at Thai democratisation.



*Above: Phalang Pracharat Party Emblem*

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palang\\_Pracharath\\_Party#/media/File:Palang\\_Pracharath\\_Logo\\_\(2020\).svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palang_Pracharath_Party#/media/File:Palang_Pracharath_Logo_(2020).svg)

## HISTORY OF THE PARTY

The origins of Phalang Pracharat date to the period following the election of 2007, which did not go to plan for military senior brass who had tried to construct at least two military proxy parties (Pheu Phaendin and Matchimathippatai) following the 2006 coup.<sup>4</sup> The junta then was

unsuccessful in convincing enough politicians to join these parties. Preparations by the NCPO to create a new junta party commenced as early as in 2014, less than a month after that year's coup, amidst military whisperings about the need to "downsize Pheu Thai".<sup>5</sup> After the putsch, the junta forbade all political party activities and encouraged intra-party factions to support the NCPO. At the same time, in 2015, the NCPO began seeking to build popular support by injecting development funds into localities — mimicking populist political parties that it had banned. These NCPO-initiated welfare projects — called *Pracha Rat* ("State Populism") — included state lending through village funds and a welfare card programme for the poor which also benefited big businesses supportive of the junta.<sup>6</sup> The design and delivery of these projects were coordinated by the Thai military's Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC)<sup>7</sup> which mobilised support for the programme in province after province.<sup>8</sup> In 2017, Prime Minister Prayut invoked his powers under Section 44 of the NCPO's 2014 interim constitution to establish an ISOC Internal Security Administrative "Superboard", with the ostensible objective of addressing broad domestic security threats. The Superboard operated at three levels, with Prime Minister Prayut and Deputy Prime Minister Prawit responsible at the national level, the four regional Army commanders directing the four regional committee levels, and provincial governors (who have always been influential in helping parties to elect candidates) heading up provincial committees.<sup>9</sup> Governors were appointed by the Minister of the Interior, who has since 2014 been General Anupong Paochinda, a close chum of Prayut and Prawit and himself a powerful voice inside Phalang Pracharat. The 2017 Order also centralised police and Interior officials and public prosecutors under Army-dominated ISOC control. ISOC had access to 5,000-6000 staff as well as 500,000-600,000 internal security personnel to help implement the objectives of the order.<sup>10</sup> Through the use of this superboard and with some seed money, ISOC moved to fulfill a major "security" objective — creating a junta party which would win the next election.<sup>11</sup>

Phalang Pracharat was officially established in March 2018 by ISOC-connected Colonel Suchart Jantarachotikul<sup>12</sup> and businessman Chuan Chuchan, alongside 13 other founding members. The timing was special since the NCPO did not allow banned parties to resume activities until August 2018 or permit them to begin campaigning until December that year.<sup>13</sup> By September 2018, Phalang Pracharat's executive board was composed of a mixture of officials who had previously helped administer the NCPO, and politicians who were representatives of political factions.<sup>14</sup> The party's name, emblem and policies mirrored the junta's *Pracha Rat* symbol and programme. In late 2018, two junta technocrats — most notably financial guru Somkid Jatusripitak who had designed *Pracha Rat* and helped to guide the economy — served as party leader and secretary-general respectively. In early 2019, ISOC teams raced around communities throughout the country, reminding Thais to vote, but also advertising and delivering *Pracha Rat* populism — indirectly assisting the Phalang Pracharat Party.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, Phalang Pracharat used committees of province-level faction teams (with vote-canvassing networks) to contest Thailand's 2019 election, and to boost intra-party coordination after the election. Given that these committees and ISOC provincial committees were each striving for the same goal — sustaining military power — they tended to considerably overlap with each other (though few local politicians actually sat on ISOC committees). The 2019 NCPO-administered election resulted in a foreseeable victory for Phalang Pracharat, especially since local factions and their canvassing networks got the vote out for the junta party. Furthermore, the heads or members of institutions legitimising the outcome — the Election Commission, Senate, Constitutional Court and National Anti-Corruption Commission — had all been appointed by the NCPO. The party — and the coalition government that it formed — now became a bridge to link the former NCPO with civilian

politicians willing to accept the continuing hegemony of the generals Prayut Chan-ocha, Prawit Wongsuwan and Anupong Paochinda atop the charade democracy.

## **PHALANG PRACHARAT'S FACTIONALISM**

As a party organised by Thailand's 2014-2019 junta, Phalang Pracharat had no history with voters and no time-honored loyal constituency. It was thus forced to rely on intra-party factions and their vote canvassing networks, in order to achieve victory at the polls and to stay in office.<sup>16</sup> Most factions were province-wide "teams" of politicians, though the party also had three larger regional factions, each of which could encompass provincial teams. The most sizeable was "Sam Mitr" or "Three Friends". Based upon ex-Thai Rak Thai Party MPs Suriya Juangroongruangkit, Somsak Thepsuthin and, originally, Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak, the faction was active in Thailand's Lower North and Northeast. The second regional faction was the "Northern Group" of Captain Thammanat Prompao, active in Thailand's Upper North. Third was Colonel Suchart's 13-MP regional grouping in Thailand's South, which was subdivided into two factions. Another important faction was a large clique of right-wing ex-Democrats, many of whom had supported the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) in its 2013-2014 campaign to oust the elected government of Yingluck Shinawatra. This "Democrat Palace" faction<sup>17</sup> was the only one among the various cliques defecting to Phalang Pracharat which did so for policy-oriented or ideological reasons; it had arch-royalist, conservative leanings.

Ultimately, following the 2019 election, 20 factions were identifiable within Phalang Pracharat. Except for the Army and "Democrat Palace", the geographical bases of the various groups were notably bastions of provincial strongmen-politicians. It is revealing that the only new faction was that of the Army. Every other faction had defected from other parties: Democrat, Phuea Thai, Bhumjaithai, Phalang Chon, Matuphum, and Chat Thai Phattana. Factions mostly entered the party either because of the "stick" of potential prosecutions or the "carrot" of access to lucrative postings and concessions, or both. For example, the Office of the Attorney General dropped charges against ex-Red Shirt leader and Khorat Group member Supon Atthakorn, who defected to Phalang Pracharat and later became a deputy minister attached to the Prime Minister's Office.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, infamous godfather Somchai Khunpluem was freed by the junta in 2017, after which his faction joined Phalang Pracharat<sup>19</sup> and his son became Minister of Culture. Other faction leaders against whom harassment forced defections to Phalang Pracharat included Sanoh Thienghong from Sa Kaew Province, and Vorathep Ratanakorn from Kamphaengphet.

Initially, from 2019 to 2020, Somkid's unelected faction of four technocrats, the "four boys", officially led Phalang Pracharat, giving it the appearance of civilian control. The faction kept its hold over four lucrative ministerial slots, including Finance and Energy – a feat difficult to accomplish in such a highly factionalized party. Indeed other factions initially demanded these portfolios. By April 2020, following a resurgence in factional disputes and, more importantly, ex-NCPO leaders' desires to better consolidate their control over the party, de facto party leader General Prawit Wongsuwan began to indirectly support cabinet changes. Nevertheless, according to former Thai Intelligence Agency head General Ganit Chanpreechaya, Prawit had "not issued any orders to change the leader".<sup>20</sup> But to expedite a reshuffle, in June half of the party executive board resigned, a move which, because of party by-laws, forced an executive committee election. The "four boys" quit the cabinet as well as the party, and the committee members selected Prawit as Phalang Pracharat Party leader. In July, the Sam Mitr faction

attempted to have its co-leader Suriya appointed Energy Minister, while Phetchabun faction leader Santi Prompat tried to become Finance Minister. At this point, the National Anti-Corruption Commission began investigating the wife of Sam Mitr's other co-leader Somsak Thepsuthin for corruption, while a 2019 video clip emerged on social media of Suriya claiming that he would never accept a cabinet post. The implicit message was for factions to stop resisting Prawit and Prayut.<sup>21</sup> Their pressure silenced Sam Mitr immediately, resulting in the appointment of new technocrats favoured by Prawit and Prayut to fill the Finance, Energy, and Deputy PM portfolios. From July 2020 until February 2021, the Army faction of the party maintained a quota of 12 posts in the 22-member Phalang Pracharat party quota of posts in the 36-member cabinet, while Sam Mitr held three posts, "Democrat Palace" and the Chonburi group each had two, and three out of the remaining 16 Phalang Pracharat factions occupied one each. As for factional positions on the party executive committee, "Sam Mitr" and "Democrat Palace" each had four. Regarding Phalang Pracharat committee chair postings in the Lower House, the Army faction dominates. Since it received no cabinet post, the Ban Rim Nam faction was allocated the post of First Deputy Speaker of the Lower House. (See Table 1.)

January 2021 saw "Democrat Palace" faction leader Natapol Teepsawan announce his wife Taya's candidacy for Bangkok governor — a move not backed by Prawit, who supported his loyalist ex-Police Chief Chakthip Chaijinda for the post. But in a sudden development in February, Thailand's Criminal Court convicted former members of the arch-royalist PDRC of terrorism-related charges for leading the 2013-2014 protests against the Yingluck government. Those convicted included ex-PDRC members and current Phalang Pracharat cabinet ministers Natapol himself and Putipong Punnagan. Following their convictions, the two were automatically forced from their political posts. The additional conviction of Taya is likely to remove her from the contest for governor of Bangkok. In March, Prawit revealed that he was nominating Chaiwut Thannakhammanusorn (Khorat/Singburi faction) to replace Natapol in the cabinet and Ittipol Khunpluem (Chonburi faction) to replace Putipong. Trinuch Tienthong (Wang Nam Yen faction) would then replace Ittipol as Culture Minister. Prawit clearly dominates Palang Pracharat's party committee, and any changes to the quota are up to his discretion.

**Table 1: Factions in the Phalang Pracharat Party (June 2020-Present)**

Name	Base	# of MPs	Previous Party Affiliation (if any)	Leader	Phalang Pracharat EX-COM posts	Cabinet posts	Lower House Committee chair/ speaker posts
NCPO	Army	8	0	Prawit Wongsuwan	3 (including party leader and treasurer)	12	9
Sam Mitr	Suhhothai Province, finance from Bangkok	14	Bhumjai Thai, Phuea Thai	Somsak Thepsuthin/ Suriya Juangroongruangkit/ Anucha Nakasai	4 (including party sec-gen)	3	3
“Giant Chalawan Group”	Phichit Province	3	Democrat Party	Surachat Sribusakorn	1	0	0
“Paknampho”	Nakhon Sawan Province	5	Phuea Thai	Kamprakob family	1	0	3
Chaiyaphum Group	Chaiyaphum Province	2	Phuea Thai	Samrit Taensap	1	0	0
“Phetchabun Group”	Phetchabun Province	6	Phuea Thai	Santi Prompat	1	1	1
“Ban Kamphaengphet”	Kamphaengphet Province	4	Phuea Thai	Ruengvit Lik/Varathep Ratanakorn	1	0	2
“Northern Group”	Phayao, Tak, Lampang, Mae Hong Son Provinces	11	Phuea Thai	Thammanat Prompao	2 (including party registrar)	1	2
“Chonburi Group”	Chonburi Province	6	Phalang Chon	Khunpluem family	3	2	0
“Khorat/Singburi Group”	Nakhon Ratchasima Province	8	Phuea Thai	Wirat Ratanaset (party whip)	2	1/2 (starting March 2021)	3
“Ubon Group”	Ubon Province	3	Phuea Thai	Supon Fonggam	1	0	0
“Kanchanaburi Group”	Kanchanaburi Province	4	Democrat Party	Potipipit family	0	0	2

“Wang Nam Yen”	Sa Kaew Province	3	Phuea Thai	Tienthong family	0	0/1 (starting March 2021)	0
“Paknam”	Samut Prakan Province	6	Matuphum	Asavahame family	1	0	1
(Southern) “Thai Axe Handle”	Phuket, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Songkhla provinces	10	Democrat Party	Nipan Siriton/ Colonel Suchart Jantarachotikul	1	0	1
“Southern Border Provinces”	Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani Provinces	3	Democrat Party	Sampan Mayaso	1	0	0
“Ban Rim Nam”	Chachoengsao, Rayong, Chanthaburi Provinces	5	Bhumjaithai	Suchart Tancharoen	0	0	1 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Lower House Speaker)
“Democrat Palace” <sup>22</sup>	Bangkok	14	Democrat Party	Natapol Teepsawan/ Putipong Punnagan/ Sakol Patiyakul	4/2 (Starting March 2021)	2/0 (Starting March 2021)	4
“Kraikrupt group”	Ratchaburi Province	3	Chat Thai Phattana	Pareena Kraikrupt	0	0	0
“Angkinan group”	Petchaburi Province	3	Chat Thai Phattana	Chaiya Angkinan	0	0	1
Total: 20 factions	----	121	Defections from 6 parties	----	27	22/36 cabinet quota	33/78

Source: author’s calculations.

## PARTY FINANCE

Phalang Pracharat has primarily relied on financial infusions from its various factions, on public subsidies, and on private donations. The NCPO initially encouraged wealthy individuals and corporations to support Phalang Pracharat, and enticed them with promised benefits if they did so and threatened less preferential treatment if they did not. The choice proved easy since Phalang Pracharat’s 2019 victory and durability in office were a foregone conclusion. The party has thus since 2019 had the most access to finance of any political party. At least 39 of Phalang Pracharat’s MPs are company directors or in limited partnerships with a total level of capital amounting to 3.25 billion baht (US\$108.3 million).<sup>23</sup> Most of these affluent MPs have been party faction leaders. Then there are deeper-pocketed financiers standing in the shadows of the MPs including such leading Thai concerns as Charoen Phokpand, ThaiBev, the Central Group,

and Boonrawd Brewery. These concerns have reportedly been willing to contribute much more money than the MPs (though exact amounts are unknown).<sup>24</sup>

By law, no donor is allowed to contribute more than 10 million baht per year to a political party.<sup>25</sup> That rule has forced Phalang Pracharat's entrepreneurial donors to follow the letter of the law and organize fund-raising events or find ways to circumvent the law in order to deliver substantial party funding — in expectation of special party favours or posts. A fund-raising dinner among prospective financiers just prior to the 2019 election landed the party 622 million baht in donations.<sup>26</sup> Even in terms of formal donations, Phalang Pracharat has received by far the most amount of money among Thai parties. When Thailand's Election Commission published a list of donors to Phalang Pracharat, Phuea Thai, Bhumjaithai, and the Democrat and Move Forward Parties in August 2020, the figures were 28.5 million, 10.7 million, 6 million, 4.5 million and 3.7 million baht, respectively.<sup>27</sup> Donors hoped to be rewarded with concessions, party executive committee membership posts or even ministerial slots — and most were.

## **DURABILITY AND MODEL FOR EXPORT?**

Thailand's next election could be held as late as 2023. Meanwhile, ISOC, the Election Commission, the Senate and other military-dominated institutions have continued to bolster the perseverance in power of Phalang Pracharat. In February 2020, the Constitutional Court dissolved the Future Forward Party (FFP) and stripped its executives of electoral rights for 10 years, especially targeting its charismatic pro-democracy leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit. Though most FFP MPs left for the Move Forward Party, the dissolution diminished the size of the parliamentary opposition. Meanwhile, in December 2020, the Election Commission began investigating whether it should recommend to the Constitutional Court the dissolution of Phuea Thai. A Phuea Thai dissolution would likely leave Phalang Pracharat with almost complete control over Lower House MPs. Late 2020 also saw political bigwig Sudarat Keyuraphan defect from Phuea Thai and launch a new political party, taking several other party stalwarts with her. The move came as former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra encountered a growing list of opponents, including Red Shirt core leader Jatuporn Prompan and Boonlert Buranapakorn.<sup>28</sup> During the NCPO regime, General Prawit had discussed finding means to reconciliation between the NCPO and principal opposition politicians, including Sudarat. The idea was to work through Prawit's associate and close friend General Noppadol Intapanya. In 2016, General Noppadon married the sister-in-law of Phuea Thai politician Anudit Nakornthap, who later became that party's Secretary-General. Anudit has now followed Sudarat in her plan to start a new party.<sup>29</sup> There is a distinct possibility that, through Noppadon's intervention, Sudarat agrees to work with Prawit under a new reconfiguration of Thailand's junta party, or perhaps the military and her faction may agree to start a new party together. In fact, she could be such a combination's future prime ministerial candidate. If so, the result would be a cosmetic refreshing of military-political party appearances.

That being said, Phalang Pracharat remains dominated by the Army faction which led the NCPO — the Eastern Tigers/Queen's Guard clique. Even if an elected civilian becomes prime minister, the key positions of Defense Minister, Deputy Defense Minister, Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Security will remain firmly under the control of retired military officers. While that currently means Generals Prayut, Prawit, Anupong and Chaichan

Changmongkol, if the king supports their replacement, it will mean that the palace-favoured Wongthewan military faction comes to dominate parliamentary politics. It might herald the ascendance of former Army Chief (retired General) Apirat Kongsompong, alongside his military associates, in leading cabinet positions as well as directing Phalang Pracharat. Apirat would work more harmoniously with current Army Chief General Narongphan Jitkaewthae, also of the Wongthewan faction. But, as long as Prayut, Prawit and Anupong can maintain order, they can count on several more years of palace endorsement.

In building that Phalang Pracharat, Thailand's military learned from the mistakes of the Tatmadaw's attempt to maintain power through its own 2008 constitution. That charter gave a 25 per cent quota of seats in the Upper and Lower Houses of Myanmar's Union Parliament to the military, while Thailand's 2014-2019 junta appointed all post-2019 Senators in the Thai Upper House. Myanmar's election formula allowed for one party to potentially obtain a super-majority of legislative seats while the NCPO-instituted Lower House election formula makes a party majority impossible. Myanmar's Election Commission tended to be rather fair while Thailand's Election Commission was accused of favoritism.<sup>30</sup> Unlike in Myanmar, Thailand's judiciary has actively dissolved parties threatening conservative interests. The coup by Myanmar's military on 1 February 2020 partly resulted from its inability to create a system that would ensure that a political party representing its interests could rise to office and then maintain itself in power, the way Phalang Pracharat has succeeded in doing across the border in Thailand. The Tatmadaw's proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party was twice decimated in elections by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy. Myanmar's junta leaders have promised new elections in a year, possibly giving it time to engineer a new constitution that emulates Thailand's approach. In mid-February 2021, Thai Prime Minister Prayut announced that he had received a letter from junta leader General Min Aung Hlaing asking Thailand's former junta chief for help in Myanmar's "democratic process".<sup>31</sup> This may indicate that the militaries of Thailand and Myanmar intend to keep learning from each other in managing their political systems.

## CONCLUSION

Thailand's elected junta — Phalang Pracharat — looks set to persist in power. Its populist policies are popular with the poor, but so were those of Phuea Thai. Absent popularity, former junta leaders standing in the shadows are likely to continue utilising factions and vote-canvassers to sustain themselves across elections. These factions cooperate with the military in hope of material gain or out of fear of state retribution. At the same time, Phalang Pracharat effectively dominates parliament, with censure motions against the government in 2020 and 2021 proving ineffective. The military's sway over courts and monitoring agencies have seen Lower House opponents succumb to party dissolution or other partisan punitive measures. The only venue for resistance has been to demonstrate in the streets. But most conveniently for Prayut, Prawit and Anupong, the COVID-19 pandemic came along at the right time — in 2020 — to give the regime a rationale to enact and extend an Emergency Decree, thus legitimising the dispersal of protests. Displacing Phalang Pracharat, or whichever party it morphs into, from office will require unity in support of a censure motion between Phuea Thai, Move Forward, Bhumjaithai and other MPs; and in all likelihood, this cannot happen without backing from the monarch.

Phalang Pracharat has demonstrated that the military can absorb factions, popular policies, private financing and state backing to establish and sustain a form of democratic "legitimacy"

that provides validation to entrench the armed forces' political hold over Thailand. It stands as a behemoth answerable only to the Palace. Given the monarch's relative lack of popularity and the continuing political divisions among Thais, any attempt either to stop the officers of the former NCPO from exercising influence through a political party or to remove this junta party from Thailand's political landscape will be difficult indeed.

<sup>1</sup> See "The Most Questionable Election in Thai History", *Prachatai*, 25 March 2019, <https://prachatai.com/english/node/7993>; iLaw, "The 2019 Elections, of the NCPO, by the NCPO, and for the NCPO", 7 November 2018, <https://ilaw.or.th/node/5004>.

<sup>2</sup> Pravit Rojanaphruk, "The Military as a Junta Party", *Khaosod English*, 13 May 2018, <https://www.khaosodenglish.com/opinion/2018/05/13/the-military-junta-as-a-political-party/>.

<sup>3</sup> See Paul Chambers, "A Short History of Military Influence in Thailand", pp. 109-446 in Paul Chambers, ed., *Knights of the Realm: Thailand's Military and Police* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> In 2007, Permanent Defense Secretary General Winai Phattiyakul, directed the then-military junta's attempts to assemble political parties to oppose Thaksin. Winai's son Sakolthee Phattiyakul, was a Democrat and later a leader of the anti-Yingluck Shinawatra People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC), who became Deputy Bangkok governor and then defected to Phalang Pracharat.

<sup>5</sup> "It's Best to Keep Mum", *Bangkok Post*, 21 June 2014, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/politics/416551/it-s-best-to-keep-mum>.

<sup>6</sup> See Prajak Kongkirati and Veerayooth Kanchoochat, "The Prayuth Regime: Embedded Military and Hierarchical Capitalism in Thailand", *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 6, 2 (2018): 279-305;

Thorn Pitidol and Weerawat Pattarasukumjorn, "Pracharat welfare depoliticises Thailand's "political peasants", *New Mandala*, 29 November 2019, <https://www.newmandala.org/how-pracharat-welfare-depoliticises-thailands-political-peasants/>.

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous interview with retired National Security Council official and Army officer, 24 December 2020; Puangthong Pawakapan, "Thailand Unsettled #1", *New Mandala*, 4 September 2018, <https://www.newmandala.org/thailand-unsettled-1-military-puangthong-pawakapan/>.

<sup>8</sup> See for example, Internal Security Operations Command, "พระราชวัง ไทยนิยมสั่งยื่น" [tPracharat thai-niyom yangyuen], 25 December 2018, <https://www.isoc.go.th/?p=2737>.

<sup>9</sup> Wassana Nanuam, "ISOC Defends New Internal Security Move", *Bangkok Post*, 24 November 2017, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/politics/1365787/isoc-defends-new-internal-security-move>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Anonymous personal interview with retired National Security Council official and Army officer, 24 December 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Suchart formerly commanded the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment (Songkhla), and the 43<sup>rd</sup> Ranger Regiment (Narathiwat) before serving in the NCPO's National Reform Steering Assembly (2015-2017). He is a member of Military Preparatory School Class 12 and Military Academy Class 23, the same class as junta leaders Prime Minister Gen. Prayut Chan-ocha, former Deputy Prime Minister Gen. Thanasak Patimaprakorn, former Deputy Prime Minister Gen. Chatchai Sarikalaya, former Minister of Natural Resources/Environment Gen. Surasak Kanjanarat and former Supreme Commander Gen. Woraphong Sa-nate and former 2nd Army Region commander Gen. Tawatchai Samutsakhon.

<sup>13</sup> Wassana Nanuam, "NCPO to allow parties limited political activities", *Bangkok Post*, 28 August 2018, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/politics/1529894/ncpo-to-allow-parties-limited-political-activities>.

- <sup>14</sup> “4 ministers, 3 ex-PDRC leaders join Palang Pracharath”, *Bangkok Post*, 29 September 2018, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/politics/1549002/4-ministers-3-pdrc-leaders-join-palang-pracharat>.
- <sup>15</sup> See, for example, Internal Security Operations Command, “จังหวัดหนองบัวลำภู รมรณรงค์เชิญชวนให้พี่น้องประชาชนออกมาใช้สิทธิเลือกตั้ง ในวันอาทิตย์ที่ 24 มีนาคม 2562 โดยพร้อมเพรียงกัน” [Nong Bua Lamphu Province Campaign to invite people to vote on Sunday, March 24, 2019 in unison], March 20, 2019, <https://www.isoc.go.th/?p=11294>.
- <sup>16</sup> Punchada Sirivunnabood, “The Rules Change but the Players Don’t: Factional Politics and Thailand’s March 2019 Elections”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 41, 3 (December 2019), pp. 390-417, <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/743633>.
- <sup>17</sup> “‘พลังประชารัฐ’ ภาคใหม่ 15 ก๊ก ภารกิจชู ‘บิ๊กป้อม’ สลახวิชาการเมือง” [Phalang Pracharat as a New Party with 15 Groups Working under Big Pom’s Political Crumbings], *Prachachat*, 6 July 2020, <https://www.prachachat.net/politics/news-486837>.
- <sup>18</sup> Voranai Vanijaka, “The Political Bubble of Palang Pracharat and General Prayuth”, *Thisrupt*, 18 March 2019, <https://thisrupt.co/current-affairs/the-political-bubble-of-palang-pracharat/>.
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