

Thailand - Red Rim Soldiers: the birth of the new network monarchy

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“Even when Thailand changed from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy, the relations between the king and the military did not change according to the constitution at all. (...) (T)he king interferes in the appointment of military officers, directly or indirectly. The military also often uses the king as an excuse to seize political power. (...) King Rama X inherited this relationship with the military from King Rama IX and has expanded the power and authority of the king over the military, moving closer and closer to an absolute monarchy. This article will explain the relationship between the monarchy and the armed forces in the modern reign in 2 parts: 1) royal government agencies which are directly under royal command; and 2) relations with the armed forces which the King has created through recently developed networks.”

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The appointment of Air Chief Marshal Airbull Suttiwan as the new Royal Thai Air Force Commander-in-Chief may not be what was expected by the mass media that reports on the military or by general observers, because the ‘Bull of the Sky’ (named ‘Airbull’ because he was born during a joint training programme of the Thai and US air forces in 1961 with the codename ‘Airbull’) is not one of the 5 flying tigers. He did not rise up through the strategic ranks nor was he a fighter jet pilot like previous air force commanders-in-chief. He was a C-130 transport pilot, had been the 601st air squadron commander in the Don Mueang 6th Wing, and had been the military attaché (Air Force) in Singapore. The position he held before taking the reins of the air force was an Air Force Special Expert, which everyone knows is a position for parking high ranking officers who the military does not want to do much.

People who know Airbull all agree that he is someone with a very nice personality - many were impressed during the time he was assigned to Singapore, but that is not a principle quality of people who are military leaders. Again Airbull did not have any outstanding achievements. What allowed this dark horse to attain such an important position in the RTAF, was that he was once responsible for a “royal flight”, and had a close relation with King Rama X, who has been a pilot, as well as another Air Force man, Air Chief Marshal Satitpong Sukvimol, Lord Chamberlain, who was the King's Royal Secretary. The royally decreed short crewcut of the new RTAF Commander-in-Chief should be good evidence that a close relationship and the expression of unbridled loyalty to superiors are the most important factors in selecting military leaders at present.

The monarchy and the military have always been inseparable. Most Thai constitutions, from the very first that was promulgated in December 1932 after the change in the form of government, have stated “the King holds the position of Head of the Royal Thai Armed Forces”. Some versions, such as Article 11 in the 1949 constitution in the reign of King Rama IX, clearly decrees that “the King holds

the position of Head of the Royal Thai Armed Forces and is the highest commander of all soldiers". Article 8 of the 2017 constitution, which was written during King Rama X's reign, there is only the short statement that "the King holds the position of Head of the Royal Thai Armed Forces". The Royal Thai Armed Forces themselves consider their most important duty to be the protection of the monarchy and safeguarding the king, queen and royal family members. In the present warless era, it can be said that the military has only this mission as its highest priority. The Armed Forces will do anything to protect the king, from pulling a coup d'état to threatening, arresting, detaining and even executing people who are believed a threat to the monarchy.

The modern Thai Armed Forces were established by King Rama V. Even when Thailand changed from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy, the relations between the king and the military did not change according to the constitution at all. The word "Head of the Royal Thai Armed Forces" in the constitution, may superficially just be a symbol of their relation according to tradition. But the truth is that both the king and the military have clearly shown us, ever since Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat was Prime Minister, that the king is the head of the Royal Thai Armed Forces who holds the authority to control the military, so it is not strange that the king interferes in the appointment of military officers, directly or indirectly. The military also often uses the king as an excuse to seize political power. Recent research discovered that the king and the military have worked together to interfere with, control and command politics all along. The military and coups d'état are political tools of the king rather than something that protects the country and its territorial integrity [1].

King Rama X inherited this relationship with the military from King Rama IX and has expanded the power and authority of the king over the military, moving closer and closer to an absolute monarchy. This article will explain the relationship between the monarchy and the armed forces in the modern reign in 2 parts: 1) royal government agencies which are directly under royal command; and 2) relations with the armed forces which the King has created through recently developed networks.

The King's personal army

Royal government agencies under King Rama X, under a law enacted by the National Council of Peace and Order (NCPO) government in April 2017, have been made into government agencies with special characteristics, exempting them from the laws governing state administration regulations and making them no longer part of the government under any other law. The administration of these royal agencies is to be "at the royal pleasure". There are 3 main agencies:

(1) The Office of His Majesty's Privy Council, which used to have a large role during King Rama IX's reign when General Prem Tinsulanonda, President of the Privy Council, had the important duty of managing the network monarchy. But in King Rama X's reign, the importance of the Privy Council has been considerably lessened. It is to be noted that the personal relationship between Gen Prem, the late former Privy Council President, and the King was not very good, which resulted in a reduction of the role of the current President, General Surayud Chulanont, beloved student and successor to Prem. King Rama X assigned to the Privy Council public relations work such as giving out goods to help the people and looking after royal projects which were launched during the last reign, rather than as an agency which provides advice on state administration to the king as it had in the past. It can be said that the old network monarchy's role has decreased greatly, even though it has not completely disappeared. Also, even though Surayud once held the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Prime Minister, he does not hold as much authority in the military as Prem did and so is not able to manage efficiently the network monarchy for King Rama X, especially in the military.

(2) The Bureau of the Royal Household whose work covers general royal affairs, the royal secretariat, royal household and ceremonial administration, looking after the king's property and any other duties "at the royal pleasure". The Lord Chamberlain (Satitpong Sukvimol) was by his royal benevolence appointed at the royal pleasure as the person in charge and is responsible for running the agency.

(3) The Royal Security Command is an important agency directly related to military affairs. It is responsible for the planning, facilitation and coordination, command, control, oversight and administration in affairs concerning the protection and glorification of the king, queen, heir-apparent, royal family members and any other persons as assigned by the king, as well as work related to royal ceremonies as assigned and keeping peace and order within palace grounds, including acting according to the laws related to safeguarding the king, queen, heir-apparent, regent, members of the royal family, royal representatives and royal visitors.

Article 8 of the 2017 Royal Decree Organising Governmental Affairs and Personnel Administration for Royal Service states that "the Royal Security Command shall adopt a system of command that is directly subject to the Monarch."

Article 9 states that under the Royal Security Command shall be the Office of the Commander, Office of the Aide-de-Camp, Office of the Royal Duty Officers, Royal Thai Aide-De-Camp Department, The King's Close Bodyguard Command, and Office of the Royal Police Guards as its main components.

In reality, King Rama X has been the commander of the Royal Security Command since he was Crown Prince and has had a number of soldiers under his command under the 904 code, but the command line was rather confusing because the Command was originally part of the Royal Thai Armed Forces Headquarters before being transferred to being under the direct command of the Ministry of Defence in November 2013, when Yingluck Shinawatra was Prime Minister and also Minister of Defence. In reality, no one in Thailand can imagine that the Crown Prince, as the commander of a military unit, would listen to the orders of a commoner Minister or even Prime Minister.

That is why the restructuring of the royal government agencies in the reign of King Rama X is to make royal authority, which was the norm in the absolute monarchy, legally acceptable under a constitutional government. The enactment of a royal decree in September 2019 to transfer the personnel and budget of the 1st and 11th Infantry Regiments to become part of the Royal Security Command is nothing more than an expansion of His Majesty's royal troops. Military experts estimate that the 2 regiments with 6 infantry battalions should total to no less than 5,000 troops. At present, the sites of these military camps have already become royal grounds.

In politics, there are many discussions. Does the King, already the Head of the Royal Thai Armed Forces under the constitution, need to have his own troops?

The side that agrees provides 2 reasons:

First According to tradition, the king as Head of the Royal Thai Armed Forces can transfer personnel anywhere at his royal pleasure. Parliament, as the representative of the people, can only enact laws which support such actions.

Second Considering the reality of politics, the 2 regiments are situated in Bangkok and served as the main force in many coups d'état, especially in 2006 and 2014. If they are under direct command of the King, Thailand can be rid of coups because it is believed that there would be no soldier brave enough to betray the King.

The side that disagrees thinks that the latter argument carries no weight and is based on very shaky speculation when one considers the fact that in Thailand's coup history a coup will only be successful after approval from the palace, and importantly, that no modern state allows a state monarch to have personal troops like this. The Head of State, even in the case of the US President who has the duty of Commander-in-Chief of the national military, is not allowed to have their own personal troops to safeguard themselves and their family.

Having personal troops not only creates a state within a state, but may also create alienation in the military, because the Thai Armed Forces believe that their duty is to safeguard and protect the monarchy. Why would the king need a personal military? Naming them 'the King's Close Bodyguard' directly means a force which protects His Majesty that receives special favour. Alienation no doubt will occur in units not part of the King's Close Bodyguard Command who may feel that they are not being favoured, and may be abandoned, neglected or left to starve. This kind of situation happened before in the reign of King Rama VI who established the Wild Tiger Corps as his personal troops, providing them with more support compared to other military units, which eventually became one of the reasons for the coup d'état.

Network Monarchy

King Rama X, when he was Crown Prince, was a soldier and pilot. He studied and trained in military affairs and gained some war experience in 1976 during the era when the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) was waging a revolutionary war. The clash in Dan Sai District, Loei Province, in October of that year was highlighted in 2019 at his coronation, in order to build an image for King Rama X as a warrior king. Even though at this time there is no longer any war, General Apirat Kongsompong, the then Commander-in-Chief of the Army, mentioned this incident again and again, stressing to the military that the King is a military leader who is brave and capable, a professional soldier with battle experience. No military personnel should doubt this, in the way that senior soldiers in the Siamese military once had doubts about the military capabilities of King Rama VI, so that the soldiers will not mutiny. This is for the stability of the monarchy, because, more than anything, a military that is disloyal is the greatest threat to the throne.

King Rama X is not only a soldier with his own personal troops, but he has also given all the people around him – from the queen, his son, his daughter(s), his close attendants, to even his pet dog – military ranks and positions. For example, Queen Suthida, a former flight attendant, had to go through many military and pilot training courses. She has the military rank of Special General and held the position of Deputy Commander of the Royal Security Command before becoming Queen. Royal Noble Consort Sineenat graduated and worked as a nurse at Phramongkutklao Hospital and already had a military rank, but when she served His Majesty as a close attendant, she had to undergo military training, quickly getting promoted to the rank of general. Her position before being appointed Royal Noble Consort was Commander of the Royal Palace Battalion, Palace Guard Infantry Regiment, King's Close Bodyguard Command, Royal Security Command. The two have also led military parades in royal ceremonies, such as the Royal Cremation of King Rama IX and the Coronation of King Rama X as was witnessed by the public. Those who are government officials in the palace and have been given the last name Vajiralongkorn, Sirivajirabhakdi, Yuvarajabariraksa or Bariraksabhuminthara, all have military ranks.

Appointing the Queen and close attendants as royal guards may seem laughable in a modern military, but this happened in the Royal Thai Armed Forces in the 21st century and may create doubts within the military. However, King Rama X has ways to strengthen his relations with the military by building a new network and customs within the military, to be sure that His Majesty will

receive the same loyalty that the former monarch received.

When recently enthroned, His Majesty selected 15 senior military officers led by Apirat Kongsompong, then the Assistant Commander-in-Chief of the Army, to go through a special training course at Thawi Watthana Palace (known to not be a palace where the king lives) and established a special unit; the Royal Guard Ratchawallop 904 Task Force (Commando Unit 904). No outsider knows clearly what authority or mission this special unit has, how many members it has, what are its rules and what work the unit covers.

The mass media that regularly reports on military affairs can only provide incomplete information on this. Sometimes, such as in the Nakhon Ratchasima mass shooting in February 2020, a part of the media misunderstood that Commando Unit 904 is the same unit as the Ratchawallop Police Division, King's Guard 904. This police unit is part of the Central Investigation Bureau and is not under the Bureau of the Royal Household at all. Later on, to avoid confusion, the police unit's name was changed to Special Operations Division in July 2020 and was assigned additional missions related to terrorism that may occur and affect the safety of the royal family within palace grounds.

But the 904 special unit mentioned here refers to elite soldiers (please see table below) who were selected and trained by King Rama X for 3 months, not only to test their military skills but also to test their loyalty and knowledge and understanding of royal traditions applied by King Rama X, such as Rajasawasdi. These military officers may not have the same character as Apirat, but when in uniform, they all wear white t-shirts with red rims inside, eventually being called the 'red rim' soldiers. There is also a 'caste' sign attached to their uniforms, indicating that they are part of the special unit. Some people, such as Gen Apirat and Gen Narongpan Jitkaewthae, the present Commander-in-Chief of the Army, favour attaching a brooch with the image of Prince Dipangkorn Rasmijoti on their chests as well.

No one can tell what the selection criteria is. Within mass media circles, it is known only that everyone needs to be absolutely perfect in terms of dress and discipline, as decreed by King Rama X, such as the very short crew cut. But there are some shared qualities. For example, most 904 members of this generation are part of the 'Wongthewan' group, that is, they started their military career in the 1st Infantry Division and are the 'sons of the influential' that studied in the military academy in years close to Apirat, Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School years 20-22. One group of analysts believe that Apirat's being selected as the leader was partly because of his family background, since he is the son of Gen Sunthorn Kongsompong, former Chief of Defence Forces, who led the coup in 1991 to overthrow Gen Chatichai Choonhavan's government. But the more important matter is that both Sunthorn and Apirat are helicopter pilots and had chances to be close to King Rama X ever since their helicopter training. Some military officers in this group also share another feature: their fathers were part of the 1991 coup, such as Maj Gen Songwit Noonphakdi, son of Issarapong Noonphakdi. Interestingly, there is no one selected from the then-famous Kraprayoon family.

Choosing Apirat as the commander of the 904 special unit in 2017 also changed the power balance within the army. That is, it stopped the expansion of influence of military officers from the Burapha Phayak group under the patronage of Gen Prawit Wongsuwan and his group, which has Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha and Gen Anupong Paochinda as important members, because even though Prayut and Prawit should be powerful in the government at that time in the positions of Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, neither raised any opposition at all when Gen Chalermchai Sittisart, Commander-in-Chief of the Army from a special forces background, who worked for Prem-Surayud and was earlier sent to cut their circles of power, nominated Apirat as Commander-in-Chief of the Army. It is known that Apirat was the one who helped Chalermchai organise the list of transfers and appointments in the year he rose to power [2]. In that year, soldiers in the Wongthewan group,

including Narongpan and many others who were well-known as red rim soldiers, such as Maj Gen Songwit and Lt Gen Charoenchai Hinthao, took over important positions in the army. Through the 2 years when Apirat was in the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Army, he strengthened his authority by appointing soldiers known for their loyalty to King Rama X under his power and laid down a network of red rim soldiers so that they could succeed him.

Gen Narongpan Jitkaewthae, known for being an important royalist, became Commander-in-Chief of the Army and commander of the Royal Guard Ratchawallop 904 Task Force in place of Apirat who went to serve King Rama X as Deputy Lord Chamberlain. Gen Thammanoon Withee became the Assistant Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Lt Gen Charoenchai Hinthao became the Commander of the 1st Army Area, Gen Chaloeiphon Sisawat became the Chief of Defence Forces, and Maj Gen Songwit Noonphakdi, who may look a little disappointed since he was not appointed as the Commander of the 1st Army Area, still holds the position of Chief of Staff of the Army, which also holds considerable importance.

Other choices, such as Gen Nattapon Nakpanich, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Army, known as the person that both Prayut and Prawit trust the most, were swept aside. This was because he is not a red rim soldier but he received the consolation of getting to sit in the position of Secretary-General of the National Security Council, which works in strategy and policy, slipping out of the military command line. In this aspect, it can be said that Prayut and Prawit's power network within the army is shrinking while officers that control important units are all officers from the palace.

Although Apirat claims that he worked very hard to develop the army while in office, he had not done anything at all to develop the army into a military force with better capability in protecting the country, except for buying a number of armoured personnel carriers from the US. It is also uncertain just how many times they will be used in national security affairs in their entire working life.

But his real achievement is the effort to foster new military values designed in the reign of King Rama X, such as producing model soldiers according to the 2019 royal curriculum. This new kind of soldier of King Rama X must strengthen their physical fitness, military character, nutrition, psychology, motivation, etc. Model soldiers according to this royal curriculum will be an upgrade of the training system standards and the general way of looking after new army soldiers.

For practical training, there are posture command drills such as standing to attention, saluting, kneeling salutes, together with the chest-pump face-flick salute which is His Majesty's new approach, hat picking up, paying homage and hat wearing stances. In addition, there are drills with arms, such as presenting arms together with the chest-pump face-flick salute, rifle raising, rifle inspection, removing bayonets, presenting rifles for inspection, including the demonstration of disassembling and assembling the M16A1 rifle, open-eyed and blindfolded. These are all being trained more rigorously. These drills are widely own, the phrase 'chest pump, hmph' or 'chest lift' originating from when King Rama X was still the Crown Prince; His Highness had thought that many soldiers were not stately or dignified, standing hunched, chest not expanded and chin lifted, and so he designed a new stance lifting the chest, pulling back the chin, and flicking the face towards the person being respected. None of these increases the army's capability to protect the country as much as they emphasize the power and influence of the King over the military.

One thing Apirat did continuously in his term was to foster royalism in the military, starting from the opening of the Boworadet and Srisitthisongkhram rooms within the Royal Thai Army Ordnance Corps Museum building in October 2019 to honour former soldiers on the royalist side. Prince Boworadet, former Minister of Defence, one of King Rama VII's relatives and trusted soldiers, and Phraya Srisitthisongkhram (Din Tharab) had significant roles in the 1933 rebellion to overthrow the Phraya Phahonphonphayuhasena government and restore the absolute monarchy. It is most

probably not a coincidence that the honouring of royalist soldiers happened at the same time that memorials related to the history of soldiers who were important members of the People's Party that suppressed the Boworadet rebellion were erased. Monuments to Phraya Phahon and Field Marshal Plaek were moved from a military camp in Lopburi between late 2019 and early 2020 and the names of two military camps changed. Phahonyothin Camp, which was named after Phraya Phahon, was renamed Bhumibol Camp and Phibunsongkhram Camp was changed to Sirikit Camp. These two events happened after the disappearance of the Constitution Defence Monument, also known as the (Boworadet) Rebellion Suppression Monument, at Lak Si intersection in late December 2018. The names of these locations are ideologically important because not only were they the leaders of the Khana Ratsadon, but Field Marshal Plaek was also the creator of the 'nationalism above royalism' idea, before King Rama IX cooperated with Field Marshal Sarit to eliminate it and replace it with royal nationalism from 1957 onwards.

In general, the red rim soldier network seems to be full of soldiers from the army and also some air force officers, but they are already transferred directly to the palace. It could be because the navy has not been much of a threat to the monarchy for a long time, since the Manhattan Rebellion and the defeat of the People's Party in Pridi Banomyong's group. The Air Force is small in size, and not only can it be no threat, but it is close to King Rama X who was once a fighter pilot. In many cases, His Majesty also served as a flight trainer for the Air Force. It is possible that he can already directly command the RTAF without needing to go through any formal mechanism. Airbull's rise to power is a good evidence of this.

All that has been said are only certain starting points of the establishment of the network monarchy by King Rama X. Other than his network within the military, which is one starting point, there are also networks in the civilian sector and very importantly, within the mass media, which work together with the royal palace and military, such as the Royal Volunteer Project founded in 2017. It had an initial number of registrations (at the royal cremation of King Rama IX and the Un Ai Rak project) of 4 million, but there is no study yet on this which is systematic enough. Additionally, it may be too early to say how the network monarchy which started in the military will work or how strong and efficient it will be. Does mass psychology or information operations, including the use of military force and established mass groups, show political power within the network or not? And most importantly, how will these operations affect politics in the current era? Not counting what Apirat's future role will be, currently outside of the military and working within the royal palace, will he do the same or similar work to what Prem did during the reign of King Rama IX? We still cannot tell right now.

The important matter is this newly established network may not need to replace the former network that had a strong and very complex existence in the reign of King Rama IX. The Privy Council not having much of an outstanding role in the current reign does not mean they are not doing anything at all. They may have been doing liaison work or they could be in conflict. When considering that these networks work by relying quite heavily on individual abilities, not counting the call for monarchy reformation, these networks may express different opinions and stances that are all over the place. For example, someone who used to be in the old network monarchy may want to see a constitution indicating that the monarchy has the same role and position that King Rama IX had, while the new network sees that the semi-absolute monarchy of the present is already satisfactory. All of this needs to be studied and scrutinised in detail.

Supalak Ganjanakhundee

Table of Red Rim Soldiers' Progress (2017-2020)

Name	2017	2018	2019	2020
Apirat Kongsompong	Assistant Commander-in-Chief of the Army	Commander-in-Chief of the Army	Commander-in-Chief of the Army	Deputy Lord Chamberlain
Narongpan Jitkaewthae	Deputy Commander of the 1 st Army Area	Commander of the 1 st Army Area	Assistant Commander-in-Chief of the Army	Commander-in-Chief of the Army
Thammanoon Withee	Deputy Commander of the 1 st Army Area	Commander of the 1 st Army Corps	Commander of the 1 st Army Area	Assistant Commander-in-Chief of the Army
Chaloemphon Sisawat	Director of Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deputy Chief of Staff• Army Expert	Chief of Joint Staff	Chief of Defence Forces
Charoenchai Hinthao	Commander of the 2 nd Infantry Division	Deputy Commander of the 1 st Army Area	Commander of the 1 st Army Corps	Commander of the 1 st Army Area
Songwit Noonphakdi	Deputy Commander of the 1 st Infantry Division	Commander of the 1 st Infantry Division	Deputy Commander of the 1 st Army Area	Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army
Suksan Nongbualang	Commander of the 2 nd Infantry Division	Deputy Commander of the 1 st Army Area	Deputy Commander of the 1 st Army Area	Commander of the 1 st Army Corps
Suwit Ketsri	Deputy Commander of the 2 nd Calvary Division	Commander of the 2 nd Calvary Division	Deputy Commander of the 1 st Army Area	Deputy Commandant, Joint Staff College, National Defence Studies Institute
Tharaphong Malakham	Deputy Commander of the 11 th Military Circle	Commander of the 11 th Military Circle	Commander of the 2 nd Infantry Division	Deputy Commander of the 1 st Army Area
Ekkarat Changkaew	Chief of Staff of the 1 st Army Corps	Deputy Superintendent, Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy	Deputy Superintendent, Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy	Director of the Army Training Command Department
Piyaphong Klinphan	Commander of the 11 th Military Circle	Commander of the 2 nd Infantry Division	Deputy Superintendent, Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy	Deputy Superintendent, Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy
Songpol Sadsaongern	Deputy Commander of the 1 st Infantry Division	Deputy Commander of the 1 st Infantry Division	Commander of the 1 st Infantry Division	Commander of the 1 st Infantry Division

Name	2017	2018	2019	2020
Kantaphot Setsatharasami	Deputy Commander of the 2 nd Calvary Division	Deputy Commander of the 2 nd Calvary Division	Commander of the 2 nd Calvary Division	Deputy Commander of the 1 st Army Area
Thawatchai Tangphithakkun	Commander of the 31 st Infantry Regiment	Deputy Commander of the 2 nd Infantry Division	Commander of the 11 th Military Circle	Commander of the 11 th Military Circle
Phumchai Chaiphan	Deputy Commander of the RTAF Security Force Command	Commander of the RTAF Security Force Command	Attached to the Office of the Commander of the King's Close Bodyguard	Head of the Office of the Commander of the King's Close Bodyguard, the King's Close Bodyguard Command

P.S.

- Prachatai. Submitted on Fri, 27 Nov 2020 - 03:57 PM:
<https://prachatai.com/english/node/8937>

Footnotes

[1] For more on the role of the King and military in politics, please see:

Nattapoll Chaiching, "The Monarchy and the Royalist Movement in Modern Thai Politics, 1932-1957", in Søren Ivarsson and Lotte Isager, eds., *Saying the Unsayable: Monarchy and Democracy in Thailand* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2010), pp.147-178. Nattapoll Chaiching demonstrates the role of King Rama IX in supporting the coup by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat in 1957.

Duncan McCargo, "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crisis in Thailand", *Pacific Review* 4 (2005), pp.499-519. McCargo shows that the operations of the network monarchy in the age of Gen Prem Tinsulanonda whose authority is above politics.

Thongchai Winichakul, "Thailand's Royal Democracy in Crisis", in Michael J Montesano, Terence Chong and Mark Heng, eds., *After the Coup: The National Council for Peace and Order Era and the Future of Thailand* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2019), pp. 282-307. The Armed Forces are shown to be an important mechanism supporting the king's authority over elected governments and the government system.

[2] "Analysis: Big Tu, Big Pom, shaking up the military: special barrier-breaking version. Keeping an eye on Big Daeng in the midst of the red hat situation." *Matichon Weekly*, 27 July - 2 August 2018 (https://www.matichonweekly.com/column/article_121055)