THE POWER OF POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND THE COLLAPSE OF DEMOCRACY IN THAILAND

by

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ABSTRACT

Why are some opposition movements pro-democracy while others are not? What explains an anti-democratic movement in a democracy? Examining how democratic institutions give rise to a popular anti-democratic movement is the key task this research accomplishes. To answer this question, my dissertation exploits variation across Thailand in terms of the extent to which a popular movement contributes to a collapse of democracy. Based on a within-case comparison of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) Movement, I develop a novel theory called "institutional blockage." It argues that a mobilized society can turn against democracy when their voices are not given appropriate space to channel their grievances within the realms of formal and informal institutions. When people feel blocked from access to power, they rebel against the system by appealing to nondemocratic institutions to regain their power, which then triggers a regime collapse. The argument reveals a paradox that people will support democracy as long as the regime does not marginalize them.

The dissertation makes three key contributions. First, the middle class and civil society can act as a force against democracy. The PAD's support base is drawn largely from NGOs and the urban middle class, both of which are often seen as bulwarks for democracy. My research outlines a concrete process in which these two forces turn again democracy, thus surmounting a theoretical and empirical challenge that has confronted previous scholarship. Second, a weakly institutionalized party system, under certain conditions, can contribute to regime survival. New democracies with fluid, patronage-based, non-programmatic party systems constrain political elites from subverting the system. Third, democratic consolidation, particularly concentration of executive power, can threaten the viability of democracy. The theory on institutional blockage and the process of anti-democratic mobilization can shed light on similar movements in Egypt, Venezuela and the Philippines.
PREFACE

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, Aim Sinpeng. The fieldwork reported in chapters 4-7 was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H11-00466 of May 19, 2011.

A list of publications arising from the work conducted for this dissertation is provided below.

  Fieldwork drawn from chapter 7.
  Fieldwork drawn from chapters 5-7.
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<tr>
<td>NACC</td>
<td>National Anti-Corruption Commission</td>
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<td>TRT</td>
<td>Thai Rak Thai</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAD</td>
<td>People's Alliance for Democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Campaign for the Popular Democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECT</td>
<td>Election Commission of Thailand</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDR</td>
<td>Council for Democratic Reform</td>
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<td>DP</td>
<td>Democrat Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPKC</td>
<td>National Peace Keeping Council</td>
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<td>STM</td>
<td>Samakkhi Tham Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>KWM</td>
<td>Kwam Wang Mai Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bt</td>
<td>Baht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMD</td>
<td>Single Member District</td>
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<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Proportional Representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHRC</td>
<td>National Human Rights Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Constitutional Drafting Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSO</td>
<td>National Statistical Office (Thailand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDRI</td>
<td>Thailand Development Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPT</td>
<td>Chart Pattana Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Chart Thai Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGAT</td>
<td>Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADM</td>
<td>Anti-Democratic Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARCR</td>
<td>Administrative Reform Council Resolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>OTOP</td>
<td>One Tambon One Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small and Medium Enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABLF</td>
<td>Asian Business Leadership Forum</td>
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<td>AIS</td>
<td>Advanced Information Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>Telephone Organization of Thailand</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTA</td>
<td>Free Trade Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPI</td>
<td>King Prajadiphok Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GHP</td>
<td>Gross Happiness Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Palang Prachachon Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Peu Thai Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDD</td>
<td>United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPP</td>
<td>New Politics Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>ML</td>
<td>Mom Luang</td>
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<tr>
<td>MR</td>
<td>Mom Ratchawong</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIDA</td>
<td>National Institute of Development Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>P-Net</td>
<td>People's Network for Election</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABAC</td>
<td>Assumption University of Thailand</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEWERC</td>
<td>State Enterprise Worker's Relation Confederation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCT</td>
<td>Student Confederation of Thailand</td>
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To my mom
1. INTRODUCTION

“Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner.”
- James Bovard

This dissertation is about the causes and consequences of political movements that oppose democracy in post-democratic transition countries. Under what conditions do we observe an anti-democratic movement at a particular place and time? Why do people in post-transition states oppose democracy? Why are some new democracies more likely to survive than others? This research provides theoretical and empirical frameworks in answering these questions.

Since the Third Wave of Democratization in the mid-1970s, little scholarly attention has been paid to popular mobilization against democratic governments, or democracy more generally (Huntington: 1991; Diamond: 2003; Schock: 1999; Collier & Mahoney: 1997; Kim: 2003; Bernhard: 1993; Bellin: 2012). Images of ordinary people rising up to challenge oppressive regimes and eventually toppling their dictators give us hope and optimism. The fall of the Berlin Wall - set in motion by protests across the Eastern Block; prodemocracy movements against President Estrada in the Philippines; protests against dictatorial Indonesia and Burmese rulers, and the recent 2011 Arab Spring remind us of the "people's power" in the collapse of authoritarian regimes.
Yet, if one looks closely, empirical evidence has presented a rather mixed picture regarding the democratic orientations of popular political movements in contemporary times. Popular movements have been regarded as contributing factors to the loss of democracy in countries like Bangladesh, Fiji, the Philippines, Thailand, Honduras, and Egypt in the past decade. As such, not all political movements are pro-democracy. We have observed empirically cases of opposition movements that advocate against some aspects of the democratic system. Moreover, not all anti-democratic movements contribute to a democratic collapse. Some democracies are able to survive despite popular movements that push for regime change.

Opposition movements in Egypt successfully called for a military intervention that resulted in the removal of a democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi, in 2013. Tamarod, one of the key anti-Morsi movements, rallied members to shore up support for the current military-backed government of Adly Mansour, despite the autocratic nature of the regime. In Honduras, what started as an anti-government movement led to the coup d’état when a group of soldiers broke into a presidential palace and forced President Zaleya to resign. The new military-backed government reportedly enjoyed strong support from sections of the Honduran society.\(^1\) Some 70,000 people marched in the streets of Tegucigalpa in support of this new authoritarian government.\(^2\)

The phenomenon of anti-democratic mobilization is real and has been witnessed more frequently in important countries, such as Egypt, Bangladesh, and Thailand. Despite this increasing occurrence, existing literature cannot help us to make sense of how, when and why these anti-democratic movements develop in democracies. This dissertation examines the conditions under which an anti-democratic movement contributes to a breakdown of democracy.

\(^2\) Ibid.
Specifically, it outlines a *concrete process* in which a political movement turns against a democratic regime, thus surmounting a theoretical and empirical challenge that has confronted previous scholarship. For this study, Thailand is chosen from several cases of recent movement-induced democratic breakdowns. The case of Thailand will contribute both theoretically and empirically to the understanding of similar phenomena in other countries. More importantly, Thailand will also shed light on why some movements are anti-government, while others are anti-democratic.

**ANTI-DEMOCRATIC MOBILIZATION**

What happens when democracy is "not working" or is producing "bad outcomes" for certain groups in society? What options do organized groups have in response to this? Anti-democratic movements are but one type of opposition mobilization. I argue here that there are three *ideal* types of opposition movements in democracies: 1) pro-reform; 2) anti-incumbent; and 3) anti-democratic (Table 1). What distinguishes these three types of movements is their goal. In general, an opposition movement forms to contest either specific policy or the general direction of an incumbent government. Once formed, an opposition movement takes on one of these three forms. This typology is an ideal type, thus in reality a movement can be a mixture of pro-reform and anti-incumbent. These ideal types, however, help to differentiate analytically and empirically the *nature* of opposition by distinguishing their goals. Pro-reform opposition movements seek to propose policy alternatives, while anti-incumbent movements seek executive or government replacement. Neither is intent on subverting the democratic system.
TABLE 1: TYPOLOGY OF OPPOSITION MOVEMENT IN DEMOCRACIES

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<tr>
<td>1. Pro-reform</td>
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<td>Propose policy alternatives; voice grievances</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Anti-incumbent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose incumbent government; voice grievances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Anti-democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subvert democratic system</td>
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Anti-democratic mobilization, which is the main focus of this study, is a distinct type of movement, whose characteristics differ from other forms of opposition mobilization. For an anti-democratic movement, government change is not a desired outcome. Instead it seeks to overhaul the entire political system. Unlike other types of opposition mobilization, anti-democratic mobilization carries the highest costs and is sometimes considered as a "last resort" strategy for a movement. Yet not all electoral democracies are conducive to the emergence of anti-democratic movements. The theory set forth in this study outlines the conditions under which an anti-democratic movement can arise to successfully overthrow an elected government.

Does anti-democratic mobilization account for the recent collapse of Third Wave democracies? Indeed, while some 60% of the states today are electoral democracies, the world has become less free. Serious signs of democratic rollback and incidence of breakdowns have been on the rise within the Third Wave countries. The rise of anti-democratic mobilization is, by definition, part of the explanation for why we see an increasing incident of democratic reversal in some of these states. Understanding anti-democratic mobilization in these post-transition states

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is, therefore, not only empirically relevant, but it has implications for our understanding of the overall state of democracy in the world.

**OVERVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL BLOCKAGE THEORY**

This research advances a concept I call "institutional blockage" - a process whereby both formal and informal channels of opposition in a democratic regime are and are perceived to be closed, resulting in a perceived loss of bargaining leverage by actors in the polity. This theory of institutional blockage is within the realm of the "institutionalist approach" and builds on previous scholarship on political institutionalization. Huntington (1968) does us a great service by pointing out that it is not enough to have formal democratic institutions, but they need to become the main source of political authority in order to achieve stability. While recognizing the utility of this approach, my arguments contribute to a better understanding of the conditions under which democracy can collapse.

I see a rise of anti-democratic mobilization as an outcome shaped by the process of institutional blockage. When the opposition forces are or "feel" blocked from access to power, they rebel against such closures by appealing to nondemocratic alternative sources of power to reverse the process of institutional blockage. Anti-democratic mobilization then serves as a vehicle for various opposition forces, whose leverage has been reduced, or completely cut out, by the process of institutional blockage that unfolds. If such mobilization succeeds in garnering support from nondemocratic authorities, then we see a complete breakdown of democracy.
The institutional blockage theory has two necessary background conditions. First, there must exist nondemocratic institutions that are regarded as alternative sources of power in a democratic system. Often, these institutions historically played a critical role in the politics of their respective countries during authoritarian times. Following democratization, such institutions continue to wield significant power despite their more limited role. These nondemocratic bodies would reassert themselves when a) their interests are threatened and b) they see a chance of success. The Philippines, for example, has a long history of military rule. Although the country made a successful transition to democracy, the military continues to wield significant power both in societal and political arenas. Indeed, despite massive popular demand for President Estrada's impeachment during the People's Power movement (EDSA 2), what prompted him to resign was his loss of military backing.5

Second, opposition forces must possess "mobilizational capacity" - the ability to organize and mobilize supporters - for them to become an anti-democratic movement. This is a crucial component for the institutional blockage theory simply because the existence of nondemocratic

---

institutions in a polity is a necessary but not sufficient condition for one to observe an emergence of an anti-democratic mobilization. Anti-democratic mobilization emerges because opposition groups with mobilizational capacity are blocked from channeling their grievances. Consequently, they are diverted to alternative channels of authority, which are the nondemocratic institutions. It is critical to understand that institutional blockages are inconsequential if the groups blocked are insignificant. Blockages that close down access to power for groups that have the capacity to mobilize and get organized will prompt them to turn to nondemocratic bodies. Such anti-democratic movement will often see themselves as "saving democracy from itself" because they believe a "truly democratic" system would represent their concerns and allow for some degree of participation in the bargaining process.

Not every new democracy witnesses a rise of anti-democratic mobilization. Likewise, only some post-transition countries experience a regime breakdown. While the vast research in the study of democratic transition points to the fragility and sometimes fleeting nature of newly established democracies (O'Donnell et al.: 1986; Loveman: 1994; Jones: 1998; Bratton: 1998; Bunce: 2000), there is a great variation in the existing scholarship as to why some new democracies survive but not others.

This dissertation contributes to this gap by providing explanations not only for what accounts for democratic collapse in post-transition states, but also under what conditions an anti-democratic mobilization occur. I argue here that being a "post-transition state" - having undergone the process of democratic transition - is an important background condition for explaining the phenomenon of anti-democratic movement. Because groups in a democratic society are afforded the freedom and space to form association, they are able to build mobilizational capacity over time. These mobilization skills, such as organizing protests, provide
tools for them to channel their grievances and make group demands. Without prior democratic space, societal groups will not possess sufficient mobilizational capacity for them to rebel against the very system from which they previously benefited.

Institutional blockage is a multi-pronged process. The first stage, the blockage, both in formal and informal institutions, leads groups to engage in opposition politics. They may employ a number of opposition strategies, such as protests and lobbying, to contest the closure of their access to power. The main aim for the opposition groups at this stage is to rebel against their loss of bargaining power vis-à-vis the government.

The second stage, alliance formation, takes place as various opposition groups band together to strengthen their bargaining power and increase public appeal. Often, groups that appear to be "strange bed fellows" ally with one another to create a broad-based opposition movement. In so doing, the movement becomes more diverse, cross-sectoral, and eclectic in its support base. The opposition alliance can continue to pressure the government for what they want through both anti-incumbent and pro-reform strategies. At this stage the movement is not anti-democratic.

The third stage is what I term the anti-democratization of the movement. It occurs when opposition forces feel that they are permanently excluded from power and that their previous strategies have not returned the desired outcome. The opposition then appeals to nondemocratic institutions to intervene to get what they want. Note that merely appealing to nondemocratic sources of power does not make a movement anti-democratic. As soon as the movement's goal changes to include "subverting the democratic system" through the exercise of power of nondemocratic institutions, then a movement has become anti-democratic. If the legitimate
nondemocratic powers respond to such appeal, they will form an alliance that can lead to a collapse of democracy.

OVERVIEW OF THE STATE OF LITERATURE

This research asks two related but interspersed set of questions: what explains the rise of an anti-democratic movement and how does an anti-democratic movement successfully contribute to a collapse of democracy. While my theory on institutional blockage addresses both questions as one single process, it is important to discern them analytically. To understand how my theory on institutional blockage challenges existing explanation in the literature, I briefly review the literature on anti-democratic/anti-systems mobilization.

ECONOMIC CRISIS/WARS

Economic Crisis ----> Anti-Democratic Mobilization

The most widely cited argument within the body of comparative literature on what explains the rise of an anti-democratic/anti-systems mobilization is an economic one. When new democracies face severe economic crisis, the public react negatively towards the regime by supporting anti-democratic/anti-system movements or political parties (Kitschelt & McGann: 1997; Brustein: 1991; Olukoshi: 1998; Allen: 1973). It is not the economic crisis per se that drives people to overthrow their democratic governments. Rather, it is how the people react to severe economic downturns that could have implications for democratic stability. Times of war or major economic downturn in a democracy provide grounds for groups to organize in opposition to the system in which they live. Much of this literature actually addresses more
broadly the rise of "anti-systems" movements, which include extreme right-wing, extreme left-wing and fascist mobilization.

**INTRA-ELITE COMPETITION**

The intra-elite approach competition argues that the stability of democracy depends on elite unity. Democratic breakdown and democratic transition can occur as long as elites remain fragmented (Higley & Burton: 1989; Lopez-Pintor: 1987). An anti-democratic movement is thus largely reflective of the power struggle among rival elites (McCargo: 2008; Ockey: 2008; Nelson: 2007). Traditional elites, such as the military, can be threatened by the rise of career politicians, for instance. The men in uniform then mobilize people to help them legitimize their seizure of power from a democratically elected government.

**WEAK POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS**

The third alternative theory argues that anti-democratic movements are most likely to thrive in places with weak political institutionalization (Huntington: 1968; Berman: 1997; Fiorina: 1997; Armony: 2004). When social mobilization outpaces political institutionalization,
chaos and crisis will ensue (Fukuyama: 2006). When weak political institutions cannot respond to the public demand for meaningful political participation in public life, the people look for other alternatives to voice their grievances. As such, where institutions fail to meet the demands of a mobilized society, we see the rise of an anti-systems movement (Berman: 1997).

**CLASS CONFLICT**

| Threat from the poor -----> Anti-democratic mobilization by the rich |

The class-conflict approach contends that what gives rise to an anti-democratic mobilization is the long-standing divide between the rural poor and the urban elites. Fearful of the rising political influence of the poor, the rich mobilize against them by seeking to subvert the democratic system that gives the former the power in the first place. The anti-democratic movement is thus an upper and middle class reaction to the threat from below (Acemoglu & Robinson: 2005; Pasuk & Baker: 2008; Thitinan: 2008; Funston et al: 2009; Hewison: 2012). An implicit assumption in this class-based framework is that economic positions shape groups in society along class lines and motivate their behavior. Inequal distribution of power across different groups in society also plays a key role in a class struggle.

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**Political Leadership**

Leadership failure ---> Anti-Democratic Mobilization ---> Regime Breakdown

The extent to which a democratic regime survives depends on elite choices (Linz: 1978; O'Donnell & Schmitter: 1986; Malloy & Seligson: 1987; Ake: 1991). This elite-centric approach argues that decisions made by elites are crucial to regime change. While recognizing the importance of structural factors, elites decide when a regime change occurs. When elites are not committed to democratic ideas, democracy is always unstable. One interpretation of the importance of political leadership to regime change concern explanations for the rise of anti-systems parties and ethnic conflicts. Ake (1991: 34) argues that "bad leadership" explains ethnic conflicts in Africa as elites mobilize people against adversarial groups. Bermeo (2003) contends that extremist parties in interwar Europe and Latin America are driven by elites, not the masses.

If one of these approaches can explain the case of the PAD Movement in Thailand, we would expect to observe the following indicators. For the economic approach to be correct, the PAD movement would emerge following a major financial crisis. The PAD supporters should cite economic hardship as a key driving force for movement participation and mobilization. Movement leaders should engage in economy-centered discourse to mobilize their supporters. The political leadership approach would be suitable for the Thai case if the PAD movement represents a form of elite manipulation of the mass for their own benefits. Elites would be the main driving force of the movement and once they get what they want, the movement should collapse. For the weak institutionalization approach to hold for the Thai case, the PAD
movement should be mobilized at a time when democratic institutions are failing to meet the demands for the majority of the people.

If the class-based approach were to explain the rise of an anti-democratic movement, we would anticipate the PAD to be mobilized based on class interests. If the PAD is composed of upper and middle class, then its interests will be shaped by fear of losing their power and privileges to the rural poor. As for the intra-elite competition approach, we would expect to see the PAD being mobilized by elite interests only. The monarchy, military and bureaucracy would play a major role in driving the opposition forces. The coup d'état would also occur regardless of the level of popular support.

THE CASE OF THAILAND

Thailand is among the oldest democracies in Southeast Asia. With the introduction of democratic politics in the 1970s, Thailand became the second democracy in the region, following the Philippines.7 Despite a rather tumultuous political development, many had high hopes that Thailand, in the 1990s, would be the beacon of democracy in Southeast Asia (Neher: 1996; Bertrand: 1998; Bunbongkarn: 1999). If democracy were to survive in this nation of 65 million, there was hope for neighboring states such as Cambodia, Malaysia, and Indonesia that transition to democracy could be achieved. Moreover, Thailand is the second largest economy in Southeast Asia, and ranks 23rd in economy size8, according to the World Bank. The Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, which originated from Thailand, taught expensive lessons to its political leaders. They steered the economy out of the global sovereign debt meltdown in 2009, leaving the country's economy relatively unscathed. With the ASEAN Economic Community in the making, which

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8 Note: Measured by GDP (PPP), 2011.
would allow free movement of goods and labor within this region of 600 million people, Thailand stands as one of the most important engines of Southeast Asia's growth.

Thaksin Shinawatra - a billionaire cum politician - who came to power in 2001, became the first Thai prime minister to ever win an absolute majority in parliament and to have served a full four-year term. His remarkable leadership was marked by sweeping reforms, welfare policies and corruption scandals - drawing both affection and revulsion from the public. Dissolution and opposition to his rule among some sections of the public was growing and various protest groups were spilling on to the streets by 2004. When Thaksin won yet another landslide election in 2005, opposition forces rapidly escalated. The breaking point came when Thaksin sold his family's Shin Corporation to Singapore-based Temasek Holdings for 73.3 billion Baht ($2.4 billion) without paying any taxes - causing massive outcry among the opposition forces.

In 2005, sustained broad-based popular mobilization against the democratically elected government of Thaksin Shinawatra nearly brought the capital, Bangkok, to a complete halt. In fact, some of the demonstrators had been protesting since 2004, while more opposition groups poured onto the streets demanding the resignation of Thaksin. By early 2006, the opposition forces to the Thaksin government united under a loosely organized movement, called the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), or more locally known as the "Yellow Shirts," calling for the ouster of his government. As the situation intensified, leaders of the PAD movement appealed to the military and the much revered monarchy to "step in" to resolve this political deadlock and bring Thailand out of this "tyrannical regime." The first intervention came from the judiciary as the courts annulled the results of the April 2006 election, which all major political parties had boycotted. Despite this, the Thaksin government refused to back down. Eventually, the military staged a coup d'état in September 2006, successfully ousting Thaksin
Administration. The PAD hailed this as a success for the movement and continued to push for systematic reforms in the country's polity that would do away with some key aspects of the democratic system.

Thailand became the richest nation to have had a successful coup d'état in the past few decades. With its GNI per capita (PPP) close to $7,000, this "upper middle income" country, according to the World Bank classification, should not have seen a day of army tanks rolling into its streets. Indeed, Przeworski et al. (1996, p. 41), predicted in their influential piece, What Makes Democracies Endure, that “[a]bove $6,000, democracies are impregnable and can be expected to live forever: no democratic system has ever fallen in a country where per capita income exceeds $6,055." The collapse of democracy in Thailand sent reverberation across the Pacific, with the Fijian coup leader, Commodore Voreque Bainimarama, citing Thailand as an "inspiration" for his successful coup in December, 2006. As this research will show, the causes for the recent collapse of the Thai democracy were political, not economic. Understanding what happened in this relatively well-off, seemingly stable, important Southeast Asian nation helps reveal much about the state of democracy in the developing world.

Thailand makes a compelling case for the purposes of this research because it empirically defies the existing three dominant approaches on explaining anti-democratic/anti-system movements. The economic approach cannot account for why, empirically, we do not always observe an anti-systems movement following severe economic crises. The economic approach expects a rise of an anti-systems government during severe economic downturn, yet the PAD movement in Thailand came about during the period of economic growth.

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The Thai case also defies the assumptions of the political institutionalization argument for two reasons. First, the Thaksin government was responding to the people. He was, after all, a populist leader who actually delivered on his campaign promises. It is not the case that his government failed to respond to popular demand for meaningful political participation. Furthermore, the weak political institution argument cannot tell us specifically when democratic collapse may occur. Under what conditions do states that are weakly institutionalized experience a breakdown? It falls short of explaining the timing and sequence of the PAD movement's emergence - why it came about now and in this order?

Lastly, an elite-centric approach is not suitable to explaining the PAD because it does not take into account the critical role the masses play in bringing down a democratic regime. Of course, elites are necessary for a democratic breakdown - without them to execute the actual overthrow of an elected government; the regime collapse is not possible. However, to say that the PAD did not play a critical role in the decisions and strategies of the coup plotters would be a major mistake. The September 2006 coup was contingent upon mass support for the success and legitimacy of the coup itself.

The two dominant case-specific approaches to understanding the Yellow Shirts in Thailand explain them as either class-based conflicts or intra-elite conflicts. These approaches, while correctly highlighting the basic grievances, are inadequate because they do not sufficiently explain the timing and organization of movement mobilization. This research does not reject the utility of the class-based explanations but finds them to be “static” and unable to illuminate on when and how anti-democratic movement emerges. Class and inequality in Thailand do capture the structural basis that underlies the grievances of the PAD movement, but on their own they cannot elucidate why the PAD emerged at a particular time and sequence. Moreover, careful
analysis of the PAD's ideology and political aspirations has shown that while class played a role in the make-up of the PAD, it was not the only driving force behind the movement's emergence. The motivations for the PAD mobilization goes beyond mere class interests to incorporate other aspects of societal interests.

Furthermore, an intra-elite approach provides an incomplete account of the PAD movement. While it is correct that there is certainly some degree of intra-elite competition between the traditional versus the new elites. The interests of the traditional power brokers, the bureaucracy, the military and the monarchy, were significantly undermined by the Thaksin Administration, which prompted the former group to signal support for the PAD movement. Yet it was the mobilization of the PAD movement in opposition that created conditions for the military coup in 2006. If the PAD movement is exemplified by intra-elite competition alone, then one would expect a coup d'état to be launched regardless of popular support. On the contrary, the timing of the coup rested partly on the PAD movement's reaching "critical mass," which allowed the coup leaders to legitimize their extra-constitutional intervention. Popular support prior to the putsch was crucial to triggering military intervention.

The intra-elite framework is also insufficient to explain popular support for the PAD. How did the movement garner so much support? The PAD was able to turn out tens and thousands of people in the streets and sustained them since 2005. Any such elite-centric approach overlooks the very foundation of the PAD movement: its supporters. While some figures inside the PAD's rank-and-file and some of the movement's allies are part of the political elites, the movement is not driven by these elite actors. Quite the contrary, the fact that the PAD is an alliance of many existing groups and organizations means that the movement members are
crucial to the mobilization strategy. Any elite-focused explanation to the PAD movement insufficiently captures the movement as a whole.

**THEORY OF INSTITUTIONAL BLOCKAGE**

The concept of institutional blockage explains the process by which the PAD rose. First, the PAD was composed of and driven by actors and groups in society that were not only made worse off as a result of Thaksin's policies, but whose opposition channels to convey their grievances were closed off. This happened in both the formal and informal arenas. In the formal democratic institutions, opposition parties in the legislature and some section of the senate joined forces with the PAD movement due to their inability to oppose, or provide alternative, to the Thaksin-led absolute majority in parliament. The same was for the courts and key figures of the bureaucracy, whose powers were severed by Thaksin's rule. In the informal institutional channels, the NGO sector, labor unions and the media experienced not only the loss of their political space but also the possibilities for them to present alternatives to government positions were marginalized. All of this resentment did not culminate in the PAD movement until Thaksin and his Thai Rak Thai party won their consecutive landslide election victory in 2005. Following this, the opposition became convinced they were permanently excluded from power. This was when the PAD came together as a movement not only to oppose Thaksin collectively, but to also appeal to the monarchy and the military to intervene.

**METHODOLOGY**

This research is based on fieldwork conducted in Thailand from 2009 to 2013. Key qualitative research methodologies utilized in this work included: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, archival data research, statistical analysis, discursive analysis, and public
opinion survey (see Appendix D). The majority of the interviews conducted for this dissertation were drawn from field work trips in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. Interviews were targeted at the following key groups: PAD's top national and local leaders, activists, media, security forces, politicians, military officers, protesters, police, academics, and government officials. To obtain a balanced view on the political crisis in Thailand, interviews were also conducted with the Red Shirts, a pro-Thaksin movement that emerged following the coup. My interviews helped me gain a context-specific understanding of the relationships among the different forces that contributed to the collapse of democracy in Thailand. Specifically, I have gained a nuanced understanding of the motivations and aspirations behind why ordinary people joined this anti-democratic movement. A list of interviewees and their details are provided in the Appendix.

To test the argument on institutional blockage, I created a new database on protest activities across Thailand between 1991 and 2011. The statistical analysis based on these data allowed me to map the cycle of contention both before and after the democratic breakdown in 2006, categorized in types and modes of opposition. I was also able to identify "critical moments" in each period of the protest cycle as the movement ebbed and flowed over time. I also used a number of digital tools to map the PAD's membership and support base and predict its movement strategy. Frequently, the research was conducted at the PAD movement's headquarter - Baan Pra Athit - and the New Politics Party headquarter, Bangkok.

Over the span of seven years I attended numerous PAD rallies, which proved crucial to my analysis of the PAD discourse. Given the dynamic and fluid nature of this political movement, it was imperative to be present at various activities of the movement to gain a nuanced understanding of the movement's goals, strategies and discourse. While attending protest rallies, I always maintained my position as a researcher and communicated to others as
such. The PAD is arguably the world's first live movement - its entire activities during much of its existence were broadcast through its satellite channels. Watching the PAD rallies at times seemed like watching TV shows. There were many elements of "production" of mass media involved. As such, understanding the message the PAD sent out to its members both at the rallies and on screen helps make my understanding of the movement more complete. The insights I gained from this field research allowed me to develop my theory on institutional blockage with solid empirical foundations.

OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

This dissertation examines the emergence of the PAD movement from 2005 to 2011. This timeframe was chosen to reflect the three major periods of the PAD movement's development: 1) emergence (2005-2006); 2) resurgence (2008-2009) and 3) decline (2010-2011). Chapter 2 provides a more detailed discussion of my theory on institutional blockage and addresses its relation to other approaches within the existing literature. Given that my work is informed by the literature on civil society, political movement and democratic breakdown, the frameworks, arguments and underlying these theoretical assumptions will be spelled out in greater detail to allow for close examination. I will then show how these existing theories were inadequate for explaining the emergence of the PAD movement. I then briefly analyze recent examples of democratic breakdowns in Venezuela, Honduras and Bangladesh to illustrate both their similarities and differences to the Thai case.

Chapter 3 introduces Thailand as the main case in this study. It argues that Thailand's political and economic structures make its democracy conducive to a breakdown. Specifically, I discuss the importance of the military and the monarchy - key nondemocratic bodies in Thailand - in understanding the trajectory of Thai politics. I then analyze other key factors that provide
grounds for democratic collapse in Thailand: 1) frequent coup d'états; 2) support for nondemocratic figures/institutions among the public; and 3) previous episodes of major popular mobilization.

Chapter 4 charts the origin of the PAD movement. I argue that the ideological foundations that underpin the PAD had its roots in the 1990s, following the 1992 Black May Uprising and its subsequent political and economic reforms. This is a period of liberalization in both political and economic arena, despite highly unstable governments and a major financial crisis. Chapter 5 examines the Thaksin regime and the emergence of the PAD as a political movement. It seeks to understand the conditions for the ousting of the Thaksin government in 2006. This chapter illustrates the first two stages of my institutional blockage theory: formal and informal institutional blockage and opposition alliance formation.

Chapter 6 is at the heart of the institutional blockage theory. It discusses the process of anti-democratization of the PAD movement. The main argument is that the PAD movement resorts to nondemocratic sources of power and authority due to the failure of other strategies. I also advance the claim that the coup d'état in 2006 was a choice - a product of a number of strategic interactions between opposition forces and the Thaksin government. Chapter 7 addresses the post-coup PAD and its decline in 2010. This section uses the post-coup PAD mobilization as a within-case variation: an anti-democratic movement still remained, but democracy survived. The chapter's main argument is that the conditions of institutional blockage were not present during this period. As such, the PAD's opposition declined in its popularity and effectiveness. Opposition elites did not see the need to engage in extra-constitutional means.

Chapter 8 reviews alternative explanations to the rise of the PAD movement and reiterates the utility of my institutional blockage theory. The chapter concludes with a discussion
of the theoretical contributions of an anti-democratic movement in Thailand to the studies of democracy, social movement and democratic consolidation. It also provides a summary and discusses implications for the generalizability of my theoretical contributions to other cases.
2. ANTI-DEMOCRATIC MOBILIZATION AND THE BREAKDOWN OF DEMOCRACY

"One does not establish a dictatorship to safeguard a revolution; one makes a revolution in order to safeguard dictatorship."

- George Orwell

INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of the seminal Transitions from Authoritarian Rule (O'Donnell et al.: 1986), where scholars debated the possibility of and the way in which democratization occurs in authoritarian setting, the world has become much more democratic. Democracy has truly emerged as the dominant regime type, and sophisticated public opinion tools have shown greater popular support for democracy.\(^{11}\) In 1989, there were 69 electoral democracies, accounting for 40% of the regime types worldwide. This figure jumped to 117 electoral democracies in 2012, accounting for 60% of the world.\(^{12}\) This period, broadly speaking, is considered as "democratic ascendancy" (Gilley: 2010, 160) whereby the number of democratic regimes far outstripped that

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\(^{11}\) See various regional barometers.

of their authoritarian counterparts. This should be cause for optimism for scholars of democratization.

Yet the past decade has been marred by a decline of freedom and instances of democratic reversal. Freedom House 2013 annual survey reports that more countries have experienced deterioration in their freedom than the countries that made improvements on it for every consecutive year since 2004. "This represents the longest continuous period of decline for global freedom in the nearly 40-year history of the report," according to Freedom House. Larry Diamond (2009) notes that one in every five democracies since the mid-1970s had experienced a breakdown and of the 29 democratic collapses during the period, 17 of them occurred in the last decade alone. Huntington's Third Wave of Democracy (1991) devoted significant space in its later chapters to warning scholars of the "reverse wave" resulting from powerful militaries, authoritarian nostalgia, weak democratic values and the breakdown of law and order. Fukuyama's the End of History and the Last Man (1992) also cautions that the world will continue to be vulnerable to anti-democratic movements as long as human beings have a desire to dominate. It remains inconclusive that democracy is a final form of government.

Recent democratic breakdowns have raised the question of not only their causes but what such collapses tell us about the state of democracy prior to the regime breakdown. Indeed understanding authoritarian resurgence should tell us as much about the authoritarian tendencies as the nature of the democratic regime prior to its collapse. This research seeks to contribute to the issue of how the "quality" of democracy may be crucial for regime stability. As O'Donnell et al. (2004, xiii) argue "The happy fact of the recent emergence of numerous democratic regimes

14 Note: This figure is as of 2009. Diamond's (2009) classification of democratic breakdown includes democracies that are outright overthrown or gradually stifled.
cannot, and, should not, conceal the fact that the workings and impacts of the respective
governments and states evince wide variations. Variations that run from acceptable to rather
dismal performance have important consequences." Among the democracies that collapsed in the
last decade, the pattern of the breakdown has been one of tremendous variation. Some states
were extremely poor, while others were as well off as any developing democracies. Just about
half of these states had a presidential system, while the others were parliamentarian democracies
prior to the breakdown. Given that the collapsed democracies are drawn from across continents,
contagion does not seem to be driving these breakdowns. All in all, the variation that exists
among the collapsed democracies is as great as the ones still standing (Table 2).

Popular support for democratic reversal has been crucial to the success of regime change
in several countries in the last decade. After the Egyptian uprising that toppled a 30-year-old
regime of Hosni Mubarak, many of the Egyptian "revolutionaries" found themselves calling out
for extra-constitutional powers to remove their elected leader, Mohamed Morsi. In the summer
of 2013, the army ousted Morsi from power - much to the delight of tens of thousands of
Egyptians. In Bangladesh, the military intervention in January 2007 was "widely welcomed" by
civil society and the international community.15 “The aspiring new middle class is quite happy to
use the military and unfair political means...to pave the way for their own entry into leadership
position,” explains Ghoshal of the middle class' support of the coup.16

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16 Ghoshal, S. (2009). The anatomy of military interventions in Asia: the Case of Bangladesh. India Quarterly: A
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Type of government</th>
<th>GNP, PPP year of collapse</th>
<th>Support for democratic breakdown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Parliamentary</td>
<td>$960</td>
<td>Upper caste, palace circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Successful (short lived)</td>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>$7770</td>
<td>Business class, middle class, state enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>$6890</td>
<td>Civil society, middle class, labor, royalist-conservative groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Parliamentary</td>
<td>$4340</td>
<td>Rival ethnic groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Parliamentary</td>
<td>$1470</td>
<td>Civil society, International community, middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Parliamentary</td>
<td>$3700</td>
<td>Political elites, US, evangelicals, Church,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>$1040</td>
<td>Farmers, civil society workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>$6,640</td>
<td>Secular groups, Christian groups, students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Parliamentary</td>
<td>$8,240</td>
<td>Secular groups, Christian groups, students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled by author. * World Bank, GNI PPP per capita (US International)
Note: "Successful coups" refers to ones that result in a regime change and transfer of power
How do we explain these recent examples of popular support for nondemocratic rule? Why do people in a democracy call out for military intervention to oust their elected leaders? To answer these puzzling questions, my dissertation advances the following claims. I argue that anti-democratic mobilization occurs when mobilized societal groups feel "cornered" and are unable to channel their grievances through democratic institutions. They form opposition groups to regain their access to power in a democratic polity. If the opposition forces perceive their exclusion from power to be permanent in the foreseeable future, they rebel against the system by appealing to nondemocratic institutions and by so doing undermining the democratic polity. If these nondemocratic bodies respond to the opposition groups, a democratic breakdown occurs.

The choice made by nondemocratic institutions to ally with anti-democratic movements and do away with the democratic systems depends largely on their "perceived" level of public support for the opposition movement. In other words, if nondemocratic bodies see that the anti-democratic movement garners sufficient support to legitimize extra-constitutional acts, then democracy will likely collapse. As such, a mobilized, popular anti-democratic movement creates conditions for a democratic breakdown. I show in detail in the empirical chapters how nondemocratic institutions in Thailand were reactive to the growing opposition mobilization against the democratic government. This is not the case that nondemocratic institutions were going to stage a coup regardless of whether or not people were calling for it. It was the anti-democratic movement that made a coup possible.

This chapter proceeds as follows. The first section defines the main subject of study - anti-democratic mobilization - and demonstrates a considerable variation in the make-up and orientation of anti-democratic movements in recent instances of democratic breakdown. I then provide a typology of opposition movements, categorizing them based on mobilization goals.
Such typology helps to distinguish empirically and analytically the difference between anti-incumbent and anti-democratic movements.

In the second section I review the current literature on the determinants of anti-democratic movements, explaining why none of the existing theories can fully account for the rise of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) in Thailand, although each has useful insights on which I build my argument. I emphasize here that my theoretical claims are not incompatible with the prominent structural-based frameworks, such as class and intra-elite. While I recognize the utility of these approaches in getting at the structural foundations of the grievances that underly the basis for the PAD’s emergence, they cannot account for why the PAD arose when it did. More importantly, these approaches tend to be “structural” in nature and they do not fully account for the “agency” of the movement. The emergence of this anti-democratic movement in Thailand is not a “natural progression” of the existing inequality or elite fragmentation in Thailand. Rather, it is contingent upon a number of strategic choices made by various societal groups.

The paradox of the Thai case, for the study of comparative politics, is not only that the PAD emerged and succeeded in overthrowing a democratic regime, it was also because the PAD was largely supported by the middle class and civil society agents. While the PAD is not an explicitly class-based mobilization, the major role played by the Thai middle class in the makeup of the movement has important implications for our understanding of the relationship between the middle class and democratic stability. Moreover, the emergence of the PAD was initiated and widely supported by civil society actors. Again, why civil society agents would support anti-democratic mobilization presents another puzzling fact of the Thai case.
The third section presents a theory linking the rise of anti-democratic mobilization to the problem of institutional blockage. In this section I outline the process of institutional blockage by dividing it into four stages: 1) institutional blockage (formal and informal); 2) opposition alliance formation; 3) anti-democratization and 4) alliance with nondemocratic institutions. At each stage, I describe the logic and the process of the conditions under which each stage occurs. The fourth section discusses the project's broader contribution to the field of comparative politics. The fifth section briefly discusses the novel ways in which this research breaks new grounds in the study of Thai politics, particularly as it relates to the current ongoing political conflict.

**WHAT IS ANTI-DEMOCRATIC MOBILIZATION?**

I adopt a minimalist definition of democracy advanced by Przeworski et al. (2000). This is a procedural definition that focuses on the issue of "contestation." According to Przeworski, democracy is defined as followed (2000, 19-20):

1. Ex-ante, a possibility that an incumbent may lose an election;
2. Ex-post irreversibility, an assurance that an election winner’s will take office;
3. Elections must be repeated.

Democracy is thus “a regime that fills executive and legislative bodies through free and contested elections; has more than one party and the opposition has some chance of winning" (Przeworski et al.: 2000, 19). Given that this is a minimalist definition of democracy that largely focuses on the mechanism of free and fair elections, it becomes an "easy" test to determine what would constitute an anti-democratic movement. If a movement forms that opposes the principle of holding elections and supports extra-constitutional interventions, then it is "anti-democratic." I choose to use this procedural definition because it presents a clear-cut yard stick that can be measured against. For analytical purpose, it is more advantageous to use this basic definition
than other more substantive, and ultimately complex, definitions of democracy that can encompass so many factors that they become a slippery slope.

*Anti-democratic mobilization* refers to a movement of individuals and groups mobilized to subvert the political system's holding competitive, free and fair elections. Movements that support extra-constitutional measures to undermine democratic regime are also regarded as anti-democratic. These factors represent a *minimum* requirement for a movement to be opposing the democratic system. There are other indicators that would qualify a movement as being anti-democratic as well. These indicators include: a) support for extra-constitutional intervention; b) support for unelected political leadership; c) support for strong involvement in politics from nondemocratic institutions/actors; and d) support for an appointed legislature. These indicators help to analytically and theoretically distinguish anti-democratic mobilization from anti-incumbent movements. Sometimes it is unclear to what extent a particular movement actually opposes the principles of democracy or merely opposes a particular elected government. There are many reasons why ordinary people would protest against their elected government, but one needs to be able to discern whether they are against the democratic system or just want to get rid of the incumbent.

The case of anti-democratic mobilization is far more dangerous to the stability of the democratic system than other types of anti-establishment or anti-government movement because the former seeks to subvert the democratic regime. The anti-Morsi movements in Egypt were calling for the military to step in: they were upset at Morsi but they also actively supported extra-constitutional intervention. As such, the movements are considered to be anti-democratic.
FIGURE 1: INDICATORS FOR ANTI-DEMOCRATIC MOBILIZATION

Minimum

Oppose competitive free & fair elections
Support for extra-constitutional intervention

Additional

1. Support for unelected political leadership

Indicators

2. Support for strong involvement of nondemocratic institutions in politics
3. Support for an appointed legislature

TYPOLOGY OF OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS

Opposition movements are neither monolithic nor unidirectional. In much of the literature and empirical work on opposition politics, opposition movements are often perceived in positive light as a collective action against something "bad" - be it a regime, a government or a leader.\(^\text{17}\) I argue here that there are three key types of opposition movement - each with its own characteristics and raison d'être for mobilization. In general, an opposition movement forms to contest either specific policy or the general direction of the government. Once formed, an opposition movement takes on one of these three forms: 1) pro-reform; 2) anti-incumbent and 3) anti-democratic. These typologies help to differentiate analytically and empirically the nature of opposition by distinguishing the goals, channels and methodologies of opposition mobilization.

Pro-reform opposition movement seeks to propose policy alternatives, while anti-incumbent movements seek executive or government replacement. Neither is intent on subverting the democratic system.

Anti-democratic mobilization, which is the main focus of this study, is a distinct type of opposition movement whose characteristics differ largely from other forms of opposition mobilization. For an anti-democratic movement, government change is not the desired outcome. Unlike other types of opposition mobilization, anti-democratic movement carries the highest costs and is considered a "last resort" strategy. The theory set forth in this study outlines the conditions under which an anti-democratic movement can occur to overthrow elected government.

Opposition movements that are pro-reform seek to address their grievances through proposing policy alternatives to the incumbent. They channel their demands through formal institutional means in a democratic system, such as petitioning their MPs, demonstration, lobbying relevant stakeholders, and campaigning. It is imperative that pro-reform opposition movements offer policy alternatives. The option of pro-reform as a strategy for mobilization for opposition movement is most likely to occur in a democratic setting where public channels for voicing grievances are available. A more decentralized system provides greater number of access points for citizens than its centralized counterpart.

An anti-incumbent movement is a more contentious form of opposition politics, whereby groups are mobilized to demand a change in leadership. The incumbent, for the opposition, has failed to deliver desired political outcomes and should no longer be in power. Contrary to the pro-reform opposition movement, its anti-incumbent counterpart does not necessarily propose policy alternatives. In many cases, anti-incumbent movements demand leadership resignation or
a new election. The movement would cite reasons for their opposition both in broad and specific terms, such as incumbent corruption, vote rigging, poor economy and bad policies.

There is no necessary reason for why pro-reform, anti-incumbent or anti-democratic types of mobilization should logically follow each other. One can observe empirically opposition movements that have the characteristics of both being pro-reform and anti-incumbent. Alternatively, a particular opposition movement can first be one of pro-reform and then evolve into an anti-incumbent movement, or vice-versa. However, anti-democratic typically should be the last option used as a result of the failures of the other two options precisely because it is the most costly option for an opposition movement. Subverting an entire political system requires a complete regime change, which means a significant portion of the political elites have to endorse such vision. Those with power, especially if they are elected, will not give up such coveted positions easily. Moreover, appealing to powerful, nondemocratic sources of power is not always an available option for opposition movements and may entail serious risks.

EXISTING EXPLANATIONS

Examining how democratic institutions give rise to a popular anti-democratic movement is the key task this research accomplishes. How do democratic institutions shape the behavior and strategic calculation of political actors in ways that they may want to overthrow the regime altogether? Why do ordinary people and civic groups join force to subvert the democratic system? This research paints a complex, yet often overlooked, picture of how the public plays an important part in its country's democratic demise. It is in the tracing of the anti-democratic movement emergence and development that is at the heart of this work.
Comparative Literature

Existing scholarship highlights that there are three key factors that explain the rise of an anti-democratic and/or anti-systems movement in new democracies. The most widely cited argument is an economic one. When new democracies face severe economic crisis, the public react negatively towards the regime by supporting anti-democratic/anti-system movements or political parties (Berg-Schlosser: 1998; Kitschelt: 1997; Brustein: 1991; Olukoshi: 1998; Allen: 1973). It is not the economic crisis per se that drives people to overthrow their democratic governments; rather, it is how the people react to severe economic downturns that could have implications for democratic stability. Sartori (1976) argues that severe economic adversity prompts people to vacate the center and move towards the extreme left or right wings of the political spectrum. Sartori's argument has found traction in a number of later scholarships particularly one that seeks to explain the rise of fascism, communism and Nazism in Europe (Saich: 1990; Lewis: 1997; Daalder: 1984; Williams: 1971).

In the Nazi Seizure of Power (1973) Allen attributed dire economic situation as a driving force behind the success of the Nazi movement: "There is no doubt that the progressive despair of the jobless, as reflected in the longer and longer periods of unemployment, weakened the forces of democracy...In the face of the mounting economic crisis, Thalburgers were willing to tolerate approaches that would have left them indignant or indifferent under other circumstances."18 Similarly, Lyttleton (1973, p. 41) argues that the professional classes in Italy

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joined the fascism movement as they "faced with a serious decline in living standards and with their social function denied by proletarian socialism."19

A second approach, political leadership, argues that leadership failure accounts for the demise of democracy. Nancy Bermeo's seminal work, *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times*, shows in her investigation of 17 cases of democratic collapse in Europe and Latin America that people may throw democracy off course but hardly do so with their votes. Political elites either misunderstand or manipulate public polarization (i.e. protests, strikes, opinion polls) for their own gain and act on their own conviction to the demise of democracy. Bermeo refers to this condition as "elite ignorance" (Bermeo, p. 228). Why people in states like Weimar Germany, interwar Italy or crisis-prone Argentina mobilized against democratic governments in the first place was a result of multitude of factors above and beyond economic crises. No matter how people become polarized, she argues, elites are the ones who bring down democratic regimes. Fascist movement in Italy, for example, despite Mussolini's efforts in appealing to the mass, did not come close to achieving a popular mandate. The real breakdown of democracy in Italy came as a result of miscalculations by the monarchy, which essentially empowered Mussolini.20

This fits well with some broader argument many scholars make that democratic transitions and breakdowns are ultimately the products of elite choices (O'Donnell et al.: 1986; Lopez-Pintor: 1987; Linz & Stepan: 1978). Linz & Stepan's (1978) oft-cited work, the *Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, argues that structuralist approaches, such as macro social and economic conditions, used to explain democratic breakdowns are too deterministic. Rather, they purport that poor leadership quality - particularly incumbent democratic leaders -

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contributed to the collapse of democratic regimes\textsuperscript{21}. Democratic rulers must believe in the persistence of democratic institutions for the regime to survive.\textsuperscript{22}

A third alternative theory argues that anti-democratic movements are most likely to thrive in places with weak political institutionalization (Huntington: 1968; Berman: 1997; Fiorina: 1997; Armony: 2004). When social mobilization outpaces political institutionalization, chaos and crisis will ensue (Fukuyama: 2006).\textsuperscript{23} When weak political institutions do not respond to the public demand for meaningful political participation in public life, citizens are driven to look for other alternatives to voice their grievances.

One interpretation of this Huntingtonian argument on "political decay" is made by Berman (1997), who argues that democracy can breakdown when the regime cannot meet growing public needs in a highly mobilized society. Berman believes the poorly designed and weak political institutions in the Weimar Republic exacerbated social cleavages, which in turn prompted mobilized and organized Germans to devote their energies to associational life. Weimar collapsed because of the party system's failure to channel conflicting demands of a very vibrant civil society. The Nazi movement, on the other hand, was able to appeal to the German associational life and take over, where political institutions had failed.

Rapid mobilization of social forces and slow development of political institutions can create instability and disorder in a number of ways (Huntington: 1968). First, traditional sources of power may intervene to restore "order" when faced with social instability. The military and the civilian bureaucracy, if they are more developed than political institutions, will be encouraged to "intervene" because of the incompetence of politicians and political institutions.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{23} Fukuyama, F. (2006, 2nd ed.) In Huntington, S. Political order in changing societies, p. xiv.
Second, when the expansion of political participation, through the process of democratization, occurs at a faster rate than the development of political parties, the polity can become overwhelmed as parties were not able to assimilate new groups. Low party institutionalization means that parties do not represent substantial social forces, but rather factions and individuals among the elites. In such condition, social cleavages can create rifts in society that cannot be accommodated by parties, resulting in instability.

**CASE-SPECIFIC LITERATURE**

Two major case-specific explanations to the rise of this anti-democratic mobilization are worth noting. The most well-known arguments among observers of Thai politics is a class-based one. This approach is centered on socio-economic structural arguments that contend that what gives rise to the mass mobilization and the ongoing crisis in today’s Thailand is the long-standing divide between the rural poor and the urban elites. (Phongpaichit & Baker: 2008; 2012; Thitinan: 2008; Funston et al: 2009; Hewison & Kittirianglarp: 2009; Aeosriwong: 2010; Montesano: 2012; Hewison: 2012). Phongpaichit & Baker (2012: 221-5) convincingly argue that the middle class and the powerful oligarchic elites were threatened by Thaksin and the poor that he empowered. While Hewison (2012: 145) does not claim a direct link between class and political movements, he stresses the importance of class as a key structural factor that explains political activism in Thailand. The class-based explanation of the current Thai conflict is buttressed by a powerful concept of the "tale of two democracies" of Anek Laothamtas (1996) who argues that there exists a division between the Bangkok middle class and the rest of the country in the way they understand democracy.

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Alternatively, other scholars view the PAD as largely reflective of the power struggle between traditional versus new elites. Elite disunity can breed political instability and create a condition in which government executive power can be subject to seizures by force (Sanders: 1981; Higley & Burton: 1989; Londregan & Poole: 1990). Coup d'états occur because military elites' interests are being threatened or neglected by political elites in the democratic system. So the former overthrows the latter to regain its prominence (Nordlinger: 1976; Li & Thompson: 1975; Kennedy & Louscher: 1991). The traditional power holders in Thailand, the monarchy-military-bureaucracy trio, were threatened by the emergence of business elites prompting them to mobilize an anti-democratic mass movement. Following the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 this business class became actively involved in politics, further threatening the interests of the traditional power brokers. The latter conservative establishment perceived the new business elites as a threat to their own power and so mounted a series of opposition to Thaksin's regime, including mobilizing the PAD movement.

**OBSERVABLE IMPLICATIONS**

Table 3 provides a summary of observable implications for each theoretical approach to explaining the rise of anti-democratic mobilization. If one of these approaches can explain the case of the PAD Movement in Thailand, we would expect to observe the following indicators. For the economic crisis approach to be correct, the PAD movement would emerge following a major financial crisis. The PAD supporters should cite economic hardship as a key driving force for movement participation and mobilization. Movement leaders should engage in economy-centered discourses to mobilize their mass support. The leadership failure approach would be suitable for the Thai case if we see a divergence on ideological orientations and voting preferences of both the masses and the elites of the PAD movement. Elites should also show -
<table>
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<th>Approach</th>
<th>What gives rise to ADM?</th>
<th>Observable Implications</th>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Crisis</td>
<td>Economic downturns prompt people to rebel against democracy</td>
<td>- Economic crisis                                                                  - Public mobilization discourse citing economic crisis as key                                                                  - Democratic system blamed for crisis                                                                  - Democratic collapses following major economic crises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Leadership</td>
<td>Elites not committed to democracy and drive anti-democratic movement</td>
<td>- Elites incite mobilization to subvert democratic system                                                             - Mass plays little role in ADM mobilization                                                             - Mass and elite interests differ on what to do with democratic system (and elites being anti-democratic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Institutions</td>
<td>Democratic institutions unable to meet popular needs</td>
<td>- Weak multi-party coalition government that is highly unstable                                                               - Unresponsive government in faced of mobilized public                                                                                          - Government ineffective; unable to perform basic governance                                              - Mobilized mass looking for alternative form of governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Conflict</td>
<td>Urban elites in conflict with the mass of rural poor</td>
<td>- Division between poor v rich or urban v rural (or both) critical to ADM mobilization                                                                 - Undemocratic upper/middle class threatened by empowered lower class                                                                             - Economic position in society a defining factor that shapes group interests                                                                                       - Uneven distribution of power across class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intra-Elite Conflict</td>
<td>Conflict among different groups of elites over spoil</td>
<td>- Division within elite circle cause for democratic collapse                                                                 - Little involvement of the mass in ADM mobilization                                                                                           - Elites not citing mass as imperative to their overthrow of elected government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Blockage</td>
<td>Channels for opposition in formal and informal institutions blocked - likely to last permanently</td>
<td>- Channels for opposition grievances closed; ineffective; ignored                                                                 - Loss of access to power by organized groups                                                                                                     - Marginalization of opposition groups                                                                                                                       - Discourse and demands of opposition for anti-democratic solutions                                                                                      - Support for intervention from nondemocratic institutions</td>
</tr>
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</table>
little commitment to democracy, be it by analyzing their behavior or discourse. Moreover, for the weak institutionalization approach to hold for the Thai case, the PAD movement should be mobilized at a time when democratic institutions are failing to meet the demands for the people.

For these case-specific explanations to hold true for the PAD Movement, we would expect to observe the following conditions. For the class-based approach to explain this anti-democratic movement, we would anticipate the PAD to be mobilized based on class interests. If the PAD is composed of upper and middle class members, then its interests will be shaped by fear of losing economic interests and power to the rural poor, which prompted urban rich to subvert the democratic system. As for the intra-elite conflict approach, we would expect to see the PAD being mobilized by elite interests only. The monarchy, military and bureaucracy would play a major role in driving the opposition forces.

**Flaws of Existing Explanations**

There are a number of reasons why both empirically and theoretically existing approaches discussed above cannot fully account for the emergence of the PAD movement in Thailand. This section evaluates existing explanations for anti-democratic/anti-systems movements and democratic breakdowns. I advance a claim that existing scholarship on these issues have its theoretical limitations as it cannot explain the phenomenon of the PAD movement in Thailand and potentially in other cases with similar anti-democratic movements.

The PAD movement arose during periods of sustained economic growth in Thailand. For the economic crisis argument to hold, economic downturns need to be the driving force behind an anti-democratic mobilization. Yet, between 2002 and 2006 when the opposition against the Thaksin government began, the GDP growth was 6% (see Figure 2). Following the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, which left Thailand at near bankruptcy, Thaksin's administration was
not only able to restore the economy, but also pay back the IMF loans that had forced previous
governments to cut critical social spending. While the economic growth did not match that of the
pre-crisis period, the overall economic conditions when the PAD Movement emerged were good.
Consequently, a major flaw with the financial crisis approach is precisely that it cannot explain
anti-democratic mobilization during an economic boom. More broadly, the approach often falls
in the opposite direction as well as many countries that face severe economic downturns do not
see mobilization against democracy (Roberts & Wibbels: 1999; MacIntyre: 2001; Levitsky &

FIGURE 2: THAILAND’S GDP GROWTH (ANNUAL)

Source: World Bank
The Huntingtonian arguments regarding weak institutions being the key factors for anti-democratic mobilization are not appropriate in explaining the Thai case given the mass popularity of the Thaksin government. As chapters 4 and 5 will show in detail, the Thai Rak Thai government of Thaksin was initially the most popular and most responsive to the electorate in the country's democratic history. The weak institution argument is useful to explain cases where institutions fail to respond to popular demands, prompting the public to lose confidence in the democratic system and look for alternatives. However, the Thaksin government's policies were responding to the people. He was, after all, a populist leader who actually delivered on his campaign promises. It is not the case that his government failed to respond to popular demand for meaningful political participation. On the contrary, he successfully enfranchised the majority of Thais, whose prior engagement in politics was limited to mere voting, by bringing them in to be an active part of the Thai political arena. He really gave voice to millions of Thais who had always felt "neglected" and did not understand the value of their political membership. But Thaksin was not responding to the opposition. In fact, as my theory will illustrate in detail, he was shutting the opposition out and taking their political space and access to power away, which resulted in them mobilizing to overthrow his administration.

The main caveat of the weak institution argument is that it assumes that the "mass" is one unitary actor. Yet, as the Thai case shows, while a large section of the public was satisfied with the Thaksin government and his populist policies, another large group in society felt adversely affected by its rule. My institutional blockage approach accounts for this social polarization. It is important to acknowledge the fact that society can become divisive and to assume that "all the masses" can mobilize against a system subsumes the possibility that the mass may not be unified.
To this end, my theory gets at the polarization in society by offering an analytical framework that can explain how some sections in society mobilize against democracy, while others do not.

Both elite-centric approaches - the political leadership and intra-elite competition - are inadequate to explaining the case of the PAD movement because they place too much emphasis on the elites. Elites are of course necessary in any democratic because they are needed to execute regime breakdown. However, in elite-centric theories the role of the mass is not properly considered in the decision making of elites whether or not to overthrow a democratic regime.

I measure the degree of "popular support" for anti-democratic mobilization by triangulating five pieces of empirical evidence drawn from my field work. Since the PAD does not have a systematic way to "count" its membership, I used the following criteria: 1) estimates of PAD protesters at peak rallies; 2) estimates of PAD media consumers; 3) numbers of supporters of PAD reform initiatives 4) the PAD's own reporting of size of supporters and 5) a survey of political attitudes towards the PAD. I provide a summary of the PAD's degree of popular support in chapter 5.

I argue here that the PAD movement is, first and foremost, a popular movement. Its emergence and development involves massive public mobilization. The grassroots and organic nature of this anti-democratic mobilization cannot be accounted by theoretical approaches that place elites at the center. If the PAD movement represents an elite-driven mobilization, then how do we explain the persistence of the movement after the regime collapse? Many of the so-called elites in the PAD movement were in power in the post-coup period, the movement continued to mobilize and wreak havoc on the streets. Elite-centric approaches cannot explain anti-democratic mobilization both before and after the 2006 coup.
Further, I show in chapter 6 that the 2006 coup in Thailand would not have happened without prior popular support. This claim supports my earlier argument that elite-driven approaches cannot account for neither the "why" nor the "when" of the coup. If political leadership and intra-elite conflict can explain the breakdown of democracy in Thailand, then the PAD movement would not have been a necessary component to the collapse of democracy. As this thesis illustrates in detail, the coup d’État was contingent on the PAD support. Not only did the coup leaders admit that popular opposition movement was crucial to their decision to overthrow an elected government, the PAD movement itself was calling for a military intervention. I also provide public opinion support for anti-democratic mobilization through the use of both surveys and polling. Immediately following the 2006 coup d’État, two major pollsters reported more than 80% of the respondents nationwide agreed with the coup.25 Follow-up polls showed strong public support for the coup government in the rest of 2006, but this declined in 2007.26

That class plays a key role in accounting for various episodes of political mobilization in Thailand is unquestionable. Chapter 3 and 4 provide a rich account of the nondemocratic tendencies among the Thai middle class, which fueled past mobilization. My own empirical accounts of the PAD Movement also reveal a strong component of class in the make-up of the movement supporters as well as the discourse. However, the main contribution of this research is not to dispute class as a key structural factor for mobilization, but to question the utility of “class” as a framework to explain the timing and the sequence of anti-democratic mobilization.

Class clevages, driven largely by economic inequality and hierarchical societal structures, are

26 Changes in the level of public support according to polls give some indication that the polls were to some extent not under pressure from the authoritarian government. The coup government did their own poll from the military public opinion research and that shows a much stronger support for the government.
“constant” features of the Thai polity. Since the mid 1980s, inequality has been on a rise, but we do not see anti-democratic mobilization all the time. In the same vein, an existence of powerful nondemocratic institutions in Thailand should lend the country susceptible to constant democratic breakdowns. But again, democracies do not fall apart all the time.

Structural factors such as class and powerful military tend to be “overly deterministic” – they subsume that as long as there are large economic gaps or the mighty military, then there would always be political mobilization and coups. I argue that these structural factors matter in so far as understanding the foundations of grievances and the frequency of coups but they do not avail themselves to explaining the “when” and the “how” political movements emerge. Structural factors lack the dynamism and agency that are crucial to understanding an ad-hoc and fluid movement such as the PAD. The emergence of the PAD was contingent on both structural and specific circumstances. More importantly, the development of the PAD over time suggests that its mobilization pattern was based largely on “strategic interactions” with its opponents. Decisions to mobilize (and when to mobilize), adopt certain campaigns, and use certain language is calculated to respond to its immediate sets of circumstances. I show in detail in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 that the outcomes that emerged through the PAD mobilization was not in a vacuum but also based on the interactions with the opposing sides. Structural analysis is useful for providing the broad picture of the political struggles but on its own cannot provide the nuanced explanation of political mobilization.

Similarly, the rich-versus-poor argument oversimplifies the make-up of the PAD supporters. While the PAD is supported largely by the urban middle class, their economic positions do not drive their mobilization. What defines this conflict instead and what accounts

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for why the PAD is broadly-speaking a "conservative-royalist movement" is the PAD's vision of the nature of the state and its relation with society. This is clearly, a political/ideological conflict. The PAD regards the monarchy as having a veto power and seeks to preserve the status of the monarchical institution as the pinnacle of modern Thai polity. PAD supporters also view traditional power brokers - the military and the bureaucracy, as the protectors of the constitutional monarch. Such illiberal and conservative view of the Thai political system is what defines the movement, not the economic class of its supporters.

Moreover, the revolutionary threat framework assumes elites' preferences to be static, which means that preferences for political institutions remain the same over time. Yet the various stages of the PAD development have shown that some groups join the movement and leave, while others rejoin. Thus, if the PAD was to be made up of all elites then they should always maintain their preferences and never leave the PAD. But this is empirically not true. Last, Acemoglu & Robinson pin their hope on the middle class in bringing about democratization. As the PAD movement suggests, however, its middle-class majority has serious opposition to some aspects of democracy.

EXPLAINING ANTI-DEMOCRATIC MOBILIZATION

What is an institutional blockage? I define institutional blockage as the attempt by the incumbent government to marginalize opposition voices in ways that are perceived to have eroded fundamental democratic freedoms. In a multiparty system, political opposition, both in formal and informal institutions, is afforded a number of channels and platforms to air their grievances. A democratic system also provides guarantee for fundamental civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, freedom of press and freedom of association. Institutional blockage occurs when the incumbent weakens the ability for the opposition forces to act as an effective check on
the abuse of government power. Further, when the opposition feels that their basic freedoms have been encroached upon and cut short by the incumbent, then their right to oppose is undermined by a democratic government.

Is the opposition marginalized because of the incumbent's majoritarianism or institutional blockage? The key difference between a weakened opposition as a result of a majority incumbent and institutional blockage is whether or not some basic democratic freedoms have been eroded. An incumbent that seeks to shun opposition voices purposely and violate civil liberties is critical to the institutional blockage approach. If a government is both majoritarian and violates some democratic freedoms, then it closes up channels for the opposition to effectively voice their grievances. This type of opposition marginalization is dangerous to the democratic system because it erodes civil liberties.

FIGURE 3: THE PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONAL BLOCKAGE TO ANTI-DEMOCRATIC MOBILIZATION
What does an institutional blockage look like? The process of institutional blockage occurs in multiple stages, and it is a dynamic *strategic interaction* between the incumbent and its opposition forces. The stages are as followed: 1) institutional blockage; 2) opposition alliance formation; 3) anti-democratization of opposition; 4) alliance between opposition and nondemocratic institutions (Figure 3). For each stage of the process of institutional blockage, both the government and the opposition face a number of options. Their chosen strategy affects whether or not the process of institutional blockage continues. As such, both the *sequence* and *timing* of this process matters to the outcome. When opposition actors and groups feel they are shut out from access to power now and in the foreseeable future, they may appeal to nondemocratic alternative sources of power to reverse, or at minimum, halt, the process of institutional blockage. If these nondemocratic institutions respond to the opposition forces, then we may see a complete democratic collapse.

The assumptions here are twofold. First, there exist functioning democratic institutions in the polity. Examples include national assembly, the judiciary, independent bodies. This theory does *not* apply to countries that are in transition from an authoritarian regime to a democracy; it only applies to electoral democracies - states with routinized elections and established, functioning, democratic institutions. Second, "opposition" at the initial stage is a loose term and refers to actors or groups that seek to offer alternatives or oppose government policies. These opposition forces have *prior* access to power in the sense of being able to have some degree of influence in policy in the past. Some of the actors have direct bargaining leverage with the government, while others, less powerful, can indirectly shape or put pressure on government's policy outcome. Lastly, there must be nondemocratic sources of power and authority in the polity that co-exist with democratic institutions.
This theory makes an analytical distinction between formal and informal institutional blockages. Such distinction recognizes the political reality of so many electoral democracies today that there are more than formal democratic routes for opposition voices to be heard. Formal democratic channels include institutions such as parliament, senate and independent bodies (i.e. election authority, anti-corruption agency), whereas informal ones are civil society organizations, labor unions, NGOs, community groups, etc. The formal institutional channels exemplify the representative dimension of the democratic polity, whereas the informal one represents a participatory one. When actors in the political arena feel their interests are no longer represented, nor they can participate in the bargaining process with the government, they feel "choked" and thus have "no choice" but to resort to alternative sources of power.

**Stage 1: Institutional Blockage**

In Stage 1, various opposition forces with mobilizational capacity who normally have access to power in some form or the other will seek to influence policy through formal democratic channels. Mechanisms for opposition through formal democratic channels include lobbying, bargaining, participating in the policy-making process, engaging the media, and using personal connection to influence government policies. If the government blocks access to power by the opposition within the democratic channels, this is considered formal institutional blockage. Note that opposition forces can come from both outside and inside formal democratic channels. Opposition within the formal democratic institutions might include opposition members of parliament (MPs), opposition senators, or independent bodies that would normally serve the purpose of placing checks on the executive. Opposition external to the formal institutions inside the democratic polity include interest groups, pressure groups, labor unions, for instance.
**Stage 2: Alliance Formation**

Facing the same predicament, opposition forces both within and outside the formal democratic institutions form a coalition. They then resort to informal channels of opposition to both increase pressure, as well as to enhance their own bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the government. The process of coalition formation may happen gradually over time or abruptly, based on the circumstances. Also, the nature of such coalitions is often loose, ad hoc and temporary because often various actors and groups have divergent grievances. They engage in actions such as protests, demonstrations, holding public forums and campaigns, and petition rallies. The main point of forming opposition through informal institution is not to engage the public nor to raise the profile of their causes, but rather to cultivate supporters. Gaining public support both strengthens the opposition bargaining leverage as well as giving them increased legitimacy.

**Stage 3: Anti-Democratization**

The opposition movement does not become "anti-democratic" until the final stage of the institutional blockage theory. I treat a rise of anti-democratic mobilization as an outcome that is shaped by the process of institutional blockage. It has the following underlying assumptions. First, an existence of powerful nondemocratic institutions that are regarded as alternative sources of power in a democratic system is a necessary background condition. These institutions are critical to not only bringing down democracy, but also legitimizing such an act. These institutions avoid overt political maneuvering and only act to challenge or intervene with democratic institutions when a) their interests are threatened and b) they see a chance of success.
Second, the perception of permanent loss of access to power will serve as a "trigger" for opposition forces to appeal to alternative sources of power, namely the nondemocratic institutions. This is when the opposition becomes anti-democratic and seeks to subvert the current democratic system. Anti-democratic mobilization thus emerge because opposition actors perceived the democratic channels, both formal and informal, to be blocked and thus they are diverted to the only "available" channels of authority, which are the nondemocratic institutions.

**Stage 4: Alliance with Nondemocratic Institutions**

The intervention by powerful nondemocratic actors is crucial for the breakdown of the democratic system. Once the opposition movement becomes anti-democratized, by appealing for extra-constitutional actions, nondemocratic institutions have the option to choose whether to ally with the movement. If these nondemocratic bodies are threatened by the incumbent, they may form an alliance with the anti-democratic movement. I note here that allying with nondemocratic institutions is not necessary for the movement to become anti-democratic. However, gaining support from nondemocratic institutions facilitates democratic collapse.

**Mobilizational Capacity**

The extent to which institutional blockage leads to anti-democratic mobilization also depends on whether the opposition forces possess "mobilizational capacity." As defined in chapter one, mobilization capacity refers to the ability for groups to get organized and mobilized. Such capacity stems from organization learning, leadership skills and past experiences. If a blockage occurs to groups that have mobilizational capacity, they rebel against institutional closures. On the contrary, institutional blockage will have little impact on actors that lack such quality. The PAD leaders are drawn from civil society organizations that have built significant
mobilizational capacity over time. These key figures have accumulated much experience with organizing protests, engaging in pressure tactics with the government as well as lobbying strategies. These skills are crucial for the mobilization and the alliance formation of the PAD Movement. The extensive networks of many of the PAD leaders, formed over years of collaboration with other groups in society, meant that the PAD was able to expand its support base quickly and effectively through multiple alliances with existing networks.

The model of institutional blockage above raises an important question: why does the government want to block the opposition in the first place? Given that the process of institutional blockage is a strategic interaction between the government and its opposition, it becomes especially important to discern why the former chooses the option it did. There are three simple answers. First, the government wants to weaken its opposition to enhance its own power. In a parliamentary system, this could mean increasing government stability and ensuring it can serve a full term. Second, the government wants to consolidate its agenda-setting power. By weeding out opposition, the government can monopolize the decision- and policymaking process. Third, the government may attempt to marginalize the opposition to increase its own popularity, which could raise its chances for a re-election.

The key factors that drive the process of institutional blockage are two-fold. The first is the relative change in access to power and/or distribution of power within formal democratic institutions and between formal and informal ones. In a parliamentary system, relative change in the distribution of power among the executive, legislative, and the judiciary, for example, can induce formal institutional blockage. In the informal institutional setting, this can occur between the government and civil society organizations. The key thing to remember is that these actors or groups must have some power or at least access to power prior this change. It is their loss of
access to power due to the institutional blockages that will set them off to look for alternative routes. The second and more important mechanism is the perceived permanent exclusion from power. Anti-democratic mobilization will occur in a democratic system when actors in both formal and informal institutional arena perceive their relative loss of power vis-à-vis other institutions as permanent or likely to persist indefinitely. This perceived exclusive from power, due to institutional blockages both formally and informally, will drive these actors to nondemocratic sources of power to reduce and completely halt this process of institutional blockage.

In order to determine whether my theory of institutional blockage explains the rise of the PAD Movement, the following implications should be observed. Opposition actors must lose access to power relative to what they used to have. Channels for demands by organized groups and key political actors are closed off in the formal democratic institution. Means for opposition, such as no confidence vote or questioning period, in parliament, for instance, should be closed or rendered ineffective by the opposition. Organized groups are unable to lobby for support from the formal institutions, nor bargain with the government to provide them with a platform to voice their grievances. This clogging of opposition channels should drive the various groups to form an anti-incumbent mobilization. We should observe an upsurge of anti-government protest activities over time, with increasing frequency and intensity as the opposition forces become more desperate. The opposition should be calling for a resignation of the current government or leadership.

If all else fails, the opposition will begin to appeal to other sources of power. If those sources of power are nondemocratic institutions, then the opposition becomes anti-democratic. If we also observe nondemocratic discourse or demands from the opposition, we can then discern
with more certainty that the movement is not just upset with the current elected government, but rather it seeks to subvert the democratic system all together. Should elites with extra-constitutional powers respond to the opposition movement, we see a complete democratic breakdown.

INSTITUTIONAL BLOCKAGE IN THAILAND

The Thai political structure remains rather centralized, with few access points to the influence. Open channels for public engagement prior to the Thaksin era included mainly through the MPs in both the national and local governments, senators (both elected and appointed), and the state bureaucracies. The availability of access points to power and influence was increased as a result of the 1997 constitution, which provided additional public participation in politics through the legislature and the newly created independent bodies (a list of which is provided in chapter 4). Despite this, there are no feedback mechanisms between the public and powerful nondemocratic institutions such as the courts, the military, or the monarchy. While this seems intuitive, the fact that nondemocratic institutions are highly powerful (and popular) but are in no way accountable to the people that legitimize them is an unusual feature of the Thai political system.

Despite the rather centralized state, opposition groups find ways to voice their grievances. Thailand in the 1990s was marked by a period of socio-political liberalization. Opposition movements, who have been instrumental to the Black May uprising in 1992, sought to instigate a number of reform initiatives aimed to liberalize the Thai political arena and increase public participation in politics. The opposition found some success in their reformist agenda, most arguably in pushing for the adoption of Thailand's most democratic constitution to date - the dubbed "People's Constitution of 1997." Following the Asian Financial Crisis of the same year,
more economic-oriented reforms were also put in place to restructure the economy. Through this period, waves of both pro-reform and anti-incumbent protests occurred, resulting in short-lived governments and frequent house dissolution. This more inclusive and open, albeit rather unstable political arrangement, increased public participation in politics and more groups being able to champion their causes.

The coming to power of Thaksin Shinawatra, the first prime minister to be elected under the new 1997 constitution, dramatically altered opposition politics (chapter 4). During his first term, opposition movements were engaged largely in anti-incumbent mobilization. This strategy had been primarily used because pro-reform politics already preceded the period and many opposition figures and groups believe reformist agenda would find no outlet in this powerful, absolute majority government. Opposition groups employed confrontational, sometimes violent, tactics aimed to depose Thaksin and his government. Opposition leaders called for the resignation of Thaksin and his cabinet. It was not until Thaksin's second electoral victory that the opposition movement recognized neither pro-reform nor anti-incumbent mobilization was going to get rid of Thaksin.

The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) is a clear case of an anti-democratic movement, albeit not initially. When the movement began mobilizing loosely in 2005, it saw itself, by all accounts, as a "pro-democracy" movement. Soon after its emergence, the movement began to adopt a number of anti-democratic measures. First, the PAD called for an installment of a royally appointed prime minister to replace the popularly elected government of Thaksin Shinawatra. Second, the movement endorsed implicitly (and later on more forcefully) both the military intervention in politics as well as the coup d'état of 2006. Third, the PAD's ideology was explicit in regards to the kinds of political reforms they envisioned, which included unelected
legislatures, unelected senators, unelected prime minister and veto power by the monarchical institution in Thailand's political system. Fourth, the PAD sought a temporary cessation of election to rid the system of corrupted politicians and "rotten politics." Finally, the PAD prioritized "good leader" over "elected leader."

The Thai case greatly problematizes the notion that civil society should inevitably promote and strengthen democracy. The PAD initially emerged largely as networks of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), labor unions, opposition media and religious networks, who formed an alliance to oppose the Thaksin Administration. Several of the major networks of NGOs were ones that have been key players in the political liberalization and democratization reforms in the 1990s. Their involvement and prominence in the PAD leadership provides strong empirical evidence against existing scholarship that links civil society to democratic stability (Diamond: 1996; Putnam: 1993, 2000; Arato: 2000). The NGO-led anti-democratic movement of the PAD shows that there is no necessary connection between civil society and democracy and that civil society can have anti-democratic effects.

The PAD Movement is not alone in its anti-democratic orientation when compared to other opposition movements in post-transition states. In Venezuela, the anti-Chavez movement was supported by sections of civil society organizations, the middle class and labor unions, pushed for an extra-constitutional intervention that eventually led to a bizarre 47-hour coup in 2002. The opposition forces in Venezuela too felt "blocked" and "excluded" from access to power (Encarnacion: 2002). With Chavez looking to stay in power "forever," the opposition movements began to appeal to nondemocratic institutions, such as the military and the court, to intervene. Although the coup government took power only very briefly, the success of the anti-Chavez
movements in mobilizing key support from groups who should otherwise be supportive of democratic politics has negative consequences for the country’s democratic development.

Why was anti-democratic mobilization a plausible strategy for the opposition movement? Chapter 3 outlines in detail the structural conditions in the Thai political system that makes it conducive to democratic breakdowns. Of note are factors such as a history of frequent coups d'état and undemocratic tendencies among the public that have significantly reduced the cost of a next coup and made military intervention a favorable option for conflict resolution. As such, military intervention is a real possibility in Thai politics - one whereby successful coups outnumbered failed ones. However, the backlash against the coup government in 1992 has increased the cost of coups, making it imperative for the military to guarantee prior popular support for its intervention. The opposition movement - having failed to change the situation through anti-incumbent and pro-reform strategies - redirected their movement to the last possible alternative: calling for military and royal intervention. The opposition had thus embarked on an anti-democratic path that would later have shattered the country's democratic development.

The PAD movement is composed of and driven by actors and groups in society that have not only been made worse off as a result of Thaksin policies, but whose opposition channels to convey their grievances were closed off. This happens in a highly arbitrary manner in both the formal and institutional arenas. In the formal democratic institution, opposition parties in the legislature, some section of the senate and independent bodies joined forced with the PAD movement for the following reasons: a) inability to provide effective opposition to the government; b) failure to provide effective checks on the executive; and c) inability to propose alternative policies. There is, in essence, a breakdown of opposition mechanisms inside formal democratic institutions that "cripple" opposition voices. The judiciary, in fact, stood the biggest
chance of mounting an opposition against the Thaksin government and it did intervene, with support from the palace, to weaken the executive and the Thai Rak Thai-dominated legislature.

In the informal institutional channels, the NGO sector, labor unions and the media, and various other social groups experienced not only the loss of their political space, but also the possibilities to present alternatives to government positions were marginalized. During the pre-Thaksin period, many of these groups were able to lobby and put pressure, with varying success, on governments, senators and independent bodies to represent their interests. During the Thaksin Administration, however, a number of access points to formal institutions were blocked for the opposition: parliament, senator and independent bodies. All of this resentment did not, however, did not materialize into a movement until Thaksin and his Thai Rak Thai party won their consecutive landslide election victory in 2005, which rendered their opposition the perception of permanent exclusion from power. This is when the PAD came together as a movement not only to oppose Thaksin collectively, but to also appeal for royal and military intervention

But why did the opposition resort to nondemocratic institutions? What were the options available to the opposition during that critical moment? There are largely two options for the opposition when faced with institutional blockage: 1) fight and 2) give up. The first stage of opposition mobilization was intended to increase their own bargaining power vis-à-vis the government by forming an alliance with other opposition groups. An alliance was seen as a way to not only aggregate their interests and grievances, but also to exert more pressure on the government. Once such measure did not yield desirable results, they increase pressure by engaging in more coercive activities, such as mass protests. "Street politics" then becomes a confrontational strategy of choice for these opposition groups that seek to recruit supporters from the public at large.
In the third stage, the decision for the opposition to continue fighting as opposed to giving up depends on two factors. The first is what I call the "zero-sum game" motivation. Groups that still remained in the PAD movement by this time were those who perceived their future to be dim if they did not fight. The stakes were simply just too high to give up. The second factor is more strategic (and less desperate) "no turning back" motivation. Essentially, opposition groups that have engaged in high-risk protest activities for quite some time, and gained popular support along the way, find themselves to have gone too far to turn back - they simply could not abandon the movement to lose momentum. Giving up would not only hurt their overall support, but it would delegitimize their cause for any future protests. Staying on course was perceived by some groups to be their only option, even though it meant putting their own ideals and demands aside. The PAD movement began to appeal to nondemocratic institutions when they perceived their loss of access to power to be permanent. There was no other choice but to press forward.

FIGURE 4: OPPOSITION ALLIANCE FORMATION

Note: Yellow denotes nondemocratic institutions
Opposition elites also have their own strategic considerations when faced with the problem of institutional blockage. Their main concern is similar to other opposition actors: if they feel threatened by the relative loss of access to power vis-à-vis other actors, they will intervene to change the situation. As we can see in Figure 5, opposition elites from both within the democratic and nondemocratic institutions who rebel against the loss of access to power. Their major interests are shaped by their ability to a) influence the decision-making process; b) influence the policy discourse and policymaking process; and c) provide alternative agenda. For nondemocratic institutions, their interests are gravely threatened if there are systematic attempts to weaken their political power, shrink their political space or undermine their institutional independence.

In the Thai case, opposition actors from the parliament, senate and independent bodies first began to show support for opposition forces in the informal institutional arena. They then began to appeal to nondemocratic institutions: the military, Privy Council and the monarchy. The judiciary, on the other hand, normally very independent and insular from political pressure, aligned its interests with that of the constitutional monarchy and sought to intervene to stop this process of institutional blockage by removing key actors and severely delegitimize them. The military did the same and formed an alliance with the Privy Council - the monarchy's de facto representatives. The constitutional monarchy became the place where opposition elites coordinated their interests. If after measures by opposition elites do not work, then they sought to form an alliance with other opposition forces in society to increase their own popular support base and hence legitimacy needed for the intervention in the democratic regime.
CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an overview of the typology of opposition mobilization and situates Thailand within the broader pattern of opposition movement in a Third-Wave democracy. There are three types of opposition mobilization: 1) pro-reform; 2) anti-incumbent and 3) anti-democratic. I argue that the conditions under which a movement adopts a pro-reform or incumbent approach is neither exclusive nor chronological. In fact a movement can be both promoting reforms and opposing incumbent government at the same time. However, the conditions under which a movement becomes anti-democratic is contingent on the unavailability and/or ineffectiveness of other approaches. Moreover, becoming an anti-democratic movement is not always an available option in all democracies.

This research advances a theoretical concept I call "institutional blockage" - a process whereby both formal and informal channels of opposition in a democratic regime is, and perceived to be, closed - resulting in a perceived loss of bargaining leverage by actors in the polity. When opposition is or "feels" blocked from access to power, they rebel against such closures in the democratic system by appealing to nondemocratic alternative sources of power to reverse, or at minimum, halt, this process of institutional blockage. Anti-democratic mobilization then serves as a vehicle for various opposition forces whose leverage have been reduced, or completely cut out, by the process of institutional blockage that unfolds. If such mobilization succeeds in attaining extra-constitutional intervention from nondemocratic authorities, then we see a complete breakdown of democracy.
3. CRISES, COUPS AND CONSTITUTIONS

"The Council for Democratic Reform under the Constitutional Monarchy had to seize power from the government, but had no intention of staying in power. We would return democracy with the King as the head of state to the people as soon as possible in order to maintain peace, order, and national security and to preserve the monarchy as the pinnacle of reverence for all Thais."

- Gen. Sonthi Boonyaratklin, September 19, 2006

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background to Thai politics after its transition to constitutional monarchy in 1932. It specifically focuses on three key issues: a) civil-military relations, b) popular discontent and c) the monarchy in politics. The main argument of this section is that there are structural conditions that make Thailand susceptible to democratic breakdowns. These structural factors are important in so far as they underlie the key grievances and actors in political mobilization. They do not, however, explain the timing and sequence of the PAD Movement’s emergence and development.

First, Thailand had many coup d'états in its political history. Coups were seen by political elites as a mechanism for crisis resolution and a "legitimate" form of government transition. Given that much of contemporary Thai history was marked by authoritarianism, a coup d'état served its purpose as a way to transfer power by force from one group of elites to another.

Second, there had been two major popular uprisings during Thailand's constitutional monarchy, both of which affected civil-military relations. However, I argue here that only the
Black May Uprising in 1992 had direct impacts on the later emergence of the anti-democratic mobilization during the Thaksin period. Black May significantly weakened the military's position in the political arena. This is particularly true when considering the power of the military vis-à-vis the public, career politicians and the monarchy. The second and related point is that the cost of coup d'états as mechanisms for regime change dramatically increased for the military. Third, the uprising set in motion the process of political liberalization, driven by reformist elites who gained political prominence following Black May.

Lastly, the monarchy has become the ultimate source of power and legitimacy vis-à-vis other democratic and nondemocratic institutions in the Thai polity. The current king, in particular, served as the arbiter of political conflict and ended major violence during popular uprisings in both the 1970s and the 1990s. The immense power wielded by King Bhumibol created a dependency on the monarchical institution as an institution of "last resort". While the monarchy has become the symbol of national unity, its extraordinary power has also been used, at times illegitimately, as a tool for mobilization and empowerment. This latter point is crucial to an understanding of the PAD Movement as both a pro-monarchy and an anti-democratic mobilization.

BACKGROUND

Despite the end of absolute monarchy in 1932, Thailand's democratic political system did not take off until the 1970s, albeit for a very brief period of time. When King Prajadiphatk abdicated from the throne in 1934, he asked that the power not be given to any particular individual or groups, but to all the people of Siam. The reality could not have been further from the king's wish. The People's Party, Khana Ratsadorn, made up of both military and civilian bureaucrats, staged a coup d'état to overthrow the absolute monarchy in 1932. From 1938 until
1973, military generals took turn to rule the kingdom. Any "elections" held were neither free nor fair. In fact, political parties were not legal entities until the 1950s. Politics was oligarchic in nature, with the majority of the populace disenfranchised despite the introduction of universal suffrage. The armed forces were highly factionalized and most coups during this period were launched by one military faction against another. Fred Riggs (1966) famously refers to this period as the "bureaucratic polity" - whereby bureaucratic leaders, military and civilian, were responsible for running the state. Unlike bureaucratic authoritarianism in Latin America, Anek (1988, p. 451) argues, "the Thai bureaucratic polity operated among docile, politically inert social groups or classes, leaving the decision-making authority in the hands of a small elite of bureaucrats."

Yet Thai politics in the 1970s was far from being calm and the people were far from being "docile." Indeed, Thailand witnessed its first popular mobilization against the military regime in 1973 - known as the October 14 Incident. Frustrated with the repressive and highly oligarchic rule of Field Marshall Thanom Kittikajorn, what began as a modest demand for improvement for university students rapidly evolved into a large-scale anti-government demonstration. The government refused to concede to the movement's demands and instead exercised brutal repression against the many thousands on the streets, resulting in numerous deaths and injured (Musikawong: 2006). The incident was revered as a landmark against dictatorship and the heroic protesters were dubbed as the October 14th Generation, whose power and influence continues to the present day.

The brief democratic period, following the October 14 Incident, provided space for a rapidly expanding civic activism. Between late 1973 and 1976 students, peasants, and workers got organized and mobilized to demand change - making protest the order of the day (Morell &
"Literally hundreds of other student groups and associations blossomed after the October 1973 incident."

However, some of the students adopted left-wing ideology, which advocated sweeping social reforms. The growth in left-leaning protesters terrified the military elites, particularly as this was the period of the Cold War and the Communist Party victory in Vietnam. The state responded with right-wing counter movements, such as the Red Gours, Nawapon and the Village Scouts, and attracted nearly two million supporters to counteract the leftists (Jamrik: 1998).

Meanwhile, the elected governments during this three-year period - four in total - proved highly unstable and ineffective in their governance. On October 6, 1976 the right-wing forces, with the implicit consent of the cabinet, massacred students on the campus of Thammasat University in broad daylight - leaving scores dead and thousands humiliated as they were stripped down and had their hands tied. General Sa-ngad Chaloryoo staged a coup in the name of the Administrative Reform Council Resolution (ARCR). The ARCR appointed a privy councilor, Thanin Kraivichian as prime minister. Following another coup by the ARCR a year later, a right-wing general, Kriangsak Chamanan, took over the leadership, ending Thailand's experiment with democratic politics.

In the 1980s Thailand entered a period of "semi-democracy" (Dhiravegin: 1992; Neher: 1988; Samudavanija: 1989; Samudwanit: 1990), whereby gradual political liberalization took place. Under the leadership of an unelected prime minister, General Prem Tinasulanond, Thailand was ruled for nearly a decade by an appointed leader who carefully balanced the interests of the military, the career politicians and the monarchical institution. Prem - highly respected by the military top brass, the king, the bureaucrats and career politicians - engineered a

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power-sharing agreement with the political elites. The "pact" allowed Prem, who was committed to remaining "neutral" and "non-political," to satisfy key elites and keep the country moving forward without another coup d'état. The generals got their authority over defense and national security matters; the politicians got to run domestic affairs while the bureaucrats enjoyed bigger budgets and better pay. The technocrats were able to implement major economic development plans and Thailand gradually democratized its politics.

Semi-democracy in Thailand worked for nearly a decade because the military began to recognize that in the increasingly globalized world, they could no longer afford to govern through the barrel of a gun. As Neher (1995, p. 197) argues: there was a "rising view among the military that the country's new economic complexity and international standing required a sharing of power between technocrats, business persons, trained bureaucrats and politicians."

Thailand did not return to full democracy in the post-Prem period, despite claims by some scholars (Bunbongkarn: 1992; Jamrik: 1998; Boonmee: 2007). Although Prem refused to stay on as the country's leader following the 1988 election, paving the way for the first democratically elected government of Chatchai Choonhavan, the “elected” prime minister's legitimacy and power rested on both the previously unelected prime minister Prem and the military. The only reason why Prem decided to allow a transition into a "full" democracy was because he knew that the Chatchai government was supported by the army. Chatchai even announced that he would not intervene in any military appointments or transfers and would approve whatever the military proposed.29 General Chaovalit, the army chief, confirmed: "I set up this government with my own hands."30 The Chatchai government represented a failure of

30 Ibid.
political liberalization in the late 1980s and paved the way for the full return of the military into politics.

The loss of military backing spelled the end of Chatchai's government and the demise of Thailand's democracy. The power-sharing agreement that Prem built and worked hard for was collapsing. The government was plagued by internal infighting, a sour relationship with the military and numerous corruption scandals. Chatchai led a six-party coalition, whose nickname among the media was "buffet cabinet," signifying the high level of corruption that had beset this administration as if state coffers were a "buffet" and any cabinet minister could "eat" however much he wanted. Chatchai's administration was also ridden by internal fighting, both within his own party and with coalition partners and by serious disagreements with some key military figures. The military top brass eventually felt threatened by the possibility of being removed from power by the Chatchai government and staged a coup in February of 1991.

THE BLACK MAY UPRISING

The 1991 coup d'état and subsequent uprising, known locally as "Black May," was a key turning point in the history of civil-military relations. Taking the Black May Uprising of 1992 as the watershed event in Thai political history that had both direct and indirect consequences in the emergence of anti-democratic mobilization and the 2006 coup, this chapter seeks to situate Black May in the historical development of Thailand. I argue here that the Black May uprising had direct ramifications for the emergence of the PAD movement a decade later.

THE 1991 COUP D'ÉTAT

On February 23, 1991, the armed forces' top brass seized power from the Charchait government. Chatchai and General Athit were held at gun point while they were boarding a plane
to Chiang Mai for an audience with the king. The constitution was scrapped, martial laws were put in place and the national assembly was dissolved. The coup was led by General Sunthorn Kongsompong and Class 5 (an elite, West Point style Chulachomklao Military Academy), whose members occupied most major positions in the armed forces. The putsch was also supported by Class 11 and 12 (Maisrikrod: 1993, p. 328). The coup plotters called themselves the National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC) and promised an immediate return to electoral politics. The NPKC cited the large-scale corruption of the Chatchai government and protection of the monarchy to justify their action. The military generals cobbled together seasoned politicians, retired generals and those close to the NPKC to form the Samakhi Tham Party (STP) to compete in the March 1992 election, which they won. The 5-party coalition, led by the STP, came to power and one of the coup leaders, General Suchinda Kraprayoon, eventually became the prime minister.

On the surface, the coup d'état in 1991 which subsequently led to the Black May Uprising, seemed like the many coups that preceded it (see Appendix B): a handful of military generals rolled in their tanks and the country's capital, Bangkok was under siege. The men in uniform said the elected government was too corrupt and the country would descend into chaos unless order and stability was restored. The elected government was overthrown and the military government took over - with a promise of a return to democracy "soon." A new constitution was written to give impunity to the coup plotters, superficial corruption investigation of the previous government was launched and the military got its massive budget boost. Meanwhile civic and political rights were curbed with periodic curfews.

There were two major causes for the 1991 coup d'état: 1) serious conflicts between the Chatchai government and the military top brass and 2) a high degree of unity among the armed
forces, particularly the military. Coup rumors began to surge in 1990 and government-military relations made a turn for the worse. General Kongsompong, the military chief, warned that politicians had no right to shuffle military rankings. PM Chatchai denied that he had done so, claiming "I will never meddle with military appointments. Why would I? I ask approval from both General Suchinda and General Sunthorn every time if it's ok,"\textsuperscript{31} However, even General Chavalit had a falling out with another minister, which led him to eventually resign. Sukhumbhand Paribatra, advisor to the prime minister, resigned because he did not get along with the army chief. Chatchai sought to resolve the crisis by resigning himself, but the parliamentarians continued to back him as prime minister as he clung on to power.

\textit{The Uprising}

What began as a hunger strike protesting Suchinda's leadership expanded into a full-blown uprising. Opposition leaders, the media, and non-governmental organizations wanted a new election and a more democratic constitution. At the height of the crisis, more than 200,000 protesters occupied the main arteries of Bangkok. The government mobilized pro-Suchinda rallies in the provinces, particularly in the Northeast, refused to concede to the people’s demands and began to retaliate against the demonstrators. The violence quickly escalated in the days leading up to the massacre of 17-20 May 1992. Some 600 people were reportedly killed at the hands of the military, although the real figures are believed to be much higher. The Black May uprising eventually ended when the King summoned General Suchinda, the opposition movement leader - Major General Chamlong Srimuang - and "advised" them to end the political conflict.

The 1992 popular uprising against the military-backed government of General Suchinda Kraprayoon, known locally as "the Black May" uprising represents both continuity and change in Thailand's political development. On the one hand, public support for the coup d'état of 1991 and its subsequent royally-appointed prime minister of Anand Panyarachun confirms existing nondemocratic tendencies among the Thai public. On the other hand, popular mobilization against the electoral victory of the military-aligned government and the coming to power of the 1991 coup leader broke a pattern of public acquiescence towards coup-installed governments. The Black May uprising transformed civil-military relations by giving increased power to the former and altering the cost of military coup d'états more generally. It also emboldens the monarchy as an institution of "last resort" for conflict resolution in the Thai polity. These implications set in motion the elite-driven political and economic liberalization in the 1990s and provided a background for the emergence of anti-democratic mobilization in Thailand.

**BLACK MAY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS**

The failure of the 1991 coup and the subsequent Suchinda government had three major consequences for the role of the military in politics. First, it created internal division within the military itself, which significantly raised the cost for future coups. Coup d'états are more likely when the military is unified, particularly in the Thai case (Tamada: 1995). After Black May, some young officers began to challenge the military hierarchies and called on the top brass to take responsibility for the May crackdown. Such defiance of authority is rare in the military where officers know their place in the hierarchical system and military leaders are used to talking down to their inferiors. "Soldiers do not like to negotiate face-to-face because they think it is a loss of face" (Bangkok Post: 1992). Indeed, during the uprising, opposition movement leaders were never able to get a face-to-face negotiation with General Suchinda. In a rare interview with
a journalist, Rungmanee Meksophon, General Suchinda reveals "To launch a coup you can't do it alone...You need friends [peauk]. Once done [a coup], you need to rely on one another. No one person alone conducts a coup. This is a weakness of a coup d'état" (BBC Black May, p. 385).

Second, Black May significantly weakened the military's position in the political arena. This is particularly true when considering the power of the military vis-à-vis the public, career politicians and the monarchy. The anti-Suchinda protest movements were unexpected and took the generals by complete surprise. Black May was the first massive outcry against military dominance in politics since the mid 1970s. This not only tarnished the public image of the military as an honorable institution in Thai society, it also seriously challenged the future role of the military in politics. The more than 600 deaths also bode badly for an institution whose main function is to "safeguard" and "protect" the people.

The Black May uprising revealed a new source for an anti-military movement - the people. The military recognized that it no longer monopolized power in society. Ordinary people were not afraid to challenge the military's authority; they were not deterred by tanks and gun barrels. As Pasuk further argues: "The initial opposition had two main poles: first, the intellectuals, academics and activists who were ideologically opposed to military rule and second, the growing ranks of anti-military politicians." For the first time, the military reckoned it could no longer seize power without popular support. This game changer is crucial to the strategic calculations of the military - one of the most powerful entities in Thailand - not only as to whether to have a coup, but when to have it. It can no longer be the case that a coup is justified because one faction of the military is in conflict with the other - as it was in the pre-70s period.

Third, the King's power was further strengthened by his role in mediating the conflict between the opposition and the government, which ended the violence. The Black May uprising
really underscored the role of the constitutional monarchy in Thai politics as the ultimate source of power and authority - the last resort for conflict resolution. In times of crisis, the Thai people pin their hope on the King to step in and resolve the conflict, as he did in 1973. During the Black May uprising, a group of influential academics called for the palace to intervene to resolve the crisis on several occasions. At the height of the crackdown, between May 17 and 19, both Princess Sirindhorn and Prince Vajiralongkorn appealed for the cessation of violence - but to no avail. It was believed that no one else but the King could have prevented further bloodshed as his moral authority derived not from constitutional powers, but rather his own personal merits. Such authority is more powerful than any politician or military general could ever possess as it is not given by position but "earned" through years of hard work.

The crucial role played by King Bhumibol in the Black May uprising left a lasting legacy that had direct implications for the emergence and development of an anti-democratic mobilization more than a decade later. First, the monarchy had strengthened its power and legitimacy vis-à-vis other key institutions in the political arena, be it parliament, senate or even the military. While the military was busy brutalizing ordinary citizens, causing scores of deaths, the parliament fared no better as it was completely "helpless" during these critical moments. The monarchy emerged as the institution of "last resort" - the only hope for the end of conflict. People were pleading for the King to step in to alleviate the situation. This cemented the monarchical institution as the ultimate authority in the political arena, despite its lack of official constitutional power. The King entrenched his position as the moral compass for the Thai nation, whose real power is drawn from widespread popular reverence from the people themselves and not via constitutional mechanisms.
Black May also contains its contradictions as it confirms long-standing nondemocratic tendencies within the Thai polity. The uprising was not in opposition to the coup d'état per se, but rather in opposition to the military staying in power. Moreover, the public support for a royally appointed prime minister underscored the monumental power of the monarchical institution - an extra-constitutional body. It also illustrated public preferences for political leadership that does not come from the democratic process. These tendencies among the public were not new in Thai political history and they thus demonstrate continuity, rather than change, in this respect.

THE POST-BLACK MAY POLITICS

Post-Black May politics was marked by a series of weak governments operating in a rather open political environment. Thailand returned to a democratic path again following the national election in September of 1992. The decade that ensued was marked by competitive democratic politics, where elections were procedurally free and fair and there was no extra-constitutional disruption. The media enjoyed greater freedom, and the people's sector saw its greatest expansion. By all accounts, Thailand had become a full democracy, albeit largely a procedural one. Career politicians and the public alike felt the days of frequent coup d'états were over and democracy had a real chance of surviving. Despite this, the military and civilian bureaucrats dominated the upper house - the Senate. While this may seem like a "residual power" of the old guard, in reality, a powerful Senate filled with retired generals can still check the power of both the executive and the lower house. In the Thai case, this means the power of the military and bureaucrats in politics still lurk in the background even if civilian career politicians were beginning to dominate political affairs in parliament.
Thai politics during the 1990s were highly unstable and "messy." Between 1992 and 2001, there were five governments - each lasting on average eighteen months. Each and every single government was a coalition, comprising between five and seven parties. House dissolution was frequent and corruption scandals abounded. Politics remained relatively fluid with governments coming and going in a relatively short time. The party system showed no sign of institutionalization as parties lacked programmatic appeals, a committed support base, candidate loyalty or roots in society. If conventional wisdom says that the legislature's main function is "law-making" then the Thai legislature could hardly be called one. The Banharn Silapa-acha government (1995-1996), for instance, passed 17 bills out of the 239 proposed - a success rate of 7%. Similarly, in the first year of Chavalit government (1996-1997), prior to the Asian Financial Crisis, the legislature's bill passage rate was 1%. Duncan McCargo (1997, p. 130) argues in his influential piece, *Thailand's political parties: Real, authentic and actual:*

There is very little prospect of mass bureaucratic parties with large memberships and fully developed local branches emerging successfully in contemporary Thailand. Much more likely is a gradual rise of professional parties which are dominated by professional politicians and technocrats, have small memberships, tend to be characterised by personalised leadership, are funded by interest groups and campaign around particular issues. Such parties would carry little ideological baggage.

Despite the seemingly chaotic, corruption-ridden politics of the 1990s, the political landscape was one of more inclusiveness and openness for political elites. Elections were actually competitive: no one knew for certain who would win. Also, a coalition government was almost always a certainty even before the elections. Deals were made on the coalition make-up
before the election, while candidates switched parties as soon as election dates were set, to maximize their chance of getting elected. As such, politicians from parties large and small felt they had a fair chance of being in power after the next election. Given a weakly institutionalized party system, whereby parties were non-programmatic, non-disciplined, and lacked national constituencies, alliances among political elites were temporary and constantly changing - giving politicians the mobility to move and realign with whomever they saw fit. This weakly institutionalized party system provided incentives for political elites to wait their turn to contest the next election, as opposed to trying to change or rebel against the system. In times of crisis, both coalition and opposition parties were able to mount sufficient opposition to the government through formal democratic channels that the government eventually collapsed, which paved the way for another election.

Black May altered civil-military relations in ways that reduced the role of the military in politics, prompting the men in uniform to retreat to their barracks during the 1990s. Some scholars argue that the military became more professionalized after 1992 as it was "forced" to be less involved in politics and more involved in military affairs (Bamrungsuk: 2001; Pathmanand: 2001). The end of the Cold War and the forces of globalization propelled the military to re-evaluate its role in politics and society. The increasingly powerful group of new political elites - career politicians - had kept the military at bay by meeting the latter's budget demand and by institutional independence from formal democratic institutions.

Democracy in Thailand has thus taken a tumultuous, oscillating, path. Beginning with the democratic interregnums of the 1970s, the Southeast Asian country did not experience full electoral democracy until the late 1980s. The 1990s mark Thailand's uninterrupted electoral democracy where free and fair elections were held regularly and incumbents lost elections, while
the media was afforded press freedom. The frequent changes of government and what seems like an "unstable" political situation indeed spells some degree of "certainty" among political elites that they would remain part of the game. While such a loose form of power-sharing did not approximate what existed during the Prem years, this perception among political figures that no one would be shut out of power permanently proved critical to the survival of what seemed like a rather brittle democracy.

**STRUCTURAL FACTORS INDUCIVE TO DEMOCRATIC COLLAPSE**

Thailand is a classic case of a crisis-prone democracy susceptible to regime breakdown. The structural conditions of the Thai polity - frequent coup d'états and powerful extra-constitutional institutions - make democratic collapse likely. They provide the background conditions for the emergence of an anti-democratic mobilization which will be discussed in detail in later chapters. Structural factors that are conducive to the rise of anti-democratic mobilization include a) patterns of previous mobilization, b) legacies of successful coup d'états, c) past 'popular' support for undemocratic tendencies and d) powerful extra-constitutional institutions. As I will argue later on, these structural conditions make anti-democratic mobilization more likely, but, they do not activate mobilization. Subsequent reforms in the 1990s, however, specifically created grounds for the emergence of the Yellow Shirts as well as the military intervention of 2006 (chapter 4).

**COUPS BEGET COUPS**

Coups have become an acceptable form of regime change in Thailand. Between 1932 and 2006, Thailand witnessed eighteen coup attempts - the highest number of coup d'états in the world. Thai scholars refer to the constant cycle of coups and crises as the "vicious cycle of the
Thai polity. Thailand continues to be trapped in this cycle of coups and crises because of conflicts among the political elites over access to spoils. Parliamentarian politics are wrought with corruption, factionalism and in-party fighting. The military, still the only institution capable of launching a coup, then intervenes to protect its own interest and to put an end to democratic politics with a promise to return to it in a short time. Before elections are re-introduced, a new constitution is written to promote the interest of the coup plotters and give them impunity. An election is held and parliamentary politics resumes. Politicians pursue pork barrel politics, crisis ensues and the vicious cycle continues.

The price tag for a military intervention, however, has gone up significantly since the popular backlash during Black May. Although the frequency of successful coup d'états in a polity theoretically increases the chance of another coup (McGowan: 2003), coups are ultimately a means of transferring power that is contingent on certain favorable conditions. Prior to Black May, there were two major ways a successful coup d'état could be launched in Thailand, depending on the nature of the coup itself (Table 4). In the pre-1970s period, when coups were launched by one military faction against another and the public was largely disenfranchised, military factionalism was the key to whether a coup would be launched or not. However, following the October 14 Incident in 1973, there was a rising expectation that a military dictatorship would be less popular among the populace. As such, a political consensus, (particularly among the military elites themselves) that a change of government is necessary is critical to whether a coup is launched. This explains why coup attempts during the Prem years failed: some section of the military top brass continued to pledge its support to Prem, leaving other factions that wanted change hung out to dry.
TABLE 4: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF SUCCESSFUL COUPS IN THAILAND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Number of Coup Attempts</th>
<th>Coup Plotters</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Considerations before coup</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-1970s</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Military faction A</td>
<td>Military Faction B</td>
<td>Another military dictatorship</td>
<td>1. Manpower of faction A versus B</td>
<td>Dictatorship until another coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s-1990s</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Civilian govt.</td>
<td>Promise of civilian government and election</td>
<td>1. Manpower</td>
<td>Mixed; military and civilian governments, no elected PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Some popular support; public opposition to current government. 3. Support from some sections of elites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Elected civilian govt.</td>
<td>Promise of civilian government and election</td>
<td>1. Manpower</td>
<td>Interim military-installed civilian government, then election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Significant popular opposition to current government 3. Support from some sections of elites and other nondemocratic bodies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author
Popular support for a coup has become necessary following the backlash against the Suchinda coup government. While a coup is still regarded as sometimes "necessary" in the case of a crisis, some indication of popular support becomes critical to the success of a coup. It is no longer enough that there is unity among the military top brass, the success of a coup will also hinge upon the perception of popular support for a coup. The Black May ultimately altered the military's calculus for a coup. As there have been so many successful coups in the past, coups will always be a factor in Thai politics. However, from the 1980s onwards, there has been an expectation among the public that the military must pledge support to democratically elected governments (Samudvanija: 1997, p. 57). The military intervention is thus regarded as an "emergency only" measure - one which must receive some degree of public support. Also, military governments are only temporary and their main job is to clean up the "mess" of the dislodged democratic government and bring the country back to its democratic path.

The Middle Class and Democracy

Although there is not yet a consensus on a direct measure for the "middle class," most agree that this class grew over time in Thailand - reflecting a growing trend across Asia. Depending on the definitions used the Thai middle class in 2013 stands between 20% and 40% of the population. The middle class in Thailand also grew consecutively between 2000 and 2013, according to estimates by the National Statistical Office. A more detailed analysis of the middle class is beyond the scope of this research, however, it suffices to say that the burgeoning middle class in Asia is often seen as "hope" for more open and perhaps democratic politics.

Yet, the middle class in Thailand has been both illiberal and ambivalent towards democracy. This is not uncommon in Asia, as much of the middle class in the region grew and expanded under authoritarian rule (Jones: 1998). The role of the middle class during Black May and previous popular mobilizations suggests their ambivalence, and sometimes opposition to, democratic politics. Clearly the middle class in Thailand is not a unified group with a defined set of ideological or political preferences. However, examining its role in political upheavals sheds light on its preferences in ways that voting behavior cannot always do, particularly during nondemocratic times. An investigation of middle class behavior and attitudes show that the middle class, particularly those hailing from Bangkok, has shown support for anti-democratic regimes since its first evident participation in popular politics in the 1970s. The ways in which the middle class has shown its undemocratic stripes can be categorized in three key ways: 1) support for anti-democratic forces; 2) support for the appointed prime minister; and 3) support for coups.

The undemocratic nature of the Suchinda regime may not have been the key issue in the Black May uprising after all. Thais did not oppose the 1991 government, which came to power via a military coup one year prior, because it was deemed undemocratic, but rather because it was generally acknowledged to be corrupt. The coup did not garner much resistance from the public as they felt the coup was justified (Uthakorn: 1993). Like previous coups, the 1991 coup did not elicit public outrage or negative response." Suchit Boonbongkarn likewise laments "As with other coups in Thailand, there was no large-scale protests. Only some academicians and politicians who lost their jobs quietly expressed resentment. For the general public the coup seemed acceptable."35

The mass protest movement that eventually led to the crackdown in May 1992, did not emerge until the coup leader and army chief, Suchinda Krapayoon, became prime minister himself. This was some time after martial law was put in place, the constitution abolished and most civic rights curbed. Therefore, to say that the anti-government popular uprising was "pro-democracy" certainly requires important qualifications. The muted public response after the 1991 coup, much like previous public reaction to earlier coup d'états, indicates that, for the most part, the public accepts a coup as a legitimate means for political power alteration. It's no surprise, then, that the coup in 2006 received nearly 90% popular support, according to polls. Chai-anan argues along similar lines that the 1991 uprising was not so much pro-democracy, but rather "a movement opposed to the possibility of a new alliance of the military and business leading to a dictatorship."36 Likewise, David Murray argues (1996, p. 181):

Although superficially the rallying cry [Black May uprising] had been for an elected MP as prime minister, the real issue was that the unelected MP came from the military - a military which, with considerable doubts, the people had entrusted with the task of cleaning up Thai politics and returning the country to a more democratic form of government. That it had failed to do this was the real issue. Had an 'acceptable' outsider been nominated for the leadership - someone like Anand or even Prem - the populace would probably have accepted it, particularly given the poor quality of the leaders of the government coalition parties.

Indeed, some sections of the middle class were also actively involved in the right-wing counter movements against the students in the 1970s. The successful student uprising of October 14 "motivated conservative elements and the elites to counter-mobilize" (Kongkirati: 2006, 12).

The right-wing groups, which were responsible for the massacre of students in 1976, formed organizations to counter the peasants, labor and students around 1975 (Kasertsiri: 1998). Ungpakorn also argues that the military and anti-Communist groups actively organized and supported the nationalist Red Guar and Nawaphon.37 The Village Scouts, officially endorsed by the state, was "the largest counter-movement with its membership of more than 20,000 drawn almost exclusively from the middle class in Bangkok" (Kongkirati: 2006, 25). "In upcountry towns," posits Kongkirati, "the movement attracted local officials, merchants, and other well-to-do persons. In Bangkok, wives of generals, business leaders, bankers, and members of the royal family took part."38

**POPULAR UNELECTED LEADERS**

Unelected prime ministers have been viewed favorably in Thailand. Given the highly unstable electoral democratic periods in the 1970s and the 1990s and the contrast to the stability of the Prem leadership in the 1980s, there has been a sense among the public that an impartial leader who can stay "above politics" is a marker of good leadership. Royally-appointed prime ministers, in particular, have been viewed in a positive light because they are perceived to possess three qualities: 1) royal blessing, 2) "neutrality" and 3) incorruptibility. The idea of having an unelected prime minister is to provide an incorruptible "buffer" between different political groups that struggle to gain control of the government. A lofty ideal perhaps, but an appointed prime minister must show that he does not seek political office for his own personal gain and that he maintains enough distance from the influence of both the military and the

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political parties. The support for an unelected prime minister stems from the idea that both the military and politicians have been extremely corrupt when they govern and thus do not represent the needs of the people.

Royal blessing gives a political actor immense leverage vis-à-vis his counterparts. The palace will support someone who can steer the country out of a crisis and can rise above politics - the constant competition over access to pork and patronage. When the King appoints someone to lead the country, he strengthens that particular person's political power and status. This is called the process of "royal legitimization."

Although the king does not have any political or administrative power under the system of constitutional monarchy, his role in times of political crises has been crucial. The Thais view the King as sacred and as a spiritual leader who serves as a symbol of unity....Because of this the monarch remains an indispensable source of political legitimacy. A political leader or regime, even a popularly elected government, would not be truly legitimized without the King's blessing.39

Historically, highly respected individuals have been appointed as PMs in times of crisis - often after the fall of a particular coup government. They were meant to serve in a "transition" period of an authoritarian government, with an electoral democracy in the near future. Two particular appointed prime ministers, Prem Tinasulanond and Anand Panyarachun, have left such important legacies in Thai political history that their own personal clout and charisma have had significant impact on the emergence of the anti-Thaksin movements, the 2006 coup and the current ongoing political crisis - years after their administrations ended.

Prem was known to be an acceptable choice to the palace, the military, the parliamentarians and the public. Prem weathered 8 years of rule, 4 administrations, 2 coup attempts, and an assassination attempt, while maintaining parliamentary politics the best he could. Because he never ran for elections, he was able to position himself as being "above politics" or "non-politicized." He maintained equal distance from both the armed forces and the political parties, and he was able to choose the people he deemed most suitable to form coalition governments. Yet Prem was no democrat as during his long rule he did not allow a no confidence motion against him.

A staunch supporter of Prem and a veteran politician, Prasong Soonsiri shares a popularly held view of his leadership:

Prem understands Thai society better than any career politician. Elected officials have a lot to learn from him...Prem has a conscience of a true democrat - more than those elected. He never abused his power even though he could have, with the military's backing and all. He solved problems not to benefit any political party, but the nation...He never had businessmen or people with vested interests lobbying him...He's the only prime minister who ended his term in grace."

Indeed, part of the reason why Prem refused to stay in power after the 1988 election was because some doubts regarding his supposed neutrality emerged. This decision came after public wariness of his administration. A petition signed by 99 people, mostly academics, was submitted to the king. They stated "We request Your Majesty's assistance with this matter to ensure that the

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A political leader in the position of prime minister will strictly maintain his neutrality to any institution for the sake of protecting his political position.”

Anand Panyarachoon, a soft-spoken, highly respected diplomat, served as a prime minister twice without once being elected. He was handpicked by the junta following the military coup in 1991 to restore Thailand's image abroad after much criticism from the foreign press with regards to the military takeover. Anand always portrayed himself as "neutral" and "apolitical," which gained him widespread support. "I had no intention to be a prime minister and never had any aspiration to enter politics. In the past many people asked me to take up various ministerial positions but I always said no." Anand was regarded as the nation's "savior" after the military coup in February 1991 (Meksophon: 2010). General Suchinda asked him to be a prime minister because he needed someone acceptable to both the Thai public and the international audience - particularly because foreign press was condemning the coup.

Following Suchinda's resignation after the Black May Uprising, internal bickering inside the parliament eventually led to the nomination of Anand to take the leadership position until a new leader is elected. The House Speaker at the time, Dr. Athit Urairat, was expected to nominate General Somboon Rahong as prime minister but then shocked everyone at the National Assembly when Anand's name was called. "I had to find someone who would be a prime minister for only three months and then return the power to the people...Someone I can trust that would not stay in power....[Anand] was that person.”

This is particularly ironic given that part of the motive for the protest movements was an opposition to the "unelected" Suchinda, but the public was willing to accept Anand, whom they

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42 See a candid interview with Anand: Meksophon, R. (2010). *Bueang luek phruetsa pha 35 prachathippatai puean lueat muean ma klai tae pai mai thueng* [Behind the scenes and stories of May 35: Democracy in blood, it seems we have come so far but we are never getting there]. Bangkok: Tawan Ok Publishing, pp. 407-414.
43 Ibid.
believed resolved the crisis. Indeed a group called "Friends of Anand" was formed among a small circle of elites at the time to support "good" and "honest" person like him staying as prime minister. The group believes a "good person like Anand must be protected and cherished." Some influential academics also joined in, which included Jermsak Pinthong, Methi Krongkaew, Kasien Tejapira, Rangsan Thanapornpan, etc. The membership shot up less than a week after inception and the group held rallies such as "Run for Anand" or "Flowers for Anand". These activities to protect someone because he was a "good person" were a unique phenomenon to Thailand.

Some sections of the Thai elites and the middle class favor unelected prime ministers precisely because there seem to be no "obvious" vested interests with the military. Theerayut Boonmee, a Thai academic, explains:\footnote{Bangkok Post. (1992, July). \textit{Catalyst for change: Uprising in May}. Bangkok: Bangkok Post Publishing.}

"The middle class was motivated by a special situation in which the dark sides of both moral and democratic values centralized in one figure [General] Suchinda. They did not have anything against unelected prime minister before the outbreak of the [Black May] turmoil, or against any other unelected prime minister before that because they found this type of leader more accessible."

\textit{The Monarchy and Thai Politics}

That the monarchy is the most powerful institution in today's Thailand is not only the result of centuries-old tradition, but also the personal cultivation of the current monarch, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the longest reigning monarch in the world. Kana Ratsadorn sought to undermine the power and legitimacy of the monarchical institution when it overthrew the absolute monarchy in 1932. Yet, the monarchy was not completely deprived of its influence and
dominance in the Thai polity as the new political order retained the role of the patriarchal king, who stood as the symbol of national unity and moral rectitude to his subjects.

Nonetheless, the power of the monarchical institution remained weak in the first two decades of constitutional monarchy. This is evidenced by King Bhumibol's failed attempt to prevent Field Marshall Phibul from re-instating the 1932 constitution in 1951 (Chaleomtiarana: 2007, 2nd ed.). It was not until after 1957, during the long rule of Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat, when the position of the monarchy was elevated. Suwannathat-Pian (2003) argues that King Bhumibol almost single-handedly brought the monarchy from a position of decline to one that represents a pinnacle of the nation. He did so by way of "personal dedication and devotion to the commonwealth, public relations tours of the country and foreign nations, royal-sponsored socio-economic welfare projects, and royal financial independence. Most of these means and methods are image-enhancing as much as altruistic." Likewise, the Thai government explains why the current monarch is deeply revered:

The love and reverence the Thai people have for their King stem in large part from the moral authority His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej has earned during his reign, one that involves a remarkable degree of personal contact with the people.

While formally the King enjoys a ceremonial position as the head of state, a careful reading of the Thai constitution reveals a much more powerful position. In the second chapter of the 2007 constitution; section 8 says: "The King shall be enthroned in a position of revered worship and shall not be violated. No person shall expose the King to any sort of accusation or action. Such an article in the constitution may seem at odds with conventional understanding of a

constitutional monarchy. Yet in the Thai case, such references to the power of the King reflect both traditional and modern understandings of the Thai monarch - one whose actual power cannot be captured in words. Thai people refer to the King as "Phra Chao Yu Hua," which literally translates to "God upon our head." In this instance, the King continues to be perceived as the "Lord of the land" whose main duty is to preserve and protect the land and the people who live on it.47

In normal times, the King serves as a symbol of unity and stability of Thailand and guides by moral suasion and example through words and writing. A prime example of this is the King's oath of coronation on May 5, 1950: "We shall reign with righteousness for the benefit and happiness of the Siamese people." This particular phrase has been frequently replayed in the past six decades and it has become a yard stick for "good governance" - one that those with the constitutional powers to govern in the democratic system should follow. In times of crisis, however, the monarch is expected to play a role in resolving the situation. The Thai government describes the King's role in crisis management:

His Majesty's moral authority was reinforced by his judicious interventions to put an end to widening political bloodshed. Two of the most crucial of those times occurred in 1973 and 1991...Through these interventions, the King did not involve himself in the political problems, which should be and were resolved through political mechanisms. Rather, he stopped bloodshed among Thais when state machinery had failed to do so.48

The King's ability to resolve conflicts, both in 1973 and 1992, speaks volumes to his power and authority above and beyond his constitutional standing. But the King's power is a

47 The Thai government has a website that explains in detail the role of the monarchy. See: http://www.thailandtoday.org/monarchy/faq.
48 Ibid.
two-way street: on the one hand, it is how the King perceives it to be, while on the other, it is what the populace expects from its monarch. Clearly there are sections of the population that called out for the King's intervention in both incidents, thus, his actions are reactionary. However, each intervention leaves a legacy and builds future expectation. This will become particularly important when discussing the emergence of the pro-monarchy movement of the PAD.

Moreover, the long reign of King Bhumibol has allowed him to build a key virtue of political leadership "barami." Barami is an important concept in Thai studies and it means "virtue" and "innate authority." This "barami" is not hereditary and cannot be given or passed on to anyone. Rather, barami is "earned" and is built over a long period of time through hard work and dedication. Barami is a marker of legitimacy and authority that can be used to enhance someone's power. The King is regarded to have a lot of barami, which makes his actions and words powerful moral suasion that can shape behaviors and outcomes in the political arena. This was why a royal blessing was so critical to the success of many of the unelected prime ministers such as Prem and Anand. In times of conflict, many political elites look to the King for solution and royal appointments. This power and authority the King derives from his "barami" as opposed to the fact that he is the King per se.

The King's moral suasion can be a more powerful marker of legitimacy than any power derived from constitutional or parliamentarian positions. This is particularly true because of the deep reverence towards the King among the majority of Thai society, which further contributes to the power of the King's words and actions. As Suwannathat-Pian (2003, p. 11) argues:

It is evident that Bhumibol's socio-political strength comes from the unconditional devotion of his subjects who are willing to support and be guided
by him because they have been convinced that his interest for their well-being is a genuine mission that Bhumibol has embraced since he took the reign...that Bhumibol has been able to defy ruling military juntas, parliaments and even constitutions with immunity is by itself proof of his unshaken bond he has cultivated with his people.

This "informal" power of the monarchical institution can shape and change political outcomes in times of crisis.

Moreover, some groups have manipulated the power of the monarchy for their own political gain. They use the monarchy as a "front" to achieve their ends, knowing full well the monarchy cannot always respond to political matters. In fact, the most powerful way to discredit someone is to accuse him of defaming the monarchy. Even the rumor of someone facing such an allegation can go a long way in tarnishing that person's reputation, which sometimes leads to dismissal and even temporary exile. Sulak Sivaraksa, a well-known public intellectual and prominent leader of a number of key NGOs, and a self-confessed royalist, was accused by General Suchinda after the 1991 coup of lese majeste. Sulak, who was forced into exile for four years, was targeted because he was a popular challenger to the coup government. Such examples of abuse of the monarchical institution can be found throughout Thai history. The emergence of the Yellow Shirts used "royalism" as a key driving force for mobilization as well as a legitimization of its movement.

**NonDemocratic Institutions**

Apart from the military and the monarchical institutions, the courts and the Privy Council represent powerful nondemocratic bodies in Thailand. The Privy Council is an extension of the monarchical institution and is a body that represents monarchical interests. These "royal
advisors” are appointed by the King and may not serve in any political positions. Privy councilors are often composed of a group of retired career bureaucrats and military generals, including previous prime ministers (in authoritarian governments). During times of crisis, Privy Councilors play critical role in "signaling" royal interests either through direct action of the councilors themselves or via lobbying other institutions in the polity, such as the military and the parliament. The most important responsibility of the Privy Council is to preserve and maintain the power of the monarchy.

Some have argued that the Privy Council had been politicized and took active part in the overthrow of the Thaksin government (Hewison & Connors: 2008; Pathmanand: 2008; Pongsudhirak: 2008). Although in theory, the Privy Council is supposed to remain politically neutral, Thaksin was convinced that Prem was a major force behind his downfall. The current Privy Council is under the tutelage of former Prime Minister, Prem Tinasulanond, whom many believe had serious conflict with Thaksin. Following the coup in 2006, another Privy Councilor, General Surayuth Chulanond became the prime minister, under the guidance of Prem. Throughout the political conflict, the PAD Movement directly appealed to Prem for support and intervention.

The judiciary is, by definition, nondemocratic in the sense that it is not an elected institution. In Thailand, however, the judiciary takes on a special responsibility as the "political reformers" (Supkampang: 2010). Traditionally, the judiciary was created to bring political reforms to the country and this responsibility was further empowered after the 1997 constitution. The direct involvement of the courts in recent political cases, most involving Thaksin and his allies, casts serious doubts as to the impartiality of the Thai judiciary. The courts were believed to be the instruments of the traditional power holders and became politicized to protect their
interests. As such, the rise of "judicial activism" (discussed in chapter 6) was seen as part of the consolidation of power of nondemocratic institutions in Thailand.

CONCLUSION

This chapter argues that there are structural conditions that make Thailand susceptible to democratic breakdowns: a) frequent coups; b) popular mobilization and its ambivalence towards democracy and c) the role of the monarchy as the "last resort" for conflict resolution. These factors make coups more likely in Thailand, compared to other Third Wave Democracies. However, democracy in Thailand does not always break down, even at times when collapse seems "imminent" such as during a severe economic crisis. The Black May uprising and its implications dramatically changed Thai politics in ways that have had fundamental impacts on future coup d'états as well as the emergence of mass-based politics. First, Black May significantly weakened the military's position in the political arena. This is particularly true when considering the power of the military vis-à-vis the public, career politicians and the monarchy. The second and related point is that the cost of coup d'états as mechanisms for regime change has dramatically increased for the military. Third, the set in motion the process of political liberalization, driven by reformist elites who have gained political prominence since Black May.

Black May also contains its contradictions as it confirms long-standing nondemocratic tendencies within the Thai polity. The uprising was not in opposition to the coup d'état per se, but rather an opposition to the military staying in power. Moreover, the public support for the royally appointed prime minister underscored the monumental power of the monarchical institution and also illustrated public acceptance of political leadership that does not come from the democratic process. These tendencies among the public were not new in Thai political history thus demonstrating continuity, rather than change, in this respect.
4. Politics of Reforms in the 1990s

"In every society, there are both good people and bad people. It is impossible to make everyone good. To bring peace and order to society is not about turning bad people into good ones, but rather it is about ensuring that good people get to govern so that bad people will not become powerful and create disorder."

- His Majesty Bhumibol Adulyadej, Royal Speech at the National Boy Scouts Convention, December 11, 1969

Introduction

Manoo, a sales manager for an international pharmaceutical company, found himself among the many thousands protesters during the Black May uprising, attending rallies after work. As a student leader during the October 14 Incident in 1973, he said something from those early days of resistance against dictatorship prompted him to join the May protests. "No matter how messy democracy may seem in its embryonic stage, it is always better than despotism." Following Black May, Thailand undertook one of the most extensive political reform episodes in contemporary history. This reform process, stretching from 1992 to 2001, broadly speaking, is among the most democratic, open and participatory the country has ever seen.

I argue in this chapter that the political reforms in the post-Black May period exemplify a contestation over both the meaning of democracy and the way in which the current political system in Thailand ought to be changed. While the reformist elites - the majority of which led the opposition movement against the 1991 coup government - agreed that reforms were needed to make the Thai polity more open and democratic, there is serious disagreement over how to go about it. Such disagreements were shaped by differing ideology and lived experiences. The end result of these reformist elites' compromise is the "1997 People's Constitution," which paved ways both for the rise of the Thai Rak Thai Party and subsequently the emergence of the People's Alliance for Democracy movement. It is not that the constitution itself drives the anti-Thaksin movement, but rather it is the people behind it.

The anti-military reformists were the driving force behind this reform movement in the 1990s. Empowered by the defeat of the Suchinda government, the reformist elites were hopeful that changes in the formal democratic institutions, such as the constitution, electoral system, and the senate, for instance, will provide new incentives and constraints on the behavior and conduct of political elites in ways that would facilitate political liberalization. The success gained by the reformist elites raise expectation of the future of democratic politics in Thailand. This "gap" between the expectations of what democracy in Thailand would be and the reality of what it is once Thaksin came to power becomes the driving force behind anti-democratic mobilization. In essence, Thaksin and his government exemplifies the very opposite of what these reformists envision and the realization of the unintended consequences of their reforms provide grounds for the rise of the PAD movement.

Yet, the so-called "progressive" reformists are neither uniformly liberal nor democratic. While the reform process itself is commendable for its unprecedented participatory nature, the
1997 constitution itself is neither inherently liberal nor democratic. The content of the constitution reflects different vested interests of the reformist elites who were tasked to complete its drafts. Understanding the illiberal, undemocratic and conservative elements within the 1997 constitution helps to explain the rise of the anti-democratic movement that emerged in 2005.

It is not just that the idea of democracy was contested while mass expectations surrounding democracy were raised, the laws and policies adopted entrenched these contradictions, reflecting the vested interests of key groups.

In this chapter, the politics of reforms in the post-Black May period will be discussed. Specifically, a detailed analysis of the 1997 constitution will be provided. I then discuss the socio-political implications of this new constitution. In addition, Thailand underwent the most difficult and severe economic reforms following the Asian Financial Crisis, which gave rise to widespread contention and social dislocation. Despite this, there was no evidence of polarization in the voting behavior of the electorates, nor was there an emergence of an anti-systems or anti-democratic movement in this period. The main explanation for the lack of an anti-democratic mobilization stems from the nature of coalition politics and the weakly institutionalized party systems that allow for a more open politics.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE BLACK MAY UPRISING

The victory of the opposition movement against Prime Minister Suchinda set in motion a broader based reform movement centered on political liberalization and democratization. I will argue in the following paragraphs that the key areas of the reform effort include: a) greater political participation from the mass; 2) greater accountability between the electorate and their representatives; 3) reduced power and influence of the military in politics and 4) a stronger and more institutionalized party system. This process of reform remains largely elite-driven despite a
concerted effort to include the voices of the people into the process. These reformist elites are a loose and varied coalition of academics, activists, professionals, bureaucrats and public intellectuals. It is important to view them as "elites" because despite the fact that some of them have deep roots in society at large (i.e. activists), they remain at the top of the hierarchy of their networks and they often represent their views on issue rather than the interests of their groups. Also, their participation in the reform process is much more pronounced than their networks, which signifies a rather elitist nature of the reform.

THE REFORM PROCESS

"Reform" became a buzz word after the supposed victory of the people in toppling the Suchinda government, paving a way for what they imagine will be an era of more inclusive and open politics. The reformists took charge of the reform process under the leadership of a highly-respected public intellectual and activist, Dr. Prawes Wasi, to create a political system where no single group can monopolize power. While there is some broad agreement as to what is "wrong" about the Thai polity, there is no consensus as to what exactly needs reforming.

I argue that the political reformers are divided into three groups: behavioralists, institutionalists, and structuralists. The behavioralists are reformists who believe the "people" are what is really wrong with the Thai political system. They question the morality and ethics of the political elites and purport that unless their behavior change for the better, no amount of constitutional or electoral engineering could change the outcome. These political elites are going to find loopholes to circumvent new institutions and continue their clientelistic, corrupt and nepotistic ways. Unless the behavior of political elites changes, no "real" reform can occur. Democracy must rest on moral and ethical foundations otherwise it will not work. Proponents of the behavioral approach tend to view politicians as "poor in quality" and have a habit of buying
votes from the rural majority as a way of building patronage and forming alliances necessary to
win elections. The malaise of the Thai polity lies in the questionable (lack of) moral ethics of
political elites.

TABLE 5: REFORMIST APPROACHES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioralism</th>
<th>Subjects of reform</th>
<th>Focus of reforms</th>
<th>Key reformists (selected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>• Morality, ethics</td>
<td>Prawes Wasi*, Theerayuth Boonmee*, Chamlong Srimuang*, Khien Teerawit, Kaewsan Atheipoh, Prasong Soonsiri, Kanin Boonsuwan, Likhit Dheravegin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Dharma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Democratic culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalism</td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>• Constitutions</td>
<td>Anand Panyarachoon, Amorn Raksasat, Uthai Pimjaichon, Bawornsak Uwanno, Somkid Lerptaitoon, Kanit na Nakorn, Pongthep Thepkanchana, Chai-anan Samudvanij*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Electoral Systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Democratic Institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structuralism</td>
<td>Socio-political Structures</td>
<td>• Power structure</td>
<td>Suchit Boonbongkarn, Somsak Kosaisuk*, Prateep Ungsongtham*, Weng Tojirakarn*, Bamroong Kayotha*, Saneh Jamrik*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Class/ Life chances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Inequality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author
* Not part of the 99-person Constitutional Drafting Committee (1996) but noted as having some influence in the discourse of constitutional drafting
The biggest proponent of this approach is none other than Dr. Prawes Wasi, who advocates for moral principles and ethics as a key to building a better society. In his earlier writing (1990), he lays out his thought on what democracy should be in Thailand:

Democracy and dharma\(^{50}\) need to go together so that democracy would be more righteous...If everyone lives by moral and ethical principles, then they would be better people...they would not be interested in politics just to seek power or benefit themselves...Dharma-based democracy will help political parties to recruit good people into politics, which will improve the quality and morality of democracy.\(^{51}\)

Two decades later, Prawes' famous "Triangle that moves a mountain" (สามเหลี่ยมเขยื่อนภูเขา) theory, which he promoted widely among academics, politicians and activists, underscores his earlier pessimism about the lack of morality among politicians. Since politicians will never be "good" or "honest," according to Prawes, they must be pressured to reform by other groups in society, namely the empowered citizenry and those with knowledge (academics).\(^{52}\) Some of the supporters of this approach take a royalist stance by using the King's words and teaching as a yardstick for how people should behave. Prasong Soonsiri, veteran politician dubbed the "CIA of Thailand" for his long tenure at the National Security Council, points to politicians as the culprits for the Thai political system. "Where politicians seek power for themselves and their cronies, that country will not likely prosper. Politicians know they should be good people but they don't

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\(^{50}\) Dharma in Buddhism means the body of Buddha's teachings. It also refers to the moral transformation of human beings.


want to be...They should adhere to the royal speech [quoted at beginning of Chapter]...and follow his teaching."\footnote{Soonsiri, P. (2000). \textit{Botrian khong phaendin} [Lessons of the land]. Bangkok: Naewna Press, p. 14.}

The institutionalist approach, on the other hand, is taken up largely by those in the law profession, and to a lesser extent, political science academics. Institutionalists believe that if the right institutions are put in place, they will place both incentives and constraints on the behavior of political elites and shape the society as a whole in ways that would allow democracy to prosper. It is not that they disagree with those taking behavioralist approach per se, those in the institutionalist camp mainly pin the hope for change on institutions. Bawornsak Uwanno, a law professor and a constitutional drafter, sees a new constitution as a solution to the malaise of Thai politics. He points to three key problems: a) representative democracy is highly problematic; b) political affairs are writ large with corruption, and lack of ethics or legitimacy and c) parliament lacks stability; prime minister lacks leadership skills; and both government and parliament are ineffective.\footnote{Kachayuthadej, B. and Kongmeong, P. (Eds.). (1998). \textit{Ruam sara ratthathammanun chabap prachachon} [A summary of the people's constitution]. Bangkok: Matichon Publishing, pp.50-1.} A new constitution would make the political realm an area for the people; make political and bureaucratic system honest and legitimate by empowering citizens in all levels; and increase government's stability and capability by ensuring that the prime minister has leadership qualities and enhancing parliamentarian effectiveness.\footnote{Ibid} Likewise, Pongthep Thepkanchana, another constitutional drafter and a current deputy prime minister, argues that the independent bodies created by the 1997 constitution are at the heart of good governance. "These institutions are needed to create mechanisms of transparent checks and balances."\footnote{Naewna. (2013, March 1). \textit{Phong thep chin thanachat 40 phit sa ong kon itsara ba amnat} [Phonthep points 1997 Constitution creates power-hungry independent institutions.] Accessed on February 9, 2012. Retrieved from http://www.naewna.com/politic/43322.}
The institutionalists had a reason to be optimistic. After all, out of the eighteen constitutions Thailand's had since 1932, only three very short-lived constitutions of 1946, 1949 and 1974 had any democratic elements, but were as a result, quickly torn up by the various military juntas that came to power. The majority of the constitutions were written to allow authoritarian regimes to remain in power, not to provide rights and protection of citizens under the law. Field Marshall Sarit, who staged a coup in 1958, took nearly 10 years to write up the 1968 constitution, as a foil to keep himself in power. "For the past 77 years Thai constitutions have failed to serve as rules and social contracts...Thailand is unable to establish a regime that uses the rule of law to solve conflicts and always relies on coup d'états," claimed law academic and student leader of the Black May uprising, Parinya Tewarnaruemitkul. As such for the first time ever, there was hope that the 1997 constitution will be written by the people for the people.

The structuralist approach, supported largely by reformist elites drawn from civil society organizations, view existing socio-political structures as major impediments to a more democratic and just society. Pervasive and growing gaps between the rich and the poor, a lack of access to resources, lack of social mobility and foreshortened future are what makes the majority of Thais feel powerless. Structuralists see measures to empower citizens and opportunities for them to participate meaningfully in the political process as key to fixing the broken political system. Raewadee Prasertchareonsuk, head of the Coordinating Committee of NGO Networks, argues that a true democracy must have the people, especially the poor and the disadvantaged, at its center. Rights, liberty and equality must be given to the people in order for any structural

reforms to be sustainable, adds Raewadee. Somkiat Pongpaibul, a pro-poor activist who later became one of PAD's top leaders, contends Thailand needs "new politics" that is not politics of representation, but politics for the people. This "civil politics" would open doors for people at the grassroots level to participate in politics and have their voices heard beyond mere voting. Thailand really needs participatory, not representative, democracy, adds Somkiat.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount spent on vote-buying (Bt)</th>
<th>Number of reported electoral violations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>10 billion</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>20-55 Billion</td>
<td>3,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>20-100 Billion</td>
<td>4,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>&gt; 25 Billion</td>
<td>16% of constituencies ordered a re-run</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Poll Watch Foundation, Election Commission, Law Society of Thailand, P-NET

Despite the different approaches to reforms among the reformists in the early 1990s, there is consensus among the constitutional drafters that the three key political reforms are: 1) empowering citizens vis-à-vis the state; 2) enabling good people to be in position of power to provide checks and balances and 3) a new constitution is needed to provide credible commitment to reforms. Many also agree that representative democracy as a political system is highly

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problematic because it cannot respond to the needs of the people on the grounds. Politicians are commonly viewed as highly corrupt, self-interested individuals whose loyalty lies with themselves, their cronies and those who finance their election campaigns. Vote-buying was rampant (Table 6) and party-switching among politicians a common occurrence (Ockey: 2003). Newin Chidchob a long-time politician, for instance, has switched party allegiances seven times during his 20-year career.

The plan to draft a new constitution, which had a modest beginning among a small circle of academics and activists in 1992, continuously faced resistance from political parties before it was adopted in 1997. Political elites insisted the constitution would affect them directly - making it crucial for them to participate in the drafting (Jarusombat & Watchawalkul: 2003). "The political reform...gradually gathered support as dissatisfaction with party politics grew among people," argues Tamada Yoshifumi (2009, p. 116). Yet, due to the frequent house dissolution during the mid-1990s, the plan for political reforms stumbled and fell many times some believe it would never materialized. Politicians wanted to ensure that they have the power to appoint members of the constitutional drafting assembly, and some wanted veto power to shoot down the new draft. This point of contention prompted heated debates within the National Assembly, resulting in many committees and drafts. It was not until the effects of the Asian Financial Crisis were in full throttle in Thailand when all the political elites could put their differences aside and voted overwhelmingly to pass what finally became the 1997 constitution.

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The constitutional drafting process is undoubtedly the most open and participatory in Thailand's history. It was the first constitution that actively engaged with the public at large. Between January and July 1997, the drafting committee held numerous public hearing throughout the country and organized public discussion of the constitutional draft in all of Thailand's 76 provinces. The Constitutional Drafting Assembly, consisting of 99 experts and elected members from all provinces, sought to ensure that this constitution incorporated as much input from the citizens as possible. Uthai Pimjaichon, a drafting member, proudly explained why it's called the "People's Constitution":

This constitution seeks to ensure that people have access to information. Any issues related to their livelihood, they must be able to get information from the various government services. They need to be able to know when the roads will be complete and so on. This constitution is really for the people. Next time we decide to construct new roads we will have to consult the people first.

THE 1997 CONSTITUTION

The institutionalist-reformists won the battle, but with a compromise. The 1997 constitution was an unprecedented attempt to overhaul the political system through a provision of a new constitution - one that sought to engage public participation. Its drafters had hoped this constitution will essentially fix the woes that have plagued Thailand's political system and strengthen its democratic institutions. While the mechanism for reform - constitutional engineering - signifies the victory of the institutionalist approach, the new constitution is a compromise of various ideologies and vested interests of the reformers. Despite its rather

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68 There were only 76 provinces at the time.
"democratic" procedure, the constitution is neither inherently liberal nor democratic as it contains conservative and elitist elements, which reflect the diverse thinking of the reformist elites.

### TABLE 7: SELECTED KEY REFORMS IN THE 1997 CONSTITUTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Reform</th>
<th>Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public participation/</td>
<td>1. Public hearings with state officials</td>
<td>To increase public participation in politics; Greater political rights; Greater rights for citizens and communities; Decentralization of central state power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local autonomy</td>
<td>2. Petition to dismiss MPs, ministers (50,000 signatures)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Community rights/ conservation of traditional culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Autonomy to local government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Good governance</strong></td>
<td><strong>To strengthen democracy; reduce abuse of power by those in political positions; more effective legislature</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Direct election of senate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Compulsory voting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. PM must come from lower house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. MPs cannot be cabinet members at the same time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Creation of legislative ordinary session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Smaller cabinet size</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Executive power</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strengthen the role of the executive; more efficient governance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. House dissolution not allowed during confidence motion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. More power to appoint and dismiss ministers, top officials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Party system</strong></td>
<td><strong>To improve the quality of those seeking political positions; to reduce vote-buying and candidate-selling; to reduce money politics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. SMD replaces bloc-voting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Funding for party development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Restrict party switching (must be member of party for 90 days before</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>election)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. PR-list second tier voting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. More oversight on campaign donations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. 5% threshold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Checks and Balances</strong></td>
<td><strong>To reduce corruption and abuse of power; to provide oversight on the National Assembly and other state agencies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creation of new independent bodies (e.g. Election Commission, National</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Rights Commission, Office of Ombudsman, Constitutional Court,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Counter-Corruption Commission)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author.
Table 7 illustrates the key dimensions of reforms that the 1997 Constitution puts in place. First, provisions were made to increase public participation in the political life and to empower ordinary citizens with new rights to guard against the abuse of state power. A total of 51 new rights were extended to Thai citizens as a result of this new constitution.\textsuperscript{70} Examples are the right to hold public hearings (article 59); community rights to preserve natural resources (article 56); the right to submit a petition for a bill consideration (article 170); and increased devolution of state power to local governments (articles 282-290). Boonlert Changyai, one of the 1997 Constitution drafters argue that these social rights were a flag ship of the constitution because they have been so poorly dealt with in the past.\textsuperscript{71}

**FIGURE 5: NEW INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS CREATED BY THE 1997 CONSTITUTION**

| 1. Election Commission of Thailand |
| 2. National Anti-Corruption Commission |
| 3. Office of the Ombudsman Thailand |
| 4. National Human Rights Commission |
| 5. Constitutional Court |
| 6. Central Administrative Court |
| 7. Office of the Auditor General Thailand |


Secondly, the 1997 constitution seeks to build a political environment conducive to good
governance. As discussed previously, the drafters' conception of "good governance" follows
along the same line as the King's notion of promoting "good" people to rule. In order to reduce
incentives for corrupt politicians to stay in politics or reduce the extent of vote buying and
money politics, a number of articles are written to bring about good governance, which in effect
would help improve democratic quality. The upper house, for instance, would be directly elected
for the first time by the populace (article 315). However, candidates would not be allowed to
campaign to dissuade political parties from intervening. The unprecedented measure is aimed to
reduce the influence of the "old elites" since the upper house has long been dominated by retired
generals, bureaucrats and public intellectuals. Chai-anan calls this "the informal political party"
or the "legislative arms" of the bureaucracy (Samudvanija: 1989, pp. 333-4). It was hoped that an
elected senate would make the National Assembly more democratic and the elected senates
would provide checks and balances for the lower house.

How can Thailand get rid of vote-buying politicians? The constitutional drafters reckon
that if more people vote, the cost of vote-buying would go up significantly for political parties.
As such, article 68 stipulates voting to be mandatory. Overseas nationals and absentee ballots are
also allowed. Electoral conduct will receive greater oversight from the newly created Election
Commission as well as other measures to hamper misconduct, such as counting ballots at each
polling station.

To attract better quality candidates to enter politics, the drafters put in measures place to
overhaul the entire electoral system. The previous system of bloc-voting, which Hicken (2006)
argues creates incentives for more corruption as candidates from the same parties are forced to
compete with one another, was done away with. A new electoral system is a mixed member
system of single-member district (SMD) at one tier, and a closed-list proportional representation in the second tier. SMD would reduce intra-party competition, while closed-list PR would create stronger incentives for party identification and reduce vote-buying opportunities. The combined effect of these measures is to help reduce the number of parties, force parties to develop national agenda and broad appeals, and strengthen the overall party system. Gone will be the days of personalistic campaigning, endless number of parties and lack of party roots in society, the drafters hope. To enhance government efficacy and stability, new rules require politicians to be a member of a political party at least 90 days before elections to dissuade party switching. The prime minister must also come from MPs, and if an MP wants to be in a cabinet, he must resign his seat.

A major concern for the reformists was the abuse of power by the political elites and state agencies. To curb power abuse, new independent institutions are created to provide checks and balances against the administrative branch of powers. A Constitutional Court was established (article 255) to ensure the rights given by the 1997 constitution are protected. The Ombudsman was created (article 196) to keep the abuse of the state and government in check. The National Human Rights Commission was created (article 199) to allow the protection of human rights. The National Anti-Corruption Commission was established (article 297) to reduce and deter corruption by political leaders, in particular. The NACC is notable because it has the power to persecute those in political positions, remove someone from office and enforce declaration of assets for politicians, of which are all unprecedented in previous constitutions.

The last notable change the constitution tries to bring about is a stronger executive. Given the history of weak and unstable coalition governments in the past, the constitutional drafters sought ways to lengthen government's term and empower the prime minister to govern more
effectively. As such, the prime minister can dissolve parliament and call new elections within 60 days (although he cannot do so during a no confidence motion). This, in combination with the 90-day party membership requirement, would make it very difficult for MPs to defect from a party, or a coalition party to cause government collapse. Moreover, the prime minister has the power to remove and appoint cabinet ministers at will (article 217)\textsuperscript{72} and no less than two-fifth of the lower house is required to have a no confidence motion on the prime minister (article 185).

**Criticisms of the 1997 Constitution**

While supporters heralded the success of the 1997 constitutional engineering, the so-called "People's Constitution" contains illiberal and conservative elements that do not necessarily facilitate democratic development. Indeed, despite its open and participatory process of constitutional drafting, the constitution itself remains an elitist invention. From the very onset, when the idea of a constitutional drafting assembly was conceived in 1994, the main supporters wanted only experts and not politicians to be part of the assembly.\textsuperscript{73} As the situation evolved and the drafting committee took various forms, politicians found ways to exert their presence. The issue of public participation in the drafting process was not of consensus, but rather controversial, as one group of reformists only wanted "expert opinion" only, while the other sought public engagement.\textsuperscript{74} The latter group won the battle but with serious opposition. Nonetheless, the final 99-member CDA was largely driven by the expert members, not the elected ones. The majority of these so-called specialists are those experienced in the law or

\textsuperscript{72} The actual wording of the constitution is that the PM advices the King to remove or appoint cabinet ministers.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, p. 17.
political science profession. Consequently, the constitution reflects values and ideologies of those in the elite circle.

One great example is article 107 that requires MP candidates to have a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree. Such requirement is completely out of touch with reality as only 5% of the Thai population completed tertiary education in 2000.\(^{75}\) In effect, the degree prerequisite discriminates the majority of the population and preserves a position of MP only for the educated few.\(^{76}\) This requirement also reflects the reformists' idea of what "good" and "capable" politicians should be. Better educated people are needed to govern the country. This article faced some resistance, particularly from the structuralist-reformists, many of whom believe this closes the doors for the majority of the Thai people to enter politics. "This [article] makes those without degrees second-class citizens and should be considered discriminatory," argues a pro-poor activist.\(^{77}\)

The 1997 constitution also reflects a strong emphasis on "good and moral people" - a rather subjective quality. The constitutional drafters sought to put in place institutional mechanisms to reign in good, capable people into politics. This reflects deep-seated belief that politicians are usually bad and corrupt people and they are one of the root causes of the broken political system. There are several problems with this subjective standard. First, who gets to define who is "good" and "moral"? Given that the "good leaders" that Thailand have had in the past are largely unelected (Prem and Anand), what does it say about the country's democracy when the qualities of "good" political elites are those who are perceived as impartial and politically neutral? How realistic is it to expect people without vested interests to enter politics

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\(^{75}\) See: World Bank EdStats.

\(^{76}\) An exception to this is for those who have been MPs before.

for the greater good of society? Politicians naturally are focused on getting elected and the extent
to which one could create incentives for "moral" people to enter politics to "help the country"
remains doubtful.

Moreover, many of the new provision of civil and community rights promulgated in the
1997 constitution are seen as ineffectual without legislative guarantee. One of the flaws of the
1997 constitution argues a drafter, Somkit Lertpaitoon, is that "many of the rights guaranteed
under the constitution cannot take effect without legislation." 78 This is a point of much
contention with the people's sector which demands more legislation to implement these rights
provision in the constitution. Bamrung Kayotha from the Assembly of the Poor contends that
many of the constitutional provisions the poor really need are likely to be of no use due to the
lack of further legislation. "The state tries to prevent the constitution from taking effect. Issues
like community rights, protection of traditional way of life, conflict over access to land and
resources are all very important to the poor. If they don't become legislative acts, they would be
of little use to the poor." 79

The draft constitution also elicited some strong opposition from the public. It's a myth
that because it is referred to as the "people's constitution" that it means it is widely popular.
Waves of protests between the supporters - "the Green Mob" - of the draft and their counterparts
heated up weeks before parliament vote. Some 30,000 village chiefs and kamnans from mostly
the North and the Northeast were protesting against the draft. 80 Another royalist group that calls
itself "Those who love their monarch" (กลุ่มผู้รักเจ้า) was among the opposition that argues the new

78 Lertpaitoon, S. (2007). Ratthathammanun chabap mai tong di kwa doem [The new constitution must be better
79 King Prajadipok Institute (KPI). (2003). Five years of political reforms under the new constitution. Bangkok:
KPI Press, p. 547.
80 Thai Post. (1997, September 5). Kamnan ma ik 3 muen - si khiao chumnum yai [30,000 kamnans are coming - the
constitution is seeking to change the regime from a constitutional monarchy to a republic. Meanwhile, some 3,000 supporters drawn from the Student Federation of Thailand, pro-democracy groups, labor and NGO groups gathered to support the draft. Pipob Thongchai, a senior NGO activist who later became one of PAD's top leaders, was among the supporters. "We need to put pressure on the politicians so that they don't back down and let the draft through." At some point they shouted Anand's name as he joined the pro-constitution movement.

Politicians, especially those in government, put up a fierce fight. Kwamwang Mai's Sanoh Thienthong, threatened house dissolution a possibility to prevent the passage of the constitutional draft. "Don't listen to anyone who says if you don't agree with the draft, the country would descend into chaos." Mun Patthanothai, an MP from the government's coalition partner, Prachakorn Thai Party, echoes:

"This is the worst constitutional draft ever...especially article 205 that prohibits MPs to take up cabinet posts at the same time. I think most MPs also disagree with this....The drafters think they could attract good people into politics. But given how the system works, only children from rich families and the capitalist groups to enter politics."

Other MPs also believe the new constitution is biased towards bigger parties and put the small and medium-size parties at a great disadvantage. Democrat MP, Kowit Tharana from the

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85 Ibid.
opposition, argues: "Small parties will lose out. How could they find 'good' people to fill up their party list? The only way for them to survive would be to merge with big parties."86

Others argue that what appears to be a "good governance" constitution is far from reality. The 1997 constitution did not emphasize good governance because it did not create mechanisms to hold the ruling class and civil servants accountable to their citizens. The way the constitution was written suggests that the public has to shoulder the initial costs of creating good governance87. For instance those who want to push the legislation need to get 50,000 signatures and have to pay for the process in order to petition to parliament. Those who seek transparency or acquire public service data have to pay for the process of obtaining such data. The 1997 constitution discusses good governance superficially, argue its critics, especially on the issues of transparency and participation. Poor people would have a hard time either producing sufficient documentation or financial resources to file a petition.

Kanin Boonsuwan, one of the drafters of the reform constitution, who later became a force behind the PAD Movement admits that after seven years since the new constitution was used, Thailand becomes stuck between a rock and a hard place.88 For the past 7 years the people who benefited from the new constitution are the politicians who fought fiercely against the positive changes we tried to push for and won, laments Kanin. "These politicians are still as power hungry as ever; they sought to influence the media to benefit them electorally, and once they're in power they abuse it; they buy themselves into power"89. The constitution came about to

89 Ibid, p. 12.
rid the system of crooked politicians and replace them with good, capable people, but Thailand ended up getting the opposite.

More criticism levied against the People's Constitution would surface following the coming to power of Thai Rak Thai party and the leadership of Thaksin Shinawatra. However, before we proceed, another parallel crisis emerged as the tense political reform unfolded: the Asian Financial Crisis. Indeed, the initial impact of the 1997 Constitution was overshadowed by the worst economic crash in modern Thai history. While no one has yet to agree on what actually caused the crisis, there was a consensus among economists that weak institutions are largely to blame (Sachs & Woo: 2000; Garten: 1999; Stiglitz: 2000).

**THE 1997 ASIAN FINANCIAL CRISIS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS**

After four decades of high-speed capitalist development, which put Thailand among the "East Asian Tigers," the country nearly went bankrupt over night when it failed to defend the Thai Baht against weeks of speculative attacks in the summer of 1997. By July, the Thai government was forced to abandon its peg to the dollar and devalued its currency by 20%. The state coffers rapidly dried up as the central bank spent some $23 billion defending the currency. The government had no choice but to seek a bail-out from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This set in a motion a financial contagion that spread to neighboring countries and beyond. Over the coming months the Thai Baht continued a free fall. As Tejapira (2006) puts it: "As the crisis unfolded, nearly two-thirds of big Thai capitalists went bankrupt, thousands of companies folded, and two thirds of the pre-crisis private commercial banks went under and changed hands. One million workers lost their jobs and three million more fell below the poverty
The IMF bailouts further deepened the crisis by causing massive social dislocations as the government was obliged to cut social programs and followed strict austerity measures.

One of the defining characteristics that precipitated the financial crisis in Thailand was weak corporate governance. For many economists, it was not surprising that Thailand was the first victim of the crisis due to its shaky macroeconomic foundations, such as accumulation of bad loans, heavy external borrowing, and corrupt and mismanaged banking system (Radelet & Sachs: 2000; Haggard: 2000; Corsetti, Pesenti & Roubini: 1999). However, what stood out to be a major contributing factor to this weakness were the close ties among banks, firms and politicians. Charumilind, Kali and Wiwattanakantang's detailed study (2003) on more than 350 Thai firms prior to the crisis finds that "connections" with large Thai banks and politicians allow firms to gain preferential access to long-term debt - with less collateral required and more short-term loans - than those without connections. These connected firms reciprocate by giving financial support to politicians as well as other kickbacks.

Prior to the 1997 crisis, the majority of the business figures stayed away from being directly involved in politics, with only a few exceptions. A major impediment to business leaders joining politics is the existing patronage-based politics that is both time-consuming and resource-intensive (Prasirtsuk: 2007). One has to build local networks with key vote canvassers over time to generate electoral support. For these reasons, provincial bosses (political mafias) have long had an advantage in the political arena. Another barrier to entry for business leaders is that they may not be willing to have their finances probed as politicians often do. Not that the Thai system does not have lax rules about scrutinizing politicians' assets, but 1997 constitution has enforced stricter guidelines for asset declaration for those seeking political office.

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Yet, the 1997 crisis prompted a number of key business figures to jump ship and get into politics full-on. Ironically, if being connected to politicians helped to propel the crash of 1997, what major Thai firms learned instead was that the only way to survive was to increase, not decrease, their ties to politics. A number of business leaders who survived the economic crash concluded the only way to protect their business interests is to run the country themselves. More importantly, Prasirtsuk (2007) argues, as globalization and push for economic liberalization intensify, key business firms, especially those dependent on government concessions, are wary of leaving their faith in the hands of non-business savvy politicians and bureaucrats.

FIGURE 6: PROFESSIONS OF CANDIDATES IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS (1995-2005)

Source: Election Commission of Thailand
Note: Data for elections 1995 and 1996 are for elected MPs only. Also note there are changes in the ECT’s categories of professions that may affect the results.
PR = party-list MPs SMD = single member district MPs
Thaksin Shinawatra, who made his fortune from telecommunication concessions explained his decision to found a new party, Thai Rak Thai, in 1998: "To bring Thailand into the new era requires leadership that understands sales strategies so we can compete in the world economy. Business elites have the advantage over career politicians because they understand the complex nature of business." Figure 7 shows that candidates who were drawn from business profession overtook those who were career politicians following the Asian Financial Crisis. In the 1996 general election, business professionals account for 29% of MPs, while career politicians account for 59%. By 2005, the number of career politicians running for MPs dropped to 17% in the party-list system, and 23% in single member districts. As for their business counterparts, the figures rose to 28% and 27% respectively.

As more businessmen entered politics to defend their business interests, there are also more opportunities for rent-seeking. Most major business conglomerates in Thailand are family-run and largely Sino-Thais. While a few are publicly traded, the founding families manage to maintain large shares of ownership (Nikomborirak & Tangkitvanich: 1999). This makes rent-seeking easier when some of the family members become politicians. Second, opportunities for rents are not concentrated in certain political figures, but diversified among many political actors. This means that private rents can be sought through various positions in the political arena, be it in the cabinet, lower or upper houses. Imai’s (2006, p. 241) detailed study of politically connected firms in Thailand between 2001-2005 show that political participation of family members yield private rents and these economic benefits are large when family members are cabinet ministers. Third, the new electoral system introduced by the 1997 constitution made it easier for business elites to enter politics as party-list candidates. Since it is a closed-list

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### TABLE 8: FORBES' THAILAND RICHEST IN POLITICS (2005-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Net Worth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shinawatra</td>
<td>Thai Rak Thai</td>
<td>Founders, Thaksin (PM)</td>
<td>$1.3 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiarawanon</td>
<td>Thai Rak Thai</td>
<td>Founding member, party list MP (Veerachai Veeramethikul)</td>
<td>$1.4 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodharamik</td>
<td>Thai Rak Thai</td>
<td>Deputy head, party list MP, cabinet minister (Adisai Bodharamik)</td>
<td>$248* (son, Pitch Bodharamik)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maleenont</td>
<td>Thai Rak Thai</td>
<td>Deputy head, party list MP and cabinet minister (Pracha Maleenont)</td>
<td>$380 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophonpanich</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Party advisor, MP, cabinet minister (Kanlaya Sophonpanich)</td>
<td>$440 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chirativath</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Financier</td>
<td>$485 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirivadhanapakdi</td>
<td>Thai Rak Thai</td>
<td>Close ties to cabinet ministers (Chaiyoth Sasomsab and Wiruth Techapaibul)</td>
<td>$3 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asavabhokin</td>
<td>Thai Rak Thai</td>
<td>Financier</td>
<td>$540 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoovidhya</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Financier (ties to Bhirombhakdi and Banthadtan families - both influential in Democrat Party)</td>
<td>$2.2 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahakijsiri</td>
<td>Thai Rak Thai</td>
<td>Deputy head and party list MP (Prayuth Mahakijsiri)</td>
<td>$365 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jungrungroengkij</td>
<td>Thai Rak Thai</td>
<td>Party secretary, party list MP and cabinet minister (Suriya Jungrungroengkij)</td>
<td>$420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhirombhakdi</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>MP candidate, minister's secretary (Jitpat Bhirombhakdi)</td>
<td>$500 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forbes Southeast Asia's Richest (2005)
proportional system, influential business families who have been financiers of certain parties could become party-list candidates without having to have established local networks and patronage like their counterparts in the constituency. This explains why there are more businessmen in the PR system than SMD in both 2001 and 2005 elections.

This proliferation of "crony capitalism" stands in stark contrast to the intentions of the political reforms in the 1990s. It is precisely these "conflicts of interests" between family businesses and politics that the reformists have sought to rectify both through the 1997 Constitution and other economic reforms. There are a number of provisions that are specifically designed to prevent conflict of interests in the 1997 constitution, such as ministers are not allowed to hold shares in public companies (article 209); members of the Assembly are not allowed to be granted concessions from the state (articles 110, 128, 208); and anyone in political positions must declare their assets and liabilities before taking office. But because business conglomerates in Thailand are family-run, members who joined politics simply transfer their shares to their spouses or relatives. The wife of Warathee Rathanakorn, a Peau Thai MP, transferred his and her shares of the family-run tour businesses to her mother prior to him taking office, for example.92 Kanlaya Sopohonpanich, member of the banking tycoon Sophonpanich Family, transferred shares worth 300 million baht to her children and their spouses prior to taking office during the Abhisit Administration.93

The super rich entered politics in Thailand full throttle when they formed Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party in 1999. Although it is not uncommon for the wealthy to finance or be involved in

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politics\textsuperscript{94} (Table 9), what is so unique about the TRT is the extent of wealth concentration in the party. The Bangkok Post reports that the ten richest families, which owned more than 40\% of market capitalization of the Stock Exchange of Thailand, have close ties to the Thaksin government \cite[2004]{Pinthong}. Many of the rich inside the TRT party made their wealth as concessionaires or through long-standing close ties to political elites. This raises a potential for conflict of interest when they hold positions that allow them to make national policies and agendas that could directly influence their business interests. When concessionaires are in political position, particularly in policy-making, there is a danger that it can lead to monopolization. "When monopolization occurs as a product of the political process, it can lead to less competition as those with political power legislate or have access to state resources in ways that hampers competition," argues leading economist at a think-tank, TDRI.\textsuperscript{95}

**Civil Society and the Politics of Reform**

This research uses "civil society organizations" or "non-governmental organizations" as a proxy for "civil society." Given that there is no consensus on how to measure civil society, I adopt a more conservative measure of civil society by making a reference to organized groups in the non-profit sector. The majority of the civil society organizations referred in this work are registered with the government and have permits to operate as non-profit organizations.

This chapter discusses specifically the non-profit sector that deals with social and labor related issues. This group constitutes approximately 30\% of all nonprofit sector in 2007. This is primarily due to three major reasons. First, the social work NGOs have played the biggest role,

\textsuperscript{94} Previously Kijsangkhom party was formed by leading businessmen at the time but their wealth dwarfed in comparison to those founding Thai Rak Thai.

in comparison to other types of NGOs, in the political reform process since the early 1990s. Second, due to their high-profile nature, these NGOs have shaped and influenced the discourse on popular politics and reforms in Thailand. Lastly, it is possible to measure the extent to which these NGOs have any effect on policy-making.

**FIGURE 7: NUMBERS OF NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR REVENUE (1997-2007)**

![Diagram showing numbers of non-profit organizations and their revenue (1997-2007)](image)

Source: National Statistical Office (Thailand)

The period of the 1990s sees the greatest expansion of the civil society sector - known locally as "the people's sector." Pipob Thongchai, a veteran NGO leader and activist, who later leads the PAD movement, argues that there are roughly three types of NGOs: 1) social work; 2) supportive of state initiatives and 3) supportive of alternative initiatives. The third one is the most common type. In his view, NGOs ought to reduce the role of state and empower the people. "If you empower people but you don't reduce the state power, you'd never get anywhere" (Seksarn: 2006, p. 158). For many community-based NGOs, people can become empowered if they can determine their own way of life and their community; determine their mode of
production and become owners of natural resources in order to ensure sustainability. The "people's sector" also aims to curb the state tendency to abuse power, because historically the centralized state derived its legitimacy not from the people but from its alliance with capitalists and local warlords (*chao pho*).

**TABLE 9: TYPE OF NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION IN % (2007)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Northeast</th>
<th>Bangkok</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Work</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funeral(^{96})</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Statistics Office (Thailand)

In Thailand the development of civil society and popular politics really emerged in the post-war period. Even though there has always been civil society in the broad sense, the nonprofit sector in Thailand officially began in 1979 (Prasertkul: 2005). The role of NGOs is to negotiate the space between state and society. NGOs in the Third World emerge to be the voices of the grassroots and take care of those marginalized by the market economy. The National Statistics Office (Thailand) conducts a survey of the non-profit sector every five years, with the most recent one in 2007. According to its report, the sector has grown exponentially since the 1980s, with more than 65,000 registered organizations in 2007 (Figure 8). The 1990s saw the greatest expansion of the non-profit sector as the number of registered NGOs increased nearly five-fold between 1997 and 2002. The majority of NGOs are of religious nature (63%), while NGOs working on social issues, constitute 26%. Most of these NGOs however are registered in

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\(^{96}\) The “funeral” section of NGOs is an actual category of NGOs according to the National Office of Statistics (Thailand). It includes organizations such as Poh Tek Tung Foundation.
Bangkok (Table 9). Since the statistics only consider "officially registered" organizations, I reckon this is a conservative estimate of the actual size of the nonprofit sector. The sector employed nearly a million workers and had revenue of 137 billion baht, some 65% is derived from donation.

Civil society organizations really proliferated in the 1990s as a result of a more open, democratic and inclusive political environment. As Figure 7 shows, the number of registered NGOs increased more than five-fold between 1997 and 2002. It is difficult to estimate the actual size of civil society as a whole, thus relying on the official record of registered NGOs gives us a glimpse of the overall picture of the people's sector. While the majority of these NGOs are involved in religious activities, some 27% of them are involved in "social work" which is a broad category that includes socio-political activism of all kinds. Many of the leaders of the Black May uprising are drawn from pro-poor and pro-democracy groups.

The 1997 Constitutions also provides hope for a more open and people-oriented politics for civil society organizations - many of whom hold the structuralist view in the drafting process. The new constitution’s provisions about the resource management rights of traditional communities energized the iconic rural NGO campaign for community forest legislation. The 1997 constitution was intended to emphasize popular participation in politics because for the past 60 years, with 15 constitutions, popular politics received the least amount of emphasis by drafters. Citizen's involvement in politics should extend beyond the ballots and constitute the foundation of democracy. It goes without saying that the notion of creating checks and balances to weigh down the power of politicians has always been present in Thai society.

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97 The majority of the PAD movement is made up off registered NGOs. However, as the movement evolved, new groups were created that were not registered NGOs but civic groups within the PAD. This suggests to me that the number of registered NGOs is only a part of a much broader civil society.

98 This is a conservative estimate, given this counts only the officially registered ones.

A more mobilized society combined with consecutively weak governments did not, however, give rise to an anti-democratic movement. Rather, what we see in Thailand during this rather turbulent period are pro-reform movements following the Black May uprising and anti-incumbent mobilization after the 1997 crash. In 1998, a backlash against the austerity measures resulted in a wave of discontent focusing on economic nationalism. Some sections of the business and academic community mobilized to oppose 11 bills they dubbed "11 bills to sell off the nation", proposed by the Chuan Leekpai government. The opposition alliance is loosely referred to as the "People's Alliance to Save the Nation" (พันธมิตกู้ชาติ), composed of some 45 different organizations, including those leading the Black May uprising that aimed to oppose IMF reform packages. This alliance draws support from the State Enterprise Confederation, the Confederation of Democracy, Assembly of Lawyers, Retail and Wholesale Trade Association, etc. The opposition came out to protest against globalization, anti IMF, anti FTA, etc. Moreover, Thailand's largest civil society organization, the Assembly of the Poor, also staged its longest 99-day rally in 1997 and won "unprecedented concessions" from the government. 100

This protest wave of nationalist mobilization pushed for parliament dissolution and a number of policy changes, as opposed to seeking to overthrowing the democratic regime altogether. This happened despite the fact many of the same figures 101 behind the anti-government and anti-IMF mobilization will, several years later, be instrumental in the emergence of the PAD movement. The Alliance sought to maximize greater access to power provided by the 1997 Constitution to stop the passage of the 11 bills. They did so by submitting a petition to revoke the bill proposal. At the same time, the alliance also organized mass rallies in opposition

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101 Pracha Liaopairat, Somsak Kosaisuk, Prasong Soonsiri, Suriyasai Katasila, Pipob Thongchai, Kanin Boonsuwan
to the Chaun government.\textsuperscript{102} By 1999, more protests from activists, academics, students and state enterprises took place, calling for Chuan's resignation and house dissolution.\textsuperscript{103} Throughout all this, the Chuan government reshuffled cabinet three times in the hope of surviving a no-confidence motion despite rising public discontent.\textsuperscript{104} Yet, the government was besieged by internal scandals, threats of defection\textsuperscript{105} and it eventually succumbed to a collapse when the House was dissolved in November 2000.

Anti-democratic mobilization never arose during this period, despite dire economic conditions, highly contentious politics and an actively mobilized mass for two reasons. First, when political conflict reached an impasse, the conflict was able to be resolved within the formal democratic institution. In the 1990s this often means governments dissolve the house when faced with a crisis, both from within the coalition government itself or from societal pressure. Given the fluid nature of the party system, a new election is not a bad option for most parties. Since there have been successive coalition governments in the 1990s, major parties of all sizes feel they have a fair chance of being in government again if they could make the right deals. Secondly, channels for opposition were not blocked or rendered ineffective in ways that opposition cannot have its voice. Opposition parties could threaten a no confidence vote if they can gain support from two-fifths of the parliament. Opposition movements on the streets, such as the Assembly of the Poor, were able to make some inroads with the policymakers. In essence,


\textsuperscript{105} Sanan Kajornprasart (Democrat MP at the time) was found guilty of declaring false assets and forced to resign; opposition parties threatened a boycott and House speaker, wan normathat threatened to resign.
the democratic system was still working to channel grievances and provide access to power for the opposition.

THE RISE OF THAKSIN AND THE THAI RAK THAI PARTY

A telecom tycoon and a clever, charismatic, articulate politician, Thaksin Shinawatra quickly recognized that the rural folks are at a disadvantage against the Bangkok elites in all aspects except for one: its size. Despite exuberant economic growth in the past three decades or so, more than half of Thailand's population remains in the countryside and the gap between rich and poor continues to widen. Politically, if a party can conquer the hearts and minds of those in the rural areas, it translates into a lot of votes. Armed with a series of populist policies, Thaksin set out to conquer the hearts and minds of the rural poor, at which he spectacularly succeeded. In January 2001, Thaksin's newly found Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party won a landslide victory in its first election. TRT gained almost a majority of the seats in parliament, missing the mark by only two seats. For the next year TRT absorbed additional small and medium sized parties and became the first party in Thailand's history to secure an absolute majority.

Thaksin's electoral victory as the leader of Thai Rak Thai is all the more incredible, when one looks at the electoral records of the 1990s. As we can see in Figure 9, no party had ever won more than one-third of the seats in national elections since the Black May uprising. As a new political party, TRT was able to garner 49.6% seats in parliament - two seats shy of an absolute majority. The runner-up, the Democrats, merely got 25.6% of seats - nearly half that of TRT. This trend of TRT winning landslide elections continue through to 2005 as well as following the 2006 military coup. Thai Rak Thai would not emerge as an invincible political party, its electoral dominance would have made national elections far less competitive.
Scholars have sought to explain the astonishing rise and success of Thai Rak Thai party. Phongpaichit & Baker (2004) attribute to Thaksin’s wealth and massive business and government connections to his party success. Others have pointed to institutional changes, such as new constitution and electoral system rules (Ockey: 2003; Hewison: 2004; Hicken: 2006; Pongsudhirak: 2008). Part of Thaksin’s popular appeal to Thai people is undoubtedly his populist politics. As Sinpeng & Kuhonta (2012) pinpoint, the use of populist policies (or policies at all) was surprising given most Thai political parties garnered support largely through their patronage networks, not programmatic policies.

CONCLUSION

I argue in this chapter that the political reforms in the post-Black May period exemplify a contestation over both the meaning of democracy and the way in which the current political
system in Thailand ought to be changed. While the reformist elites agreed that reforms are needed to make the Thai polity more open and democratic, there is serious disagreement over how to go about it. The end result of these reformist elites' compromise is the "1997 People's Constitution," which paved ways both for the rise of the Thai Rak Thai Party and subsequently the emergence of the People's Alliance for Democracy movement. The rise of Thaksin and his Thai Rak Thai Party presented a shock to some, while hope to other reformists who painstakingly sought to reform the political system to bring the country towards the democratic road.

A detailed analysis of the reform period in the 1990s shows that indeed the so-called "progressive politics of reform" contains many contradictions. While the reform process itself is commendable for its unprecedented participatory nature, the 1997 constitution itself is neither inherently liberal nor democratic. The content of constitution reflects that different vested interests of the reformist elites who were tasked to complete its draft. Understanding the illiberal, undemocratic and conservative elements within the 1997 constitution explains the rise of the anti-democratic movement that emerged in 2005.

Another key point made in this chapter is that this reform decade represents the pro-reform movement by those opposed to military-dominant politics. The reformist elites were hopeful that changes in the formal democratic institutions, such as the constitution, electoral system, and the senate, for instance, will provide new incentives and constraints on the behavior and conduct of political elites in ways that would facilitate democratic development. The success gained by the reformist elites raise expectation of the future of democratic politics in Thailand. This "gap" between the expectations of what democracy in Thailand would be and the reality of what it is once Thaksin came to power becomes the driving force behind anti-democratic
mobilization. In essence, Thaksin and his government exemplifies the very opposite of what these reformists envision. The realization of the unintended consequences of their reforms provide grounds for the rise of the PAD movement.

The economic crash of 1997 serves as a parallel crisis to the process of political reform. While the crisis helps to propel the passage of the "People's Constitutions," it has been both a blessing and challenge to the Thai polity. For one, it had shown that the democratic regime in the 1990s, despite the party system's weak institutionalization, unstable governments and seemingly unresponsive, that it can resolve conflicts through democratic channels. However, the financial crisis provides grounds for the super rich to get directly involved in politics. The implications of this will contrast the intentions of the 1990s reformists and set in motion the rise of an anti-democratic mobilization.

Despite the frequent government change, an increasingly mobilized society, and the most severe economic crisis in contemporary times, an anti-democratic movement did not emerge in Thailand during the 1990s. There are three key reasons for this. First, there is alternation of power and significant uncertainty as to the makeup of government. Political leaders feel included in the political arena and they all feel they have a fair chance of being in government. What many scholars criticize as "weakly institutionalized party system" indeed helps elites to work out an informal power-sharing in the sense that no one shall be marginalized or excluded from power for long. The military gets its budget and no one meddles with its internal structure. Political parties have a fair chance of winning the next election or be part of a multi-party coalition government. Between 1992 and 2001, small, medium and large parties rotated power, coalesced or opposed one another. Factions were fluid - they join a new party when they please and there is no "fixed" political arrangement. Since parties are neither rooted in society, nor have much
programmatic appeals, party switching is not a costly action for politicians to take. There are no
friends or foes forever in this political arena. Losing an election is not detrimental because
parties feel they can wait their turn to be in power next time. Given a government lasts only 18
months on average, the wait is not very long.

Second, the society became more open and inclusive in the aftermath of the Black May
uprising. The opening up of the society is illustrated partly by a greater degree of activism and a
massive expansion of the civil society sector, as discussed in this chapter. Civil society
organizations were able to gain concessions from the central government, and even held political
elites responsible for their action for the time (Pathmanand: 2001). Moreover, the Thai political
system became more devolved in part due to the decentralization in the early 1990s, in which
sub-national governments were created to meet local demands.

Lastly, an executive can be dislodged from power and a government replaced in multiple
ways. The mechanism for power alternation is not crippled or rendered ineffective. A coalition
partner or even faction can defect from a governing coalition, and the government can collapse.
Pressure from social groups, particularly through street protests, can significantly delegitimize
the coalition government, and causes it to breakdown. Because coalition governments in the
1990s were so weak and fragmented, opposition groups, be it in the formal or informal
democratic channels feel they can influence the course of politics in one way or the other. The
Chuan government (1997-2000) tried to hold on to power as long as they could despite frequent
and intense protests as well as numerous internal bickering with the coalition partners, but they
eventually succumbed to house dissolution.
5. THE EMERGENCE OF THE PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY

"Democracy is not my goal. Democracy is merely a vehicle."

- Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, December 11, 2003

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the Thaksin regime and the emergence of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) as an anti-democratic movement. The key questions addressed in this section are: 1) what explains anti-democratic mobilization? and 2) how did the PAD contribute to the successful breakdown of Thailand's democracy? I apply the first two stages of my institutional blockage theory - the process of blockage and opposition alliance formation - in this section. I show that the PAD began as diverse, separated groups of anti-incumbent opposition movements against the Thaksin government and his policies. The opposition mobilization intensified as the process of institutional blockage unfolded. The opposition forces then formed an alliance, which became the PAD movement, initially as a strategy to increase the opposition's bargaining leverage with the incumbent. As the opposition grew and its demands went unmet, the movement began to adopt an anti-democratic stance. This latter point will be discussed in chapter 6.
At each stage of the process of institutional blockage, both the government and the opposition have a number of options. Their chosen strategy affects whether or not the process of institutional blockage continues. As such, both the sequence and timing of this process affects the outcome. When opposition groups feel they are cut off from access to power now, and in the foreseeable future, they appeal to nondemocratic, alternative sources of power to reverse, or at minimum, halt, this process of institutional blockage. If these nondemocratic institutions respond to the opposition forces, then we see a complete democratic collapse.

An examination of the Thaksin government also reveals how its marginalization of opposition voices was perceived as threatening to basic democratic freedoms. Both the political dominance of the Thaksin government and his increasingly illiberal rule had, for his opposition, gone beyond the democratic realms. As I will show in detail, each opposition group that mobilized against Thaksin was both adversely affected by his policies and experienced political intimidation and harassment. The closing down of opposition space and encroachments on fundamental democratic freedoms underscored the nature of institutional blockage during the Thaksin era.

While much of the focus of this research is on the PAD Movement, I will also discuss the broader "Yellow Shirts Movement" of which the PAD was part. The Yellow Shirts encompassed three major groups. The engine of the movement was a loose network of alliances, which was the PAD. Supporting the movement, albeit indirectly, were sections of the armed forces and key individuals close to the palace. I discuss these broader networks and the PAD as the Yellow Shirts but am careful to distinguish among the three. This chapter will break down the key groups and actors inside the PAD and will also discuss their key allies as part of the broader Yellow Shirt Movement. The PAD set a stage for the coup d'état while the armed forces
launched the coup with support from those close to the palace. These three components were, I argue, crucial for a successful overthrow of a popularly elected government.

The emergence of this anti-democratic mobilization and the breakdown of democracy is regarded, from the perspective of some of the 1990s reformists, as an extension of the reform process that began more than a decade prior. Viewed in this light, many PAD supporters believe the coup d'état was not only acceptable, but "necessary" to resolve a political deadlock caused partly by the unintended consequences of the 1997 constitution and to pave the way for further reforms. Eventually, another constitution was passed in 2007, reversing some of the "progress" made in the previous constitution. "The fact that the Thaksin regime lasted for some five years is evidence that the 'system' and political structures set out by the 1997 constitution are problematic, even though many believed the real problem is with 'people' and not the 'system," reveals Somkid Lertpaitoon, a law academic and a 1997 constitutional drafter.106

THE THAKSIN GOVERNMENT AND THE BASIS FOR OPPOSITION

The nature of the Thaksin government, lasting from 2001 - 2006, created conditions under which the PAD emerged. This administration is marked by two polar extremes. On the one hand, Thaksin was without a doubt Thailand's most popular elected prime minister, evidenced by his landslide electoral victories and public opinion polls. On the other hand, he is also among the most loathed by the opposition - so reviled that they were willing to overthrow him via a military coup d'état. This section analyzes the Thaksin era by first looking at what explains Thaksin's popularity. Then, we examine the causes for opposition. This section is divided into two parts. The first is what Thaksin and his government actually did to deserve criticism. The second

examines the discourse constructed by the opposition to convince the public that Thaksin was a threat to the nation. I argue later, however, that both of these elements helped to propel anti-incumbent mobilization. However, what is apparent from the emergence of the PAD's *anti-democratic* mobilization is that institutional blockages occurred both in formal and informal channels.

Thaksin's immense popularity is derived largely from two sources: his policies and his leadership style. Despite being one of Thailand's richest men, Thaksin marketed himself as the man of the people. When Thaksin founded Thai Rak Thai (TRT), he sought ways to capture the hearts and minds of the rural poor. His earlier experience in politics, with the Palang Dharma Party, which was ironically led by one of Black May uprising's leaders and one of the PAD Movement's top men, Chamlong Srimuang, was not successful. Before running for the 2001 national election, Thaksin toured the country to talk with various NGOs, activist groups and people in the countryside to assess their needs and problems. The mastermind behind TRT's famous populist policies, Somkid Jatusripitak, discussed what is behind the party's slogan "New Thinking, New Action" (คิดใหม่ ทำใหม่):

*We [Thailand] need to strengthen the base of the economy....Previously high GDP growth was concentrated at the very top. There was no triggering down to the rural areas...We can't compete in the global economy if our strength is our cheap labor. Therefore we need policies like debt moratorium for farmers, for example.*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 Baht Healthcare</td>
<td>Aimed to create universal healthcare by offering a 30-baht fee ($1) for each visit to a healthcare unit regardless of procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Tambon One Product (OTOP)</td>
<td>Promote local products and wisdom through state subsidies. Encourage Thai producers to export their goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Million Village Fund</td>
<td>One million baht ($33,000) given to each village nationwide as development fund to be managed by the community itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt Moratorium for Farmers</td>
<td>Debt relief for farmers for at least 3 years, no interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMEs Subsidies</td>
<td>Government subsidies to aid small and medium-size enterprises (investment, development and export promotion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers' Subsidies</td>
<td>Debt restructuring for farmers, co-operative development, debt relief with private banks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People's Bank</td>
<td>Target low-income families who want to borrow but lack credit; aimed to keep them off loan sharks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income Housing</td>
<td>Government housing for low-income citizens nationwide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education loan</td>
<td>Students from low-income families can take government loans for education to be paid back with low interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author's compilation.

The popular pro-poor policies were indeed part of TRT's economic grand strategy, called "the Dual Track Development Strategy." The dual-track policy was an effort to maintain stable economic growth: a slowdown in exports due to slackening external demand would be met with a boost in domestic demand through government policy measures and, conversely, domestic demand stimulation would be held back when exports picked up. The key sectors to be targeted were the manufacturing, export-oriented sectors as well as the agricultural sector. Thaksin's
economic team\textsuperscript{108} strongly believes in the need to overhaul the economic structure so that the economy would not succumb to another crisis like in 1997. "How is it that Thailand is wealthier overall but people are poorer? We're too dependent on exports and foreign investment...and such growth increases inequality. We've long neglected the gap between urban and rural and between industrial and agricultural sectors," argues Somkid.\textsuperscript{109}

Pro-poor policies (Table 10) were important for TRT, not only because they were in line with the party's economic thinking, but because they were also crucial for its electoral success. TRT wanted to have concrete policies to drive the party - a rarity for a party system whose existing parties were largely based on either patronage or corporate interests. Having policies targeting those in the rural areas, which still represent the majority of Thailand, was also be necessary to win an election. Given that the majority of the brains behind TRT were not familiar with rural needs, they reached out to a number of key NGOs and activists for their input on pro-poor schemes, such as Dr. Prawes Wasi and Praphat Panyachatrak (Pasuk & Baker: 2010).

The socioeconomic context for TRT’s rise to power and its championing of pro-poor populist policies was also extremely important. While TRT's economic policy aimed to reduce the income gap and raise overall growth through the combination of exports and increased domestic consumption, one must not forget that the party was driven by some of the country's wealthiest individuals. Yet the fact that these powerful businessmen had a strong mandate to run the national economy, some argue, was tantamount to allowing them to capture state power to control and manage national resources (Phongpaichit & Baker: 2004, p. 97). This "political capture" of the business elites could be a double-edge sword. On the one hand, the country's economy is in the hands of a supposedly highly capable group of people who understand what it

\textsuperscript{108} Most graduated from top American MBA schools and have extensive experience in business, banking, etc
takes for Thailand to compete in the global market. On the other hand, they could use their state power and access to resources to benefit their businesses. Tejapira (2006) argues that the Thaksin government was made up of "crony capitalists," who "combined aggressive neo-liberalization with capitalist cronyism, and absolutist counter-reform politics with populist social policy, to radically transform the existing patterns of power relationships and elite resource allocation."

Thaksin was, nonetheless, a hugely successful leader. Unlike most prime ministers in Thailand in the past, he actually implemented key policies promised during TRT campaigns. He presented himself as an approachable person, who understood the needs of the poor. Being from Chiang Mai province in northern Thailand, Thaksin was able to portray himself as a self-made man from the provinces, whose hard work helped to propel his success. "I don't need to be a prime minister. I'm already rich enough...why bother? But I volunteer to help the country. I don't gain anything from trying to combat corruption...only to put myself and my family in trouble", claimed Thaksin.\(^\text{110}\) Thaksin's seemingly down-to-earth nature and approachability struck a chord with many people from the provinces. When Thaksin was under investigation for falsely reporting his shareholdings in his first year in office, some 50,000 people in Khon Kaen province held a massive ceremony to brush away "bad omens" so he could be acquitted.\(^\text{111}\) His popularity with people, particularly in the North and Northeastern provinces, which later became his electoral stronghold, has been unmatched by many leaders who preceded him.

Thaksin's brilliant marketing schemes have served to strengthen his leadership. He pioneered the weekly "Prime Minister Thaksin talks to his citizens" radio shows, where he established a rapport with listeners by discussing what he or TRT have done recently. Not only

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did he try to reach out to people living in the provinces, his radio shows also sought to counter the largely military-dominated radio airwaves.\footnote{See: McCargo, D. (2000). Politics and the press in Thailand: Media machinations (Vol. 7). Routledge.} For instance, in his first talk show on April 28, 2001, he outlined key policies of his government. Thaksin also set up "mobile cabinet meetings" where cabinet minister meetings were rotated in various provinces around the country, instead of it always being held in the capital city. These marketing maneuvers were clever ways for Thaksin and TRT to not only better market themselves, but they also expanded their influence and presence. "They want to show the electorate that it's not enough they elected TRT and Thaksin on election day, but the voters need to be reassured that their government is doing their job. They can build long-term relationships with citizens this way," argued Pipon Udorn during a seminar on "Thai Politics of Marketing vs. Marketing of Thai Politics."

Thaksin defends his pro-poor policies as "policies for the development of human capital" not populism. He argues that Thailand suffers from three diseases: poverty, corruption and drug.\footnote{Thaksin gave a speech at Bi-Tech on "Corruption." Cited in Pisitsethakarn, P. (2004). Thaksinomics II: Thaksin kab naypobai sangkhom [Thaksinomics II: Thaksin and social policies]. Bangkok: Matichon Publishing, pp. 267-8.} Improving human capital is at the heart of combating these three diseases. "My motto is always 'Decrease expenses, increase income and enhance opportunity' (ลดรายจ่าย เพิ่มรายได้ สร้างโอกาส) - the government must find ways to help the weak in society so they can stand on their own feet and compete in this globalized world. I'm ready to help the sick so they can compete in a marathon. I'm ready to get this weak country to a strong position in the global market," claims Thaksin.\footnote{Shinawatra, T. (2003, June 30). Speech at the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand. Accessed on April 24, 2012. Retrieve from http://www.nesdb.go.th/portals/0/news/annual_meet/46/data11.pdf.}

His main thinking lies in the idea that the poor, especially those in the agricultural sectors, are saddled with debts and have to resort to loan sharks because they lack access to credit. His pro-poor policies are thus aimed to not only open access to capital for the poor
(through low-interest borrowing) and debt reduction, but also increase disposable income so they can bring themselves out of the bottom and become a more productive force in the labor market with their new spending capacity.

Many of Thaksin's policies were widely welcomed both at home and abroad. His supporters are quick to point out that no other prime minister gives them anything "tangible" and never keeps campaign promises. Even long after Thaksin was ousted from power, his supporters vowed he was the best leader Thailand had ever had. A taxi driver from Payao province explained why Thaksin was his "hero":\textsuperscript{116}

When Thaksin was in power, it was so easy to make money...Whatever Thaksin promises, he follows through. Like the 30-baht healthcare, I used it right away. My son has low platelet count - medicine costs 10,000 baht a pop. Without the 30-baht program, he would not have survived it. This current prime minister, Abhisit, he promised free schooling. But it's a lie. They only give 490 baht per child, which doesn't even cover the cost of a uniform. I have to take out a loan to put my kids through school. Thaksin would never let that happen.\textsuperscript{117}

In 2012, six years after the coup d'état that ousted Thaksin, his legacies lived on as he was awarded the "Statesman Award of the Year" from Asian Business Leadership Forum (ABLF) for his "outstanding achievement in government and innovative approach to development."\textsuperscript{118} His famous 30-baht healthcare program is now touted by international development agencies as among the "best practice" in bringing universal healthcare to low-

\textsuperscript{116} Referring to Thaksin's policy that helps to crack down on mafia within the taxi community
\textsuperscript{117} Taxi driver (personal communication, July 9, 2011).
\textsuperscript{118} See: ABLF Awards \url{http://www.ablfawards.com/award-categories/statesman-award/}. 
income nations.\textsuperscript{119} His popularity brought a lot of attention from foreign press on Thai politics. Thaksin was featured on the front covers of the Time Magazine both during his tenure as a prime minister \textit{and} as an exiled prime minister. Thaksin told the BBC in 2011 that he was the mastermind behind Peau Thai's election campaign, in which his sister, Yingluck, was up for a leadership.\textsuperscript{120} Peau Thai won a landslide victory, and his sister is the current prime minister of Thailand.

Yet Thaksin was a man shrouded in controversies and corruption allegations. While his supporters admired his policies, his charismatic leadership and can-do attitude, his opposition loathed him for the same reasons. While Thaksin was campaigning for his first election as head of TRT, the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), created as one of the 1997 constitution's independent bodies, voted almost unanimously that he and his wife had been guilty of falsely declaring their assets by transferring their shares to their housemaids and drivers, insider trading and securities price manipulation, while he served as deputy prime minister during Chavalit's government in 1997. Since this was considered a "political case" the matter was passed on to the Constitutional Court, which narrowly struck it down by 8:7 votes. His critics cried foul that this "miracle" was only possible because Thaksin bribed officials to influence their votes.\textsuperscript{121} Boonlert Changyai, one of the 1997 constitution drafters, slammed the Constitutional Court's decision, which he argues not only directly contradicts that of the NACC, but also contradicts previously similar cases.\textsuperscript{122}


\textsuperscript{120} Shinawatra, T. (2011, June 11). Interview with the BBC.

\textsuperscript{121} It is interesting to note that General Prem and Dr. Prawes Wasi publicly supported Thaksin during the early stage of his administration.

Skeptics who have been wary of the influx of the super rich into Thaksin's cabinet only found cause for further criticism. Ukrist Pathmanand wrote an article in Matichon Weekly, just weeks after Thaksin took the leadership, about the "total monopolization of telecommunications and mass communications business" - warning not to trust politicians with vested interests. Thaksin's own family business, AIS, Thanin Chianravanont's (advisor to finance minister) Telecom Asia and Adisai Bhodaramik's (cabinet minister) Jasmine and TT&T account for most of the shares in the telecommunications providers in Thailand. By late 2001, academics began to protest against what they believed was a "major conflict of interest" when the Thaksin government sought to convert telecoms concession fees into excise charges (which they eventually did in 2003). Researchers at an independent think tank, the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), published reports arguing that the move would not only reinforce existing telecoms monopolies, but would make them billions at the expense of the state and the Thai people. "This is a blatant example of conflict of interest as well as policy-based corruption," claimed the TDRI.

Such corruption allegation was the first, among many, that plagued Thaksin's government throughout his first and second terms (see Figure 10). Thaksin is not the first corrupt prime minister Thailand had had, but his scale of corruption, his opponents claimed, far outstripped that of his predecessors. Kraisak Choonvavan, an opposition MP from the Democrat Party, and

124 Veerachai Veeramethikul, TRT party list MP, is part of the Chiaravanont family. Thanin himself is advisor to finance minister.
126 During Thaksin's first term, Kraisak was a senator and was among the most vocal opponent of Thaksin from the senator 40 group.
also the son of Chatthai Choonhavan, who was ousted by the 1991 coup for "corruption" explain the difference between his family's corruption and that of the Shinawatra's:

My father was the first elected prime minister. The military thought he was very corrupt so they took him out. 'Extreme corruption' has always occurred in Thai politics but this paled in comparison to Thaksin's. My family...since Phin Choonhavan [grandfather; 1947 coup plotter]...can't compare to Thaksin's family, which is money politics. Children and grandchildren of Thanom [coup leader and PM, 1963-73] drive Japanese cars. Families of past leaders may have privilege during their time of rule but not reproduction of wealth like Thaksin.\(^\text{127}\)

**FIGURE 9: SELECTED CORRUPTION ALLEGATIONS DURING THAKSIN ADMINISTRATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Amount (Baht)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shin Corp sale tax evasion</td>
<td>73 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTX bomb scanner purchase</td>
<td>35.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer auction</td>
<td>900 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber purchase</td>
<td>1.4 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity concession</td>
<td>4 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar Home project</td>
<td>7.9 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car park bribery</td>
<td>300 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ample Rich investment</td>
<td>16 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ponbutra (2007)

\(^{127}\) Choonhavan, K. (personal communication, July 19, 2011).
Thaksin's close allies also admit to his corrupt ways. One close aid, who chooses to remain anonymous, reveals: "Thaksin is no democrat. He's a businessman. He's a man of 'grey' - not white or black."\(^{128}\)

His CEO-style management was viewed by some as abrasive, controlling and dictatorial. He viewed Thailand as a company and himself as a CEO, which seems natural given that he was himself a business tycoon and that the TRT team was staffed with American MBA graduates.\(^ {129}\) This "ego-centric" style of leadership puts Thaksin at the top of the hierarchy and his cabinet as the executives of "Thailand Inc." Known to be giving out Hernando de Soto's books "The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Elsewhere" to his cabinet, he has been warned to read up more on Thai history.\(^ {130}\) Thailand is not a company; it's a country with history and cultures, and citizens are not employees, claim his critics. "State budgets are not assets of Thailand Inc. where Thaksin and his cabinet are owners, who can just pander to people through their populist schemes as if it were their own money," writes Chaweewan Saibua in Prachachat Thurakij.\(^ {131}\)

As a highly successful businessman, Thaksin had a tendency to monopolize control and was not particularly open to dissenting voices, even from his own people. Thaksin shuffled cabinet ministers often, regardless of their performance, so that no one felt secure in their position. For example, he shuffled Pongthep Thepkanjana, who was a Minister of Justice (a US-trained lawyer and a drafter of the 1997 constitution), to the Ministry of Education and then switched him back to the Ministry of Justice. An interview with an unnamed former minister during Thaksin's second term also revealed that Thaksin did not like any cabinet minister taking

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\(^ {128}\) Thai Rak Thai aid. (personal communication, July 2, 2010).
\(^ {129}\) Actually the first person who really pushed TRT into this direction was Somkid Jatusripitak.
credit for his or her work. A Matichon article, entitled, "Thaksin does everything, his people become mute" mocked Thaksin for being so controlling that his inferiors (including ministers) did not dare to openly disagree with him. His former deputy government spokesperson, Jakrapob Penkhae, agrees that Thaksin had his faults: "I am with Thai Rak Thai because Thaksin has plans to bring progress to Thailand. But his way of getting things done may not be legitimate...another of his faults is that he is too focused on what he wants to do and is not open to alternatives, especially from the opposition."\(^\text{132}\)

Thaksin is, without a doubt, a polarizing figure. He was the first prime minister who not only managed to serve a full 4-year term, but was also the first to have secured a majority in the house. During his reign, however, Thailand also saw the largest popular mobilization in its modern history. The opposition to the TRT government, and in particular Thaksin, began with a few outspoken individuals and expanded between 2002 and 2005 into a full blown movement, the PAD. In the following paragraphs I unpack the opposition movement to Thaksin and his party, which eventually led to his downfall in 2006. In so doing I chronicle the development of the People's Alliance for Democracy - the largest anti-Thaksin movement - which formed slowly but came together in early 2006. I then apply the theory of institutional blockage to illustrate what drove the anti-democratic mobilization.

**FORMAL INSTITUTIONAL BLOCKAGE**

The opposition movement in Thailand began as an anti-incumbent mobilization. This occurred in both formal democratic institutions, which included parliament, the senate, independent institutions and the courts, and in informal institutions which included the realms of civil society, media, academia, and interest groups. At this stage, various members of the formal

democratic institutions either formed their own opposition groups or began to form alliances with the opposition in the informal institutions. Their main purpose was not to overthrow the democratic system at this stage, but rather to publicly disapprove of Thaksin's rule and Thai Rak Thai policies. While broadly speaking this anti-government mobilization was not unheard of both in Thailand and elsewhere, what set this movement apart was the groups that became involved. The fact that opposition was drawn from within the democratic institutions themselves suggested that Thaksin's democratically elected government was seriously flawed.

TABLE 11: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS THAT LED MAJOR PROTESTS (2001-2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Small-Scale Farmers' Assembly of Isan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Assembly of the Poor, Small-Scale Farmers' Assembly of Isan, Buddhism Protection Centre of Thailand, Network Against the Trans Thai-Malaysia Pipeline, Association of Tambon Administrative Organization, Campaign for Popular Democracy, Assembly of the Poor (Pak Mun Dam Division)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Network Against the Trans Thai-Malaysia Pipeline, Assembly of the Poor (Pak Mun Dam Division), Campaign for Popular Democracy, Muslim Organizations of 5 Southern Border Provinces, State Enterprise Workers' Relation Confederation, Southern Network of Land Reform for the Poor, Ram Kamphaeng University' Student Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>State Enterprise Workers' Relation Confederation, Provincial Electricity Authority, Metropolitan Water Authority, EGAT, State Railway Union of Thailand, Students of Luangta Mahabua Group, Tak Bai Incident, Network Against the Privatization of EGAT, Entertainment Industry Association (Bangkok), People's Alliance for Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>State Enterprise Workers' Relation Confederation, Four Region Slum Network, Network of the HIV Positive, Anti-FTA Network, Assembly of the Poor, Network Against the Privatization of EGAT, Student Federation of Thailand, Network Against Education Transfer, Farmers' Debt Network, Network of Agricultural Non Governmental Organizations of Thailand, Thailand Weekly (Sonthi)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled by author from various newspapers (see Appendix C)
**Stage 1: Anti-incumbent Mobilization**

In Stage 1, various opposition forces who normally have access to power in some form or the other will seek to influence policy through formal democratic channels. Mechanisms for opposition through formal democratic channels include lobbying, bargaining, participating in the policy-making process, engaging the media, and using personal connections to influence government policies. If the government blocks access to power by the opposition within the democratic channels, this is considered formal institutional blockage. Note that opposition forces can come from both outside and inside formal democratic channels. Opposition within the formal democratic institutions might include opposition members of parliament (MPs), opposition senators (not formal titles), or independent bodies that would normally serve the purpose of placing checks on the executive. Opposition external to the formal institutions but inside the democratic polity includes interest groups, pressure groups and labor unions.

**Parliament**

Opposition in parliament was rendered completely ineffective on two grounds: 1) inability to hold Thaksin and his cabinet accountable for their actions and 2) inability to run competitive election campaigns against the TRT. These instances are examples of both the institutional blockage by design and the perception of blockage. While not rare in parliamentary democracies with majority governments, this blockage helps to drive anti-incumbent mobilization from within the formal democratic institutions.

Thaksin consolidated his political dominance on two levels: across parties and within the Thai Rak Thai party itself. When Thai Rak Thai was voted into office in 2001, its win of 248 out of 500 seats, was not enough for Thaksin, despite the fact that no party in Thailand had ever won
more than a third of the votes. “We [Thailand] used to have so many parties we could not remember their names," claims Thaksin. “We are now sending a message to the world that there will be continuity in politics.”\(^{133}\) TRT proceeded to merge with Kwam Wang Mai Party and Seritham to gain additional 20 seats - making it Thailand's first ever absolute majority government. Ironically, a stable and strong government is exactly what was intended by the 1997 constitution.

The opposition was crippled in its ability to do its job as opposition in parliament. The 1997 constitution required two-fifths of MPs to launch a no confidence motion against the prime minister - something that the main opposition party, the Democrats, was never able to do throughout the Thaksin Administration. And because both the Kwam Wang Mai and Seritham parties completely dissolved when they merged with TRT, there was no threat of "defection" inside the governing party - something of a constant threat for every single coalition government in the 1990s. Even if TRT's coalition partner, Chart Thai, defected to join the opposition (which they did not), TRT still held a majority and no minister could be voted out of a job as long as TRT MPs towed the party line. One of the most effective tools for parliamentarian opposition – the no confidence motion - was rendered useless. Things turned for the worse for the Democrats in Thaksin's second term as its seats amounted to merely 19% of the total seat share, compared to TRT's whopping 75% (Table 12).

TABLE 12: SEAT SHARE OF THAI RAK THAI V. OPPOSITION PARTIES (2002-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Government (%) of seat shares</th>
<th>Opposition (seat shares)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thaksin 1 (2001-2005)*</td>
<td>Thai Rak Thai 57% (inc. KWM, SRT)</td>
<td>Democrat 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chart Thai 8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thaksin 2 (2005-2006)</td>
<td>Thai Rak Thai 75%</td>
<td>Democrat 19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Following party merges occurring between 2001 and 2002

Moreover, the Democrat Party, which has become the only viable, permanent opposition party, cannot win elections. This made national elections in Thailand no longer competitive. The Democrats last won an election and were able to form a government in 1992, following the Black May. Since then it had been a series of coalition partnerships or opposition. But the rise of the TRT and its later electoral dominance rendered the Democrats as the only main opposition in town. Other small and medium parties, such as Chart Thai, Chart Pattana and Kwam Wang Mai, have either been absorbed by TRT (in the case of KWM) or remained fluid enough that they still had the option of joining with either TRT or the opposition. In essence, the rise of TRT meant the Democrats had become the de facto opposition party. Since the DP cannot win elections, as long as TRT or other Thaksin-aligned parties still exist, its only chance of being in government would be through extra-constitutional means or through a collapse of the TRT government.

When Thaksin's party was in government, parliament was very much subordinated to the executive power of the prime minister's office. This was illustrated by the poor attendance of the Thai Rak Thai MPs in parliament. The speaker sometimes had to close business early because

134 Meaning that no matter what the election results are, the DP will never join force with TRT or any other Thaksin-aligned forces.
parliament was inquote; and five times between 2002 and 2004 House sessions were actually
halted following headcounts. Uthai Pimjaichon, House Speaker during TRT member reveals:
"Thaksin doesn't value parliamentary sessions. Even important issues like budgetary meetings,
sometimes he was absent...I don't need to mention how [many times] he did not answer
questioning periods...Sometimes he chose to go see people in the villages, who would give him
praise, as opposed to showing up to parliament." Eventually TRT whip proposed a salary raise
for MPs to entice them to attend meetings (McCargo & Pathmanand: 2005, p.106).

Frustrated by its inability to check the power of Thaksin, an informal alliance developed
between the opposition groups protesting on the streets and the Democrat Party. The DP
members felt they shared the PAD's deep resentment towards and dissatisfaction with the
Thaksin government. Wittaya Kaewparadai, Democrat MP and former minister commented:

Parliamentary mechanisms for checking the executive were crippled. The 1997
constitution created such a strong executive and Thaksin knew it. We in the
opposition couldn't launch the no confidence motion on Thaksin. So many times
parliamentary sessions had to be cancelled because not enough MPs showed up.
Thaksin did not respect parliamentary procedures. The Upper House couldn't do
anything either. This is a total parliamentary tyranny... Since formal
parliamentary channels were closed off, we had to pursue extra-parliamentary
ones.136

The frustration of the opposition party prompted its members to join forces with the anti-
Thaksin groups. Democrat MPs began to frequent PAD rallies, some even going on stage to
show their support towards the movement. Democrat MPs who went on the PAD stage included

p. 76.
Kasit Piromya, Somkiat Pongpaibul, Kulaya Soponpanich, Anchalee Thepbutch, and Kraisak Choonhawan. Kaewparadai confirmed this during an interview: "The Democrat Party considered the PAD as an alliance…indeed some of our members joined PAD and engaged in their activities. Some went on stage, others donated food and money...What the PAD leaders said on stage resonated very much with how we felt in Parliament. We saw eye to eye on a number of issues." The biggest contribution the Democrat Party made to the PAD movement was to provide mass support. In fact, Democrat Party leaders admitted mobilizing their mass to PAD rallies – most notably the infamous 193-day protest in the post-coup period. While figures vary, according to party estimates, the Democrat Party forces most likely accounted for about half of the total PAD mass. "Democrat Party members, mostly from the southern region of Thailand, mobilized the mass to join PAD rallies."

**SENATE**

The first ever elected upper house, a product of the 1997 constitution, was problematic from the start. The idea that the Thai polity could get rid of corruption and money politics by neutralizing the upper house so that it did not represent vested interests or political parties, was in retrospect, naive. The 1997 constitution stipulated that candidates running for positions in the senate would not be allowed to either campaign or belong to a political party. This way the upper house would be full of "good" and "clean" people because they would need to have already established themselves as people who had made sacrifices for public life and who wanted to be in the senate to truly serve the country. What actually happened was certainly far from these ideals. First, many existing politicians sent in their family members and relatives to run, given

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137 Various Democrat MPs (personal communication, July 11, 2011).
139 Paison, T. (personal communication, July 12, 2011).
that their last names would be recognized.\footnote{For example, the first elected senate has the following who are families of politicians or themselves politicians: Chumpol Silpa-acha, Chodchoi Sophonpanich, Sukhumporn Ngonekham, Rabiebrat Pongpanich, Veera Anantakul, Butsarin Teyapairat, Visit Techatheerawat, Sawat Amornwiwat, Kraisaek Choonhavan, Pichet Pathanachode, Chaweewan Kajornprasart, Udsaneer Chidchob, Den Toh-meena, Karun Sai-ngaam, Surachai Pithutecha, Thavit Klinprathum, Athit Kamlang-ake, Wichian Pao-in, Nitinai Nakornthap} Second, upper house elections were as fraudulent as those for the lower house. The senate election in 2000 was held five times. In the first round, 78 out of the 200 candidates elected were not approved by the Election Commission due to concerns over electoral misconduct, resulting in an additional 35 by-elections. Such by-elections were to be repeated for four more rounds until all 200 senators were signed off by the ECT.

Allegations of corruption and "immoral" misconduct haunted the first elected upper house. A senator from Suratthani, Chaleom Promlert, was accused by four under-aged girls of statutory rape, and was later imprisoned for 36 years. Moreover, some elected senators later resigned from the upper house to run for a position in the lower house, which just showed that they remained very much part of the political party system.\footnote{Such as Kasem Rungthanakiat, who ran for a MP with TRT and won in 2001.} Another senator was found to have bribed a fellow senator, Klaew Norapathi from Khon Kaen, with cash and Buddha amulets in exchange for his committee's withdrawal. The last nail in the coffin of the 2000-2006 Upper House is the first ever "fight" in the history of Thailand's National Assembly when Bangkok senator Prathin Santhiprasop punched Mae Hongsong senator Adul Wanchaithanawong during the debate over the Tak Bai Incident.

An opposition to Thaksin's government formed inside the upper house as early as 2002 but massively escalated following the Tak Bai Incident in 2004\footnote{Some of the early supporters of PAD from the senate include senators Kraisaek Choonhavan (Nakorn Ratchesima), Maleerat Kaewka (Bangkok); Jermsak Pinthong (Bangkok); Winyu Ularnkul (Sakol Nakorn), Karun Sai-ngaam (Buriram), Nirand Pitakwatchara (Ubolratchathani); Somboon Thongburan (Yasothorn); Wongpan Takua-toong (Pang-nga).}. Given the flawed electoral process and the number of political "cronies" inside the senate, concerns over its "credibility" and potential co-optation by the TRT-dominated lower house began to mount. A key concern is
that if the senate is being influenced by Thai Rak Thai politicians, then it could not provide the necessary checks and balance to the lower house. The 1997 constitution stipulates that three-fifths of the senate vote is necessary for an impeachment of those in political positions. Somkiat On-wimol, Supanburi senator, questioned Thaksin during a seminar: "Is it true that you, prime minister, and Thai Rak Thai intervened in the affairs of the upper house by buying off senators?" Likewise, Nakornsawan senator Prasit Pithunkijja echoed a similar concern: "Don't think that the senate is fully independent - not all 200 of us - because some have vested interests...I don't believe we [the senate] will ever have the necessary three-fifths vote to remove anyone from political office."

Following the Tak Bai Incident, in which scores of men from the troubled Deep South were stripped, handcuffed and stuffed into police vans and 85 suffocated to death, the anti-Thaksin senators were outraged. Some senators formed an alliance with the opposition party, the Democrats, to question Thaksin during a joint parliament-senate session. However, when Thaksin showed up, he explained his side of the story for half an hour and then left without allowing senators to question him, despite a number of senators raising their hands. "This is not a press conference. We, as senators, are elected to represent the Thai people. Why did the prime minister come and not let us do our job and question him?" asked Senator Sompong Srakrawee angrily. Senator Jermsak Pinthong, one of the most outspoken critics of Thaksin who himself was a 1997 constitution drafter, led opposition movement inside the upper house

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145 Thaksin defended state officials in this action and tried to conceal what happened and argued the men died because they were starving!
147 Ibid.
against the Thaksin government, with support from senators drawn largely from academia and NGOs. In retrospect, Jermsak argues that representative democracy has continued to fail in Thailand, both the lower and upper houses.

"It's always the same group of people in parliament and now senate. The people have influence and networks. A new constitution will not help...If Thailand really comes to a dead end, then we need to do away with elections altogether and get people from a wide range of professions appointed. The politics must be more participatory."  

Some senators felt the upper house could not provide the checks and balances to the lower house, as envisioned by the 1997 constitution. First, senators could never reach the required three-fifths to submit a motion for general debate to request cabinet ministers to explain important matters on state affairs. Second, the upper house's committee work was no more effective. It's not that the senators could not investigate state affairs at all, but that the opposition senators felt that their voices were not heard and that Thaksin disrespected the very purpose of the upper house and did not allow himself to be questioned. "After two years in the upper house, senators don't care about the citizens, but care about particular politicians. Some people want to gain some legitimacy from the government, others want to be in politics later. The senate committees were besieged by outside powers, so they become an asset to the government," opined Wallop Tungkananurak, a long-time senator and activist.

148 Such as Pichet Pathanachode, Wanlop Tungkananurak, Winyu Urankul.
Independent institutions were created following the 1997 constitution to provide more checks and balances in the political system as well as to reduce abuse of state power by political elites (see Table 6). The fact that Thaksin surprisingly escaped the verdict of the Constitutional Court in 2001 cast a long shadow of doubt with regards to the impartiality of newly created independent bodies. Over the course of Thai Rak Thai rule, there were numerous allegations of Thaksin's interference in independent bodies. "The current [Thaksin] government had influence over every single institution; be it parliament, senate, independent bodies, and the media," warns academic Sangkit Piriyarangsan.\(^5\) By 2005, as talks over potential constitutional amendments surged, some sections of the judicial system suggested a complete dissolution of all independent bodies since they were neither impartial nor independent.\(^6\) "These institutions were created to provide checks and balances to the political institutions but not only were they dominated by political influence, but they also lacked the capacity to hold those in political positions accountable," laments a judge.\(^7\)

Kanin Boonsuwan, a 1997 constitutional drafter, sums up the reasons for why he calls Thaksin an "opportunist dictator".\(^8\)

1. Running a country to expand family business;

2. Take control over key institutions to prevent the system of checks and balances;

3. Control and interfere with freedom of press

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\(^{7}\) Ibid.

4. Promote relatives or cronies to high position in the military, police and bureaucracy;

5. Plan to privatize state enterprises that will benefit his own family and cronies;

6. Govern the country by through propaganda

INFORMAL INSTITUTIONAL BLOCKAGE

As the opposition inside the formal democratic institutions was finding that their channels for grievances were blocked and ineffective, groups in the informal institutional realms were meeting the same fate. While in the 1990s academics, civil society, activists and other groups were engaged in pro-reform mobilization, there was little of that during the rule of TRT before it turned into anti-incumbent mobilization. Partly, this is because the pro-reform mobilization already took place over the course of the prior decade and so the reformists were less willing to push for more reforms, given that much of this should have happened when the 1997 constitution was put in place. It is also partly because some of the key reformists felt they had some of their own lobbies for change within formal institutions. The "shock" and "disappointment" that followed took many of the reformists into the whirlwind, which forcefully mobilized various groups into an anti-incumbent movement. They took to the streets.

The Thaksin government saw a flurry of protest activities during its administration. Between 2001 and 2006, there are more than 1,850 protest events reported in the media. More than 60% of these protests were organized by NGOs. The biggest and most continuous hike in the number of protests reported was between mid-2005 and the end of the first quarter in 2006. Opponents of the Thaksin government began to engage in protest politics in 2002. Much of the opposition movement was directly targeting particular sets of government policies. Protest activities started slowly in 2001 but really began to pick up in 2002 when a number of large rural
NGOs, such as the Assembly of the Poor and the Small-Scale Farmers' Assembly of Isan began to demand the government's responsiveness to their problems, as promised during the election campaign in 2001. The Assembly of the Poor staged a protest that lasted more than 60 days in late 2002, asking the government to reconsider the plan to build the controversial Thai-Malaysian pipeline and the ongoing conflict over Pak Mun Dam.

FIGURE 10: PROTEST EVENTS AS REPORTED IN 14 NEWSPAPERS, QUARTERLY (2001-2006)

Source: Author (see Appendix C for sources)

CIVIL SOCIETY

The election of Thaksin Shinawatra in 2001 brought some hope among civil society agents that Thailand was edging towards a new era of democratic politics whereby citizens would have more say in the polity beyond Election Day. Such optimism stemmed, partly, from the fact that the Thaksin government was the first to be elected under the new People's Constitution, which many NGO leaders had helped to draft. Partly, it was the first time in
Thailand's democratic history that there was a majority government - raising the hope that perhaps some progress could be made. Thaksin gave a promise, upon coming to power, that he was committed to serving the people. At a round-table discussion organized by King Prajadipok in February 2001, which included well known activists and academics, Thaksin vowed to let dharma and high morale guide his policies." I share many of Dr. Prawes' vision...regarding peaceful engagement and sustainable economy...The government must be the ultimate policymakers and ensure that if people respond negatively to policies, we hear them out and make necessary adjustment" (KPI: 2001, pp. 64-67). In the early years of his administration, Thaksin showed signs of commitment to the people's sector, either by personally talking to demonstrators or by sending his personal aides or cabinet members to hear their claims, be it the Assembly of the Poor, anti-power plant groups from Bo Nok or anti-pipeline groups.

The relations between some NGOs and the government turned sour quickly. Dr. Saneh Jamrik, a well-known academic within the human rights NGO community agrees: "When Thaksin became prime ministry initially - we [the NGOs] were all hopeful; he was a wealthy man who wanted to help the poor...but as time passed he's not what we thought and even said bad things about us saying we sound like a broken record. Now Thaksin would deal with the poor himself without having to work through us or Anand. So we are disappointed."155

The opposition to Thaksin and his government from civil society organizations can be categorized in two ways: sectoral and ideological. Many NGOs, labor unions and other civil society actors came out in opposition to Thaksin first and foremost due to their disagreement over a very specific set of policies of the Thaksin government. In this group there were four key industries, whose civil society organizations protested against the Thaksin government: 1) state enterprise workers; 2) teachers' unions; 3) media activists; and 4) grassroots networks against

155 See: Fah Diaow Gun Web Board on http://samesky.net
mega-projects. As the opposition from the people's sector continued, it becomes clear that many of the NGOs were ideologically against TRT party platforms. Table 13 shows some of the key dimensions of NGO opposition to Thaksin's policies.

**TABLE 13: DIMENSION OF PAD'S POLITICAL IDEOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Ideology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy/Trade</td>
<td>Sufficiency economy; alternative livelihood; anti-populism; anti-FTA; anti-neo-liberalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political System</td>
<td>Constitutional Monarchy with a very powerful monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>Semi-authoritarianism; anti-representative democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>Respect for civil society; community independence; self-reliance; grassroots politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality/Ethics</td>
<td>Dharmic democracy; moral leadership; anti-corruption; anti-cronyism; anti-vote buying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author. A summary of PAD’s ideology based on the author's field research.

**POLICY-BASED CORRUPTION**

The PAD believed that Thaksin, through his party Thai Rak Thai, abused his executive power to enrich himself and his cronies. While this is nothing new in Thai politics, what became particularly worrisome is what his opponents called "policy-based corruption" (corruption cheung nayobai). I define policy-based corruption as large-scale corruption committed by those at the highest political positions through national policy. In essence, a political leader commits policy-based corruption when he passes a bill through cabinet that directly or indirectly benefits his personal interests. Policy-based corruption was rife within Thai Rak Thai, according to critics, because many of the TRT cabinet members were elite businessmen, who themselves had monopolies or semi-monopolies in their industry. By being at the highest level of government, their businesses continued to enjoy far greater monopolies due the fact that they themselves were
policymakers. After he came to power, Thaksin's own businesses in telecommunications - Shin Corp, AIS, and Jasmine - posted impressive profits. From 2001 to 2004, Shin Corporation's net profit jumped 260% while AIS increased its profit by 85% for the same period. More importantly, the degree of competition between Thaksin's mobile provider, AIS, and other companies was "thinned down by several means." (Phongpaichit & Baker: 2004, p. 202). Within a few years of Thaksin coming to power, AIS became the largest mobile phone provider in Thailand. Thaksin also exercised executive decree - power reserved for emergency situation only - which enabled him to block off future competition in the mobile phone service industry.\footnote{Phongpaichit, P., & Baker, C. J. (2004). \textit{Thaksin: The business of politics in Thailand}. NIAS Press, pp. 209-210.}

The most explosive example of policy-based corruption, according to his critics, was the sale of Shin Corporation to Singapore-based Temasek Holdings in 2006 - the biggest stock market trade in Thailand's history. This sale outraged so many people that it became one of the biggest rallying points for the opposition movement, prompting hundreds of thousands to join protests on the streets. The biggest point of contention was the fact that the sale was completed exactly 2 days after the passage of a new telecommunications bill that allowed increases in the foreign ownership of Thai companies from 25% to 50%. The deal was, moreover, exempted from capital gains tax because prior to the sale Thaksin had conveniently amended the law regarding foreign investment in the telecommunications sector. Supinya Klanarong, secretary of the Campaign for Media Reform, vows the trade was "irregular" from the beginning.

The biggest point of contention was the fact that the sale was completed exactly 2 days after the passage of a new telecommunications bill that allowed increases in the foreign ownership of Thai companies from 25% to 50%. The deal was, moreover, exempted from capital gains tax because prior to the sale Thaksin had conveniently amended the law regarding foreign investment in the telecommunications sector. Supinya Klanarong, secretary of the Campaign for Media Reform, vows the trade was "irregular" from the beginning.
investment in the telecommunications sector. Supinya Klanarong, secretary of the Campaign for Media Reform, vows the trade was "irregular" from the beginning. "Thaksin has prepared for this deal for quite some time. This trade is not transparent - no one can actually explain the entire process."\(^{157}\) Thaksin never gave full explanation for the Shin Corp Sale. He merely said his son sold the shares but he could not explain why the tax was not paid on the sale.\(^{158}\) The Shin Corp scandal has raised the issue of morality, business ethics and national security under the Thaksin government.

What was most problematic in the Temasek-Shin Corp deal is what his critics term a "major conflict of interest." This is a criticism levied against Thaksin throughout his administration but it best manifests itself through the Temasek deal. Temasek was a foreign government-owned company buying up assets that were owned by the family of Thailand's most powerful person who was actively in the highest political office. As such, it was not a routine business transaction. The buyer was not an ordinary individual but ultimately a foreign government. The seller was not an ordinary corporate entity but ultimately the business domain of its prime minister. This was a deal where the buyer should have been mindful of the integrity of the product being offered. The opposition argued that few people with respectable morals and ethical standards would want to come into ownership of a tarnished product, no matter how good a bargain it may have seemed.

*Populism*

Thaksin's populist policies were not welcomed by much of the NGO communities. While some of the opposition to populism was disagreement over the nature and direction of the

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\(^{158}\) See Thaksin's interview with Surayuth at Reung Lao Chao Ni (2006, March 10).
policies, others joined the opposition forces to protest over the shrinking of NGO influence as a result of these policies. Thaksin's populist policy in essence was tantamount to encroaching or taking over political space occupied by the people's sector. It allowed the state to not only expand its presence and influence in the countryside but it also reduced the right of communities to mobilize in favor of alternative initiatives and it closed up the opportunity for communities to have to right to choose which way to develop or progress. When Thaksin sought to destroy the credibility of NGOs by accusing them of taking money from foreign donors or of provoking violence in 2002, the TRT government reinforced the right of state authorities to deal with protesters as they saw fit. In sum, TRT's populist policies in essence rapidly weakened the ability of the popular political sector to get mobilized. NGOs and popular politics in general were forced to compete with the state for the support of the lower class on similar issues. The opposition to Thaksin's populist policies from civil society organizations can be summed up as being based on three key factors. First, populist policies were not intended to transform the structure of poverty in Thailand. Second, populist policies sought to weaken the ties between the people's sector and society, while strengthens the state's power. Third, populist policies did not empower people, but make them more dependent on the state.

Many of the ideas that became Thaksin's populist policies, such as the 30 baht healthcare, village fund, and debt moratorium, came from civil society organizations. These groups hoped that Thai Rak Thai would put them to good use. As Prapas explains, Thaksin's populist policy took its shape gradually, incorporating many elements from civil society groups and various societal factors so when we look at the success of Thaksin's populist policies we have to recognize the success of various communities and villagers for their input.\textsuperscript{159} In essence populist

policies have their origin in the structure and practice of various civil society groups, policy networks, especially poor people movements, small scale farmers and so forth.

Yet, after these pro-poor policies were implemented, the NGO sector had serious doubts about the actual intention of these policies. Populist policies were not aimed at transforming the structure of poverty in Thailand, according to some within the NGO community. His critics were convinced that TRT used populism as a tool to benefit the party electorally for these policies did not aim to create justice for the poor. Sulak Sivaraksa (2002), a well known figure in the nonprofit sector, condemns populist policies for turning citizens into "consumers" and in the process stripping away their power to be self-reliant. Likewise, Sansit Chanpoon, leader of the Network of the Chee River Basin Community (which was negatively affected by the construction of a dam in Roi-Et province) claimed that Thaksin did not understand the problems of the poor. "Thaksin came to Roi-Et to show that he was serious about solving our problem...he began giving away free buffaloes, cows, land, cheap housing, etc, but he didn't see the root cause of the poverty - the dam. The dam construction had caused flooding for 5 years now and we all got considerably poorer. NGOs fear that populist policies hurt the prospects for human development because they do not empower the people.

Ungpakorn (2010) argues that the reasons why so many NGOs are critical of Thaksin were because they embraced the notion of community independence and rejected state-led

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161 Ibid.
164 Ibid.
redistribution of wealth.\textsuperscript{165} NGOs were established to help provide public goods where the state has failed. In the process, NGOs believe in building and strengthening community capacity so that they can become self-reliant.\textsuperscript{166} Populism, from the perspectives of community activists, weakens the sense of community and the ability for communities to be self-sufficient and self-reliant. Moreover, the fact that the TRT cabinet represents capitalist interests, NGOs fear that their political dominance would result in neoliberal policies, such as FTAs, that would further weaken the poor.\textsuperscript{167} “The Assembly of the Poor mobilized to show that Thaksin's pro-poor policies were not working...they [the policies] did not address the issue of land ownership, community rights and access to resources for the poor. He [Thaksin] just gave handouts...That's not helping,” claimed Barami Chairath, the Assembly's advisor.\textsuperscript{168}

Thai Rak Thai's populist policies in essence rapidly weakened the ability of popular politics to get mobilized. NGOs and popular politics in general were forced to compete with the state for the lower class on similar issues. Hewison & Kittirianglarp (2009: 461) argue that Thai Rak Thai’s successful welfare approach caused a loss in public support for NGOs. Even the TRT had sought to disengage with popular politics altogether. NGOs were being marginalized by the state and lost credibility in due process. NGOs had never lost their political space like this before (Winichakul: 2010). The government effectively took over both political and public space and shrunk the political space so that it was reserved for parliamentary representatives only. Somkiat Pongpaibul argues further that populism and political corruption drove a wedge between the


\textsuperscript{168} Chairath, B. (personal communication, December 27, 2012).
people and NGOs. This forced grassroots NGOs to have to get up and fight back for their own space and the right to operate that had been taken by the state.

ANTI-GLOBALIZATION/ANTI-CAPITALISM

For many PAD supporters, particularly those from grassroots NGOs, Thaksin and Thai Rak Thai were the worst form of capitalist domination. They viewed Thaksin and his cabinet as capitalists who sought to abuse state resources in order to build mega projects, such as hydraulic dams or gas pipelines without any consideration of the environment, resources or local communities.\(^\text{169}\) The grassroots NGOs, many of whom became the bedrock of the PAD movement, saw capitalism as the destruction of community and human rights.\(^\text{170}\) Pitaya Wongkul, a key PAD figure, believes that real democracy must guarantee: 1) the right to self govern; 2) the right to own natural resources and environment and 3) the right to make decisions to collaborate and protect the interest of the community.\(^\text{171}\)

A capitalist economy is also an antithetical of the principle of "sufficiency economy" which the king endorses. The discourse on a sufficiency economy emerged in the 1980s, around the same time that Thailand was going through rapid economic development. The King believes that while economic development, measured by GDP growth, may have many benefits, these often do not trickle down to the poorest people. What the country really needs is sufficiency economy - a principle based on moderation, appropriateness, social justice and knowledge.\(^\text{172}\)


\(^\text{172}\) See Chai Pattana Foundation for the King's principle on sufficiency economy. [http://www.chaipat.or.th](http://www.chaipat.or.th).
The key idea is that one needs to find a way to prosper in a way that is more just to the people of all walks of life and that takes care of our environment.

### TABLE 14: PAD'S COMPARISON OF KING'S AND THAKSIN'S ECONOMIC APPROACHES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capitalism (Thaksin)</th>
<th>Sufficiency Economy (King)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital is money</td>
<td>Human and social capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free competition</td>
<td>Communitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winners and losers</td>
<td>All winners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free trade</td>
<td>Selective exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumerism</td>
<td>Moderation, thrifty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>Culture, mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentally unfriendly</td>
<td>Environmentally friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsustainable development</td>
<td>Sustainable development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking moral grounds</td>
<td>Moral grounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP measures development</td>
<td>GDH measures development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author's comparison

It should have been obvious to the NGO community that Thaksin never has a place for NGOs in either his rhetoric or approach. Jaturon Chaisaeng, considered a "leftist" in Thaksin's government admits: "Thaksin government always held that the roles of the middlemen should be eliminated and direct communication with people has to be established." It is likely that Thaksin's government carried out policies that impacted the nation as a whole, whereas the NGOs kept focusing on impacts at the community level or group level (Table 14). This is a very different

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approach from Thaksin who looked at the issue from a national level. As Thaksin thought the role of the middlemen should be eliminated, the gap between Thaksin and NGOs got bigger and bigger. Thaksin also had little appreciation for conciliatory politics. When he first took office, he claimed "Rules regarding protest need to be tightened. If you are negatively affected by government policies and you want to make a claim, submit your claims and the government will deal with them accordingly. There's no need to create disorder."\(^{174}\)

The Thaksin government's tough stance and hostile attitude towards some of the civil society organizations further created a rift between the people's sector and the government, which bred distrust and hostility. Towards the end of 2002 Thaksin showed obvious frustration with the lingering demonstrations of the Assembly of the Poor, Small-Scale Farmers' Assembly, and Pak Mun Dam activists and he sought to discredit the public credibility of NGOs. He accused NGOs of "taking money from foreigners" and "inciting violence."\(^{175}\) Thaksin told the Pak Mun Dam communities "I want to consult with the people who experience problems directly. I don't want to discuss with NGOs, which act like their advisors...NGOs are like salesmen...they make commission off poor people."\(^{176}\)

Fierce opposition to Thaksin's plan to sign a number of free-trade governments and the ensuing actions taken by the prime minister are often cited by the NGO community as an example of the government's unwillingness to incorporate the people into the decision-making process. Not only did Thaksin sign some FTAs without going through parliamentary channels, which raises the question of their constitutionality, but he did it without much consultation with people on the ground, particularly the NGO community.


\(^{176}\) Ibid.
A group of eight NGO leaders felt they were unnecessarily "harassed" by the government as they were investigated by the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) without justifiable cause. Banjong Nasae, a well-known activist in fishermen's rights from the south and among the investigated, complained that this was a tactic of intimidation by the government and the fact that the AMLO agreed to do this, without giving us any reason for investigation, means that these supposedly "independent" bodies were used as a tool by the government. "The cabinet motion on 23 April 2002\(^\text{177}\), which gave state authorities more power to deal with claims made by citizens, prompted more than 1,000 protesters from more than 300 NGOs out to the streets. They saw the new motion as yet another extension of abuse of state power. "What the government is doing is worrisome and is destroying opportunities to solve poverty and violence in those communities. What the NGOs proposed to the prime minister were actual facts from the ground, which reflected the poverty and inability to secure resources on the ground...Such [cabinet] motion only exacerbated this problem" complains Senator Nirand Pitakwatchara.\(^\text{178}\)

Some NGOs do not oppose all of Thaksin's pro-poor policies, but they believed he lacked the "right" principles. Thaksin was, in the eyes of many NGOs, lacked the right incentives to help the poor. "I agree with some of Thaksin's policies. But he doesn't have the right principles to guide him. For example, the Village Fund, instead of decentralizing power to the local level, he just threw a pile of money at the villagers. That's not community development through empowerment of the people. That's throwing money at a problem," claimed Bamrung Kayotha, a well known activist.\(^\text{179}\)

\(^{177}\) See the motion here: [www.cabinet.thaigov.go.th/pol45_0423.htm](http://www.cabinet.thaigov.go.th/pol45_0423.htm).


\(^{179}\) Kayotha, B. (personal communication, January 9, 2013).
The Committee for Popular Democracy - one of the most organized and successful political NGO - joined the PAD because they were convinced Thaksin lost his legitimacy as the nation's leader because he lacks the basic leadership qualities. They outlined key points of contention with Thaksin:

1. Misuse of his popularity to shun minority voices or those who oppose him;
2. Abuse of power and aggressive interference in independent bodies;
3. No moral authority;
4. Destroyed the process of political reforms by establishing authoritarian capitalism;
5. Used his wealth to transform the political system for his own benefits

The people's sector had pinned its hopes on using their "own people" inside Thaksin's government to pave the way for a greater role for NGOs in state affairs. The most startling example is Poomtham Wetchachai, a veteran NGO leader, who became a deputy minister in Thaksin's first Administration. The NGO community adopted a lobbying strategy to get what it wanted and saw Poomtham as the "connection" in government that it needed. As Ungpakorn: 2011) succinctly argues: "Even though NGOs were excited about the triumph of Thai Rak Thai at the beginning and they tried to lobby Poomtham, but not long after they were all disappointed and very angry at the government." 

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181 Ibid.
Sombat Boon-Ngam Anong, founder of the Red Sunday Group, which emerged to support Thaksin-aligned movement, the Red Shirts, in the post-coup period. Sombat acknowledges Thaksin’s flaws when it comes to his engagement with the people's sector:

I don't particularly like Thaksin and have been critical of him in the past - he's too dictatorial. Thai Rak Thai's version of democracy lacks participation. It's what I call "wholesale democracy." He [Thaksin] won't let the people suggest ways to solve problems. You tell him you have a problem in something. He tells you, no problem, I'll take care of it. He won't let others help him think through problems. No feedback mechanism. And if anyone disagrees with him, he gets very defensive. He does not understand why public intellectuals exist. He closes up space for independent thinking. He works too fast, if you try to intervene, he gets really upset. This tends to create enemies.183

THE MEDIA

For a country that used to pride itself for having one of the freest press in Southeast Asia, particularly traditional media (newspapers and TV) that were able to freely criticize government, the Thai Rak Thai government had, for some, significantly shrunk the space for independent thinking. Towards the end of Thaksin's first term, there was growing opposition, particularly from media activists in the people's sector. A number of opposition newspapers that began to voice criticism towards the Thai Rak Thai government, particularly those from The Nation Group and Thai Post, were harassed as their senior editors and journalists had their bank accounts investigated for "improper funds" without cause.184 Other news outlets were under

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184 Ibid.
pressure to produce positive news for the government. "Thaksin wants to turn newspapers into TRT's personal propaganda machine," argues the PAD. Between 2004 and 2005, Reporters Without Borders registered a drastic hike in the degree of press repression - a trend which continued into the post-coup period. By early 2006, many media NGOs, such as the Association of Thai Journalists, had joined forces with the PAD in protest at the Thaksin government's growing encroachment on media freedom.

FIGURE 11: REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS FREEDOM OF PRESS SCORE, THAILAND (2002-2006)

![Freedom of Press Scores](image)

Source: Reporter's without Borders.
Note: 2006 was skewed also due to the coup in September

The first sign of Thaksin's open war with opposition media occurred when all of a sudden the NACC was investigating members of the executives of the fiercely independent Nation Multi-media Group, Thai Post newspapers and Naewna newspapers - all of which had been critical of the Thaksin government. The government claimed "someone asked us to look into
their financial accounts” but gave no justifiable cause for this investigation. Then Assumption University (ABAC) Poll was threatened, and attempts were made to get rid of political news on UBC cable channel 8. Other media outlets were getting worried that their own financial accounts would be investigated by the NACC without cause. By early 2003, the Thai Journalists' Association made a public statement condemning the government for cracking down on media independence through the abuse of state power, personal wealth and connections and intimidation.

The move to sell iTV dealt another blow to Thaksin-media relations. Shin Corporation, which belongs to the Shinawatra family, bought iTV, one of the few independent media outlets, in 2000. By 2003 Thaksin moved iTV into the Shin Corp building along with the Thai Rak Thai party headquarters. Before this, iTV was the only independent TV channel but it was turned into Thaksin's personal marketing machine. Some two dozen iTV employees opposed the Shinawatra family takeover, citing "conflicts of interest" but they were instead fired. Supinya Klanarong, a well known media activist, called the media under the Thaksin government "truly dangerous for Thailand" (Klangnarong: 2007, p. 33). She herself was sued by Shin Corp twice for defamation on the grounds that she exposed the conflict of interest between Thai Rak Thai, Shin Corp and iTV.

The most dramatic, and arguably the worst move made by Thaksin in his attempt to suppress opposition voices was the cancellation of a popular talk show, Thailand Weekly. Sonthi Limthongkul, owner of the multimedia Manager Group, who was once a supporter of TRT, began to expose the TRT government through his talk show, which was broadcast on state TV

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channel 9 in late 2005. As the show's popularity surged, the government ordered a reduction in Thailand Weekly's air time from 5 days a week to 1 day a week. By Sonthi's own account, the trigger for his campaign to oust Thaksin came when his show was abruptly cancelled altogether.\textsuperscript{187}

Instead of silencing Sonthi, dropping his show prompted the rapid rise of what became the "Sonthi phenomenon". Popularized by his vocal opposition to Thaksin, Sonthi embarked on a crusade to rid the political scene of Thaksin, once and for all. Sonthi was a charismatic, well-spoken and likeable man. He and his Manager Media crew began to hold Thailand Weekly Mobile - first at a public university, then at parks until eventually hundreds of thousands turned up to listen to what Sonthi had to say.\textsuperscript{188} His ability to draw large crowds at rallies and many more on TV and radio via his media channels made him a strong candidate for the PAD leadership. As such, when the PAD was born, leaders of many other opposition groups all agreed Sonthi would be the top leader. This happened despite the fact that Sonthi was considered an "outsider" by other PAD leaders, who were all drawn from the civil society sector.

Moreover, Sonthi was able to raise a lot of money for the PAD cause. Chamlong’s first announcement asking for donations was on September 1, 2006; within 2 weeks ASTV received more than 15 million Baht.\textsuperscript{189} The ability to fundraise is crucial particularly for any sustained, large social movement. The fact that Sonthi owned a media company also played a critical role in the success of the PAD mobilization. It is especially important for an opposition movement to have its own media outlet to create and expand its membership base as well as to avoid any government censorship. "Sonthi is the most important leader of the PAD top ranks," admitted

\textsuperscript{187} Songthai, T. (2008). \textit{The Officials Call Us Traitors...but We are the People's Warriors Saving the Motherland}. Bangkok: GPP Publication, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{188} One of the biggest rallies is the one on February 4, 2006.
Suriyasai, a member of the PAD secretariat. "He owns the media and he gets to frame the movement the way he sees fit....and he has the funds."\(^{190}\)

Sonthi’s crusade against Thaksin was good for his business, at least initially. Apart from Sonthi’s media company, the PAD was joined by other influential figures in the media industry which included Tul Sirikulpipat, managing editor of the Manager Group and Suravit Weerawan, an heir of the media mogul from the south. A survey conducted in November 2005 found that readership of Manager newspapers had risen by 88%, from the pre-crisis figure of 82,000 to 154,000 newspapers.\(^{191}\) When Sonthi began his Thailand Weekly, viewership on manager.co.th soared from 300,000 a day to 900,000 a day.\(^{192}\) As for radio, there are some 82 stations that belong to the manager group which has an estimated 200,000 listeners nationwide.\(^{193}\) Later, however, the Manager Media Group would have to go through several financial restructurings as PAD protests dragged on, costing the business millions. In particular, during the 193-day rally where the entire period was shown live on TV, intermittent with ASTV shows (mostly from the PAD rally site), the cost of airing the protests were outstripping the donations Sonthi was receiving.\(^{194}\) An ASTV produced admitted, as a long-time employee of Manager Media Group, "We are just getting by and having to make tough decisions."\(^{195}\)

\(^{190}\) Katasila, S. (personal communication, December 22, 2012.)
\(^{192}\) Ibid.
\(^{193}\) Ibid.
\(^{194}\) Chana, (personal communication, December 18, 2012)
\(^{195}\) Ibid.
One of the largest and earliest opposition to Thaksin and his government came from state enterprise workers. Under the leadership of Somsak Kosaisuk, chairman of the State Enterprise Workers' Relation Confederation (SEWRC), who later became one of the top five PAD leaders, led anti-government protest since 2002. He was able to turn up tens of thousands of supporters - many of whom were workers themselves. The single most important issue for the labor side of opposition was TRT's plan of state enterprise privatization. Somsak was head of Electricity Generating Authority Thailand (EGAT) worker's relations and has fought for a long time against any plans to privatize it. Somsak was such a prominent labor leader that he was part of the movers and shakers of the economic restructuring plans post-Asian financial crisis and has, together with other activists, outlined a list of state enterprises that could never be privatized. This includes EGAT, dam, etc. Yet Thaksin has vowed in 2003 that no privatization would be allowed under the new legislation put forth by TRT. Thaksin turned around and did exactly the opposite of what he promised as he sought to privatize EGAT, which prompted some of the largest protests against Thaksin pre-coup. On several occasions EGAT threatened to cut off electricity should the government continue with its privatization plan. Other state enterprise unions followed suit. Between 2002 and 2006, unions such as Provincial Electricity Authority, Metropolitan Water Authority, and State Railway Union of Thailand joined in the anti-government protest.

The neoliberal policies of the Thaksin administration was seen as a "nightmare" for the Thai labor unions. Aggressive FTA plans by the TRT government without improvement on wages and worker's rights represent major concerns by labor groups, who joined other NGOs in their opposition to the government. "His [Thaksin's] capitalist ways left no workers powerless.
His trade policies allow foreign investors to enslave Thai labor," argued Sirichai Mai-ngam, a labor leader who later became one of the PAD's top figures.\textsuperscript{196} The system completely overlooked the ordinary workers and allowed the depression of working conditions and wages.\textsuperscript{197}

\textit{T}eachers' union

Under the leadership of the National Thai Teachers' Union, teachers from all over the country staged a number of mass rallies beginning in 2005 against the government's plan to transfer the control of state schools to local authorities. Teachers argued the government did not understand the problems that teachers faced and were concerned that their profession would fall prey to corrupt local politics once it was transferred to local authorities.\textsuperscript{198} Thanarat Samok-nae, leader of the Network against School Transfer to Local Administration, discussed the reason for joining the PAD:

The cabinet motion to transfer the school system said it was based on approval and agreement on behalf of teachers. We cannot accept this...Imagine transferring the entire education system to the hands of local elected officials, we would lose integrity, quality and we do not feel certain it'd be good for our nation. The education system is the foundation for our country's stability...The government must stop this. They can take whatever other infrastructure but not


\textsuperscript{197} Kayotha, B. (personal communication, December 27, 2012).

the education system. They need to leave the system to us who are teachers and know what is best.\textsuperscript{199}

The mass protests of teachers nationwide, with some 150,000 out on the streets at some point, greatly strengthened the opposition movement to the Thaksin government. The teacher union's protest also helped to draw more supporters to the PAD in general, due to their effective protest campaigns, such as blood spilling, banning AIS phones, and threatening a teachers' strike nationwide. Again, leaders of the teachers against the school transfer were able to frame the issue as one of threats to national security and the fabric of the nation, which carried powerful messages to the conservative-minded, who represented the bulk of the PAD supporters. The ability of teacher leaders to build a network across 76 provinces also meant they were able to stage protests in a number of provinces across the country - further heightening the stake between the government and the opposition forces.

\textit{Buddhist sects}

Two Buddhist organizations emerged as the backbone of the PAD movement from the very onset. They were Santi Asoke and Luang Ta Mahabua. Santi Asoke is a rather controversial Buddhist sect founded by Samana Bodhiraksa, who left the Thai Sangha following an order by the Buddhist Supreme Patriarch. Members of Santi Asoke, or Asoke Group, are devout followers of Bodhiraksa who live a very modest lifestyle, are vegetarians (unlike the majority of Buddhist monks in Thailand), consume organic products and eat once a day. Chamlong Srimeong, a Santi Asoke core member, rose to power in the 1990s, bringing the spotlight to the Buddhist group, as Chamlong always wore the plain "moh-hom" outfit, which became associated with his religious

\textsuperscript{199} ASTV Online. (2005, November 11). \textit{Mop khru khan thai-on at "netiborikon " mai khaochai panha - rapphit chaiRon krit ron} \textit{[Teacher's mob opposed the transfer; claimed attorneys don't understand the problem.]} Accessed on June 2, 2012. Retrieved from \url{http://www.manager.co.th/Politics/ViewNews.aspx?newsID=948000156529}. 
beliefs. Santi Asoke has expanded rapidly since the 1990s, as thousands more people have joined. They have their own monasteries throughout the country and established their own charities, schools, restaurants, businesses, libraries, printing press and political parties.

Santi Asoke has always been political. Bodhirak and his followers began engaging in national level politics with the establishment of the Palang Tham party, led by Santi Asoke's very own Chamlong. Initially, the party was filled with Santi Asoke members, who were slowly being replaced by career politicians, including Thaksin in the mid-90s. In an oft-cited speech, Bodhiraksa explained why the Asoke communities must be engaged with politics:

"We live in the real world, even if we are ordained. As long as we still live in this life and this world, we have the duty to make this world a better place. Engaging in politics is our way to contribute to the life we live now, to make this society a better place for everyone. It is a noble thing to do. If we don't go to war with the evil that is standing in front of you, then we do not live by dharma. Lord Buddha says "to suppress bad people and elevate good people.""\(^{200}\)

Santi Asoke established Dharma Forces (Kongthap Tham) as a political unit of Santi Asoke to support its political aspirations and largely to organize political activities, such as demonstrations and petitions. Dharma Forces have been crucial to the success of the PAD movement. They began opposing the Thaksin government openly in 2005 when they came out to protest Thaksin's policy allowing the listing of some of Thailand's largest liquor producers on the Stock Exchange of Thailand. "In fact we began opposing Thaksin towards the end of his first term, be it his politics, his policies, and now this alcohol issue and cronyism....we feel betrayed because we have known him sing Palang Tham...Chamlong used to give him advice all the time when he first took office. We had no choice but to act," reveals Sam Din, a key leader of Dharma

\(^{200}\) Field observation of Bodhiraksa's teaching at PAD rallies in 2011, Bangkok.
Forces. As soon as Chamlong decided to escalate his opposition to Thaksin, he brought Dharma Forces to join the PAD and he himself became one of PAD's top five leaders.

Santi Asoke's Dharma Forces were indispensible to the PAD movement for two reasons. First, they brought some of the most organized, highly disciplined manpower to the movement. Asoke members are those who have given their lives to Santi Asoke, have given up everything as laymen and strictly followed the lifestyle according to what Bodhiraksa believes. As such, when their leader, Chamlong, gives orders, they follow them strictly. Yolsiri Damchua, an Asoke long-time member and active member of the Dharma Forces, revealed: "Santi Asoke group is the main 'servant' of the PAD movement. During protests, we had a meeting everyday at 7am, we take care of the orderliness and cleanliness of the protest sites, we provided food, water and sanitary; we provided security; donation; you name it. We made it possible for other PAD members to be able to stay at rally sites." Their highly disciplined nature and absolute loyalty to Bodhiraksa and Chamlong made them powerful organizers of the PAD movement. Moreover, Dharma Forces had a permanent force, which meant that if their leaders decided to join a protest or mobilize against something, there was no shortage of supporters from Santi Asoke. Unlike other civil groups, whose members waxed and waned over the protest period, Dharma Forces always supplied a steady number of people that the PAD could rely on.

Secondly, Santi Asoke made the PAD movement "more holy" or more related to Buddhism. This religious spin on the PAD was crucial to the framing of their campaigns. One of the tenets of the PAD ideology was its belief in dharma, dharmaic democracy and righteousness (to be discussed later in the chapter). The preaching of Bodhiraksa and Chamlong on these issues not only provided common ground between other PAD members and Dharma Forces but it also

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201 Sam Din. (personal communication, June 24, 2011).
helped reinforce the message and consolidate the opposition movement. In addition, PAD rallies
always had a presence of at least a couple of dozen of Santi Asoke monks who prayed and
walked about in the rallies, chatting with other protesters. This gave a sense of some "sanctity" to
the overall PAD rally.

Luang Ta Mahabua was another important group inside the PAD, most crucial to the
initial efforts to mobilize forces to oppose Thaksin. In the pre-coup stage, Sonthi Limtongkul had
a close relationship with Luang Ta, so there was a deeper connection with the ASTV forces.
However, Luang Ta was fiercely against Thaksin's plan to list alcohol beverage companies on
the stock exchange. Luang Ta and Thaksin had some degree of personal relationship and Luang
Ta admitted using his followers to helping Thaksin before his first election. Luang Ta had
thousands of devout followers, many of whom turned up to protest against Thaksin, under the
name of "Luang Ta Mahabua Students Association." They therefore provided a reliable source of
supporters to the overall PAD movement and further solidified Buddhism as one of the key
aspects of the PAD's opposition to Thaksin.

**STUDENT/ACADEMIC OPPOSITION**

A number of academics and public intellectuals as well as students began to join the
mobilization movement. The Student Confederation of Thailand reached an agreement to join
forces on Feb 4 2006 to “save the nation”. Katchawan Chaiyabut – the SCT's secretary went on
stage to proclaim its stance and called for the Prime Minister's resignation. Ramkamhaeng
University Student Assembly also joined in soon after. The other student bodies from
Thammasat, Chulalongkorn and elsewhere joined forces. Many of the student groups felt that
Thaksin used loopholes in the constitution, abused the law and used his overwhelming majority
in parliament for his own and cronies' benefits. This was policy-based corruption. They called
for yet another major political reform – one that would lead to real and tangible reforms. Academics from Chula, NIDA, etc began to submit petitions or write open letters (NIDA) to support other academics’ opposition to the Thaksin government. These academics proclaimed that there were a number of serious violations committed by Thaksin.«203

THE ROYALISTS

The royalists were a small but powerful and influential section of the PAD Movement. There were two key types of royalist. The first type included individuals and groups who had royal lineage. They were drawn to the PAD mainly because they were convinced Thaksin was really a threat to the Thai monarchy - their heritage. Groups like the "Royalty" (Ratchanikul), the "High Society Group" and the "Noble Women Group" formed to defend the monarchy and support Sonthi’s opposition to Thaksin. Many of these royalists were high-ranking bureaucrats, and many of them already despised the many bureaucratic reforms TRT had undertaken. Many of these individuals had royal titles (i.e. "M L" or "M R"), which helped to further the cause of the PAD as a pro-monarchy movement. They were also important financiers of the PAD. M R Yongyupalak Kasemsant, an early and vocal supporter of the PAD, believed as long as Thaksin remained powerful, the Thai monarchy was in jeopardy:

I'm 72 years old and I've never witnessed the country so divided...the government swore that it would protect the monarchical institution, but no one does anything. I've heard in the provinces there has been effort to push the citizens to choose between that certain someone [Thaksin] and the King, and they choose him because he gives away money for free...gives free fish. But the King's way takes

203 Matichon. (2004, August). Chu wit 2 ma laeo khwang raboet sanghan nakkamueang pan hun [Chuwit no. 2 is here; threw a bomb; told politicians to tamper with stocks], p. 16.
more effort. The King will teach you only how to catch a fish...Thaksin often says 'my country' and 'my citizens.' I'm sorry but I am the citizen of King Bhumibol.204

Another group of royalist supporters included pro-monarchy, conservative groups and individuals. Some of these people had worked on various royal projects and had been their long-time supporters. They believed in the King's philosophy and joined the PAD to defend the monarchy. The Club for Truth and Transparency, for instance, was a collection of pro-monarchy individuals who believed Thaksin had plans to subvert the monarchical system and turn Thailand into a republic.

THE DEMOCRAT PARTY

The Democrat Party and the PAD are loosely related and only coalesce under specific conditions to achieve short-term objectives. The Democrat Party is not a mass-based party and has always been "conservative" when it comes to extra-parliamentarian opposition. By nature, the Democrats have a rather elitist approach on politics and would get involved with contentious activities, such as street protests or movements, only when the benefits are obvious. As such the relationship between the Democrat Party and the Yellow Shirts waxes and wanes over time, depending on expected rewards for mutual support.

The first phase of the PAD-Democrat alliance, beginning in 2005 until the coup, was marked by mutual sympathy but also ambivalence. There was recognition of a shared objective, but each pursued different strategies. Before the coup, the Democrats’ position towards the PAD was supportive but not overtly so. Frustrated by its inability to check the power of Thaksin, due

204 Naewna. (2008, November 11). Ratchanikan " rabu sathaban yu nai chuang antarai mi khabuankan min paiyannoi chi " thaksin " yu nai ko sang khwam taekyaek won prachachon pokpong sathaban [Royalists point out monarchy is in danger; anti-monarchy movement; Thaksin creates division; plea to citizens to protect the monarchy]. Accessed on June 5, 2012. Retrieved from News Center Database.
to institutional constraints, the Democrat members felt they shared similar deep resentment and dissatisfaction towards the Thaksin government as the PAD.

This frustration drove the Democrats to look for allies outside of parliament. The Democrats took some initial steps to mobilize against the Thaksin government, including their planned anti-Thaksin rally and the boycott of the 2006 election, most of which either failed to materialize or were ineffective. Eventually some Democrat MPs began to frequent PAD rallies, some even going on stage to show their support towards the movement. "What the PAD leaders said on stage resonated very much with how we felt in parliament. We saw eye to eye on a number of issues."\(^{205}\)

These issues both lingered and gathered more opposition as time went on. In 2004 various state enterprise networks engaged in a 241-day protest opposing plans to privatize EGAT. After Thai Rak Thai won yet another landslide electoral victory, the same groups that engaged in contentious politics in the first Thaksin Administration continued their activities. Towards the last quarter of 2005, protest activity increased sharply, a trend that would continue into 2006. Some 50,000 teachers from all over the country descended on Bangkok to oppose the government's plan to alter education transfer. In 2005, the government also witnessed the process of alliance building among several networks of NGOs that would later morph into the People's Alliance for Democracy in early 2006.

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\(^{205}\) Democrat Party members (personal communication, July, 2011).
STAGE 2: ALLIANCE FORMATION AND THE BIRTH OF THE PAD MOVEMENT

Anti-Thaksin opposition groups, who had separately protested against the government, eventually formed a collective alliance in early 2006 to drive out Thaksin once and for all. The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) was an anti-Thaksin movement that brought together a broad range of groups whose interests were adversely affected by the Thaksin regime. Despite the diversity of the groups that have allied themselves under the rubric of PAD, the nature of the PAD core was exemplified by their 5 top leaders: 1) Sonthi Limthongkul represents the fight against Thaksin's crackdown on the media; 2) Chamlong Srimoung symbolizes the fight against Thaksin's money politics; 3) Pipob Thongchai exemplifies an opposition to Thaksin's political reforms; 4) Somkiat Pongpaibul represents a force against Thaksin's reform of the bureaucracy and 5) Somsak Kosaisuk exemplifies forces against Thaksin's plan to privatize state-enterprises. Indeed the pre-coup PAD anti-Thaksin rallies were supported largely by networks of NGOs, state enterprises and trade/labor unions. Somsak, for instance, was the leader of the Confederation of the State Enterprise Labor, which represents over 200,000 workers. Similarly, Pipob was a highly respected NGO leader, who was the head of the Campaign for Popular Democracy that drew support from a large network of NGOs all over the country.

Drawing on the networks of the core leaders themselves and other non-NGO anti-Thaksin groups, such as the 40 Senators Group, university academics, Luang Ta Mahabua Students, high-ranking civil servants, students, opposition parties, the PAD came together to form an alliance in February of 2006 - just months before the September coup. Indeed, the PAD’s core leader and

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media tycoon Sonthi revealed "If you asked me whether the PAD called out for a military overthrow [of Thaksin]…I think so…I always say [political] change can only be brought about in 2 ways, one via a coup and another through gradual change. The army should launch a coup as long as they do it for the country, and not for themselves."\(^{208}\)

The PAD self-identifies as a "largely middle-class urbanized" movement.\(^{209}\) Chaiwat Sinsuwong, one of PAD top leaders and former Palang Tham MP concurs, "The majority of PAD supporters are middle class, although we have some lower class folks too. Many had followed Sonthi's TV show 'Thailand Weekly' and joined the protests on their own. But people who attended rallies often had money."\(^{210}\) The urban middle class from all across the country constituted the bulk of the PAD Movement support base. They were drawn to the anti-Thaksin movement largely because of their political and ideological dispositions. The PAD supporters believed in the monarchy as the utmost important institution in Thailand. Their reverence towards King Bhumobol, affinity with and emotional attachment to the monarchical institution helped to propel their opposition to Thaksin. Katherine Bowie (1997, p. 82) argues that the king represents a "symbol of conservative reaction against progressive reforms." They strongly believe that Thaksin and his TRT was a grave threat to the monarchy and the Thai state, which rests on the conservation notion of "religion, nation, and king."

Many of the PAD supporters believed Thaksin wanted to transform Thailand into a republic, or at minimum, weakens the monarchy. Others members also believed that Thaksin was "selling out the nation" to make profit through his aggressive free-trade policies. Moreover, many of the PAD supporters were members of the DP and joined the PAD as an extension of

\(^{208}\) Interview with Kane Sarika, Chief editor of Nation Weekly April 28, 2009 reprinted in PAD Save the Motherland: Proof of Bravery, Sacrifice and Ahinga, pp. 386-7
\(^{209}\) Interviews with various PAD leaders confirmed this statement.
their opposition to TRT. A PAD leader reveals: "We [PAD leaders] use the monarchy for forming an alliance...A broad-based movement like the PAD needs a common grounds...We know the monarchy doesn't really like us because we troubled the king. But we need to mobilize people, to draw in the masses. So we had to do it [use the monarchy]."211

By closing in on the number of access points to channel demands from the public, opposition/resistance build up among groups that were affected. In need of outlets to express their demands and opinions, these groups held rallies separately before they came together as an alliance against the Thaksin government.

THE ANATOMY OF THE PAD MOVEMENT: INSIDE THE PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY

Who were inside the PAD? What was in the name "People's Alliance for Democracy"? This section argues that the PAD was composed of two levels of networks: 1) hardcore supporters, some with a vertical relationship to the leadership and 2) transient supporters, with horizontal relationships to the leadership. While all the opposition groups formed networks and relationships with one another under the umbrella of the PAD, the type of relations and degrees of separation from the PAD's core leadership differed. Moreover, over the course of the PAD's three-stage mobilization, the structure of the PAD network was far from static. Indeed over time, while some of the groups remained as core supporters, others left and rejoined. The dynamic nature of the PAD structure had serious consequences to the size of its membership, which waxed and waned over time.

211 PAD leader (personal communication, December 19, 2012). Interviewee wanted to remain anonymous.
Originally the name the People's Alliance for Democracy was adopted following Suriyasai's suggestion.\(^{212}\) The name is derived from a group formed during the 1990s, Network for the People's Alliance, to oppose a number of post-Asian financial crisis reforms. A number of existing PAD's leaders were part of the prior group and has readopted the name to reflect the nature of the new PAD movement. According to the leaders, the PAD is:

We are a big family, the biggest family in the world. If we want to build a house and change the society, we can. There is a social contract in our hearts.

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that if we need to get up and fight again or go to the streets, we will do so unconditionally. We know that our mission remains unfinished. 213

The "people" represent the various people from all walks of life who are bent on fighting for the country as they vision it. Using the word "people" portrays the idea of "mass" in this movement and that the PAD was truly a popular mobilization.

The "alliance" meant two things. First, an alliance represented the fundamental commonality among all PAD supporters, despite their own backgrounds or origins. Various groups and interests allied together to fight and unite as one against the Thaksin regime. Second, the alliance illustrated the structure of the PAD as a web of networks that come together to form the movement. From the very onset, the PAD was a temporary alliance of convenience - those with very different goals and interests sought to find a common ground to unite on a temporary basis to fight against Thaksin. The movement was loosely aligned with various groups. This was why the PAD had multiple leaders to represent the various broad interests that came together to defy the Thaksin government.

"Democracy" for the PAD meant something completely different from what one normally understands as democracy. The PAD's version of democracy maintained that there is a constitutional monarchy in Thailand, whereby the monarch is above the constitution, and the Thai democracy must protect the very foundation of the state, which is nation, religion, and king. Also the people must be enlightened enough to elect the "right" and "good" leader. A more detailed discussion of the PAD ideology is in chapter 7.

**CORE LEADERSHIP**

The core leadership of the PAD was divided into three parts. The first part was the First Generation leadership, which was composed of five leaders drawn from a variety of groups. Sonthi Limthongkul represented the ASTV/Manager portion of the PAD, which was among the largest. The membership of the ASTV was able to mobilize thousands of protesters at every major rally. In fact, more of Sonthi's followers subscribed to ASTV or were regular consumers of Manager Media. The second group was under the de facto leadership of Chamlong Srimeong, which apart from drawing the devout members of Santi Asoke, which numbered in the thousands as well, also elicited support from those who liked Chamlong. Chamlong was a very popular Bangkok governor in the 1990s and he was among the top leaders of the Black May uprising.

Somkiat Pongpaibul and Pipob Thongchai were representatives of the NGO sector. While numerous in terms of the number of organizations that joined the PAD, the absolute numbers of supporters that these NGOs brought in to the movement are not large. For instance, the Network of 30 Organizations against Corruption had 30 members, each with its own members but they may have collectively sent only one or two of the Network's representatives to the PAD protest rally at any particular time. The overall support of NGOs inside the PAD was thus less visible if one went to the rallies. The same was true of the labor unions, under the leadership of Somsak Kosaisuk. Somsak was a chairman of the Confederation of State Enterprise Workers' Union, which represented at least 2,000 workers. He was asked to join the leadership rank-in-file because of the labor portion of the PAD movement that he represented but the number of workers that actually attended PAD rallies was not a true representation of their overall support. Again, the few leaders of the labor groups were sent in, while the majority of the rest stayed behind as they were unable to miss work to join long rallies.
The first generation of leaders made major decisions with regards to the movement (Figure 14). The structure of the PAD was centralized in this respect, albeit with five leaders, not one. They met regularly and voted on issues such as rallies, protest strategy, legal actions, position towards the opposition and government, etc. Based on fieldwork interviews, these leaders said the decision to take action did not take the strict form of unanimity or majority vote, but rather all these leaders tried to find grounds that would be acceptable to all. Often prior to each major rally or major action taken by the PAD, the leaders issued a press release via Manager Media outlets. The leadership was not aloof from its members as it spent significant amounts of time with the PAD members, particularly during rallies. During quiet times, these leaders appeared frequently on PAD media outlets, be it on ASTV, writing in Manager's various publications or in non-ASTV media. During rallies, they spent much of their time with fellow protesters, conducting a number of speeches on stage and doing rounds of mingling with the PAD members.
Of note is the fact that all of the PAD first generation leaders had significant experience in mass mobilization and in organizing protest activities. Those representing NGOs and the labor section of the PAD, in particular, had a number of decades experience in "street politics". They had the know-how of organizing protests, which came in particularly handy when conducting protest strategies. They understood to a great extent the logistics of protest activities, knowing what worked and what might not. Prior to the PAD being officially established, each of the core leaders had in fact mounted their own protest against the Thaksin government. For instance, Sonthi’s Thailand Weekly Mobile drew thousands of supporters to his weekly shows. Somsak himself staged a number of protests against the privatization of state enterprises between 2003 and 2005. The PAD movement, in some respect, is a conglomeration of opposition movements against Thaksin into one major, unified movement.

The second part of the core PAD leadership was composed of the PAD coordinators. They were responsible for the day-to-day running of the PAD movement. The coordinators were also the link between the core leaders and other groups inside the PAD. Suriyasai Katasila, Chachawal Chartsuthichai, Panthepp Pongpuapan, and Prapan Koonmee, for example, were key coordinators of the PAD. They often partook in the decision-making process along with the first generation of leaders, particularly when it came to press releases and media relations. They connected the PAD to the outside world, were the mouthpiece of the PAD and supported and realized the goals of the leaders. They were crucial to the mobilization efforts of the PAD, particularly for long rallies.

Another important part of the PAD structure was the movement's security apparatus. It is composed of three major components: 1) PAD Volunteer Guards; 2) Dharma Force Guards and 3) Srivichai Warriors. The PAD Volunteer Guards (PVG) were recruited largely from protest
attendants but also from state enterprises and NGOs that represented the core of the PAD movement. Kittichai Sai-sa-ad was the main leader of the PVG. The EGAT, Waterworks Authority, etc sent in their people as volunteers. According to guards, the PVG went through rigorous recruitment processes. There was a Center for Public Safety inside PAD, which did background checks and required trial periods for all guards. Also because there were instances of ill-intended persons impersonating as PAD guards, every few weeks they would change the badge for the guards and guards without the badge would not be allowed in.214 The most organized security apparatus for the PAD was during the third stage of mobilization, the 158-day rally, which Chamlong insisted on using the Dharma Forces only.

Dharma Forces were recruited from within Santi Asoke itself. These were highly disciplined monk-like types of guards that would take orders from Samdin Lertboot, and to some extent Chamlong, (both former army generals), and follow them strictly. They were smallest in number, but also the most organized. They largely took charge of security at the protest sites and were not front liners. In addition, the recruitment of Srivichai Warriors was under the leadership of Damrong Yotarak, a southerner in charge of the PAD sub-group, Pak Panang PAD (Pak Panang is a district in Nakorn Sri Tammarat province in southern Thailand). Damrong recruited men from other PAD sub-groups in the south of Thailand to form the Srivichai Warriors. The hijacking of the train from the south to Bangkok was when this group made its name and since then they were front liners for various occupation activities such as the Suvanabhumi airport, the government house and various major arteries in the capital. They were also the guards for the five core leaders of PAD.

214 PAD leaders admit the guard issue has been a "disaster" for quite some time, particularly during times of crisis as the leaders lost control over who the guards are and what they do. They were many reports of "rogue" guards who used weapons and did not obey orders. For the third stage of mobilization, the 158-days, Chamlong was vehement about using the Dharma Forces only to prevent any undisciplined guards.
The leaders claimed that all three security divisions practiced the principle of peace and Ahimsa (a non violent approach championed by Gandhi which has a much more profound meaning than what it was used to denote during the demonstrations). Whenever journalists (who were on many occasions verbally abused or physically harmed by the guards) confronted the PAD core leaders about the violent manner of the guards, they got defensive and said most weapons carried were for self protection. In theory, all guards were only allowed wooden battalions for protections. But Srivichai Warriors were caught with guns, bullets, explosives, ping pong explosives, sharp metal pipes, rubber bands and cutter knives, etc. The PAD leaders always denied their guards were armed. Yet, when the Warriors hijacked the bus and got arrested, these weapons were found. The PAD leaders' claim that the guards were "volunteers" is unlikely to be true. All guards had special privileges that other PAD members did not - special clothing, not having to line up for food, etc. The Srivichai Guards were reported to have been bankrolled by a wealthy staunch PAD supporter from Samui in southern Thailand.

The Second Generation of the PAD leadership is composed of second-in-command leaders. Officially there were only three leaders, Sirichai Mai-ngam, Sawit Kaewwan and Samran Rodpetch. There were also five additional spokespeople for the PAD: Prapan Kunmee, Sarocha Pornudomsak, Anchalee Paireerak, Kamolporn Worakul and Saranyoo Wongkrajang. They were either close associates of the First Generation leaders or heads of powerful PAD allies. Unofficially there were many more second generation PAD leaders, who frequented the PAD stage and ASTV and were respected as the "elders" of the PAD, but they did not assume the official title of the second generation leaders. They provided leadership support to the first generation leaders and at times helped make major decisions related to the overall direction of the movement. Some of these second generation leaders were the right hand men of their first
generation counterparts, so their relationship predated the PAD movement. Trust is a major issue particularly when it comes to being responsible for mass protests.

**TABLE 15: SELECTED PAD NETWORKS BY SECTOR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media</strong></td>
<td>Manager Group, the Nation, Thai Post, Naewna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationalists</strong></td>
<td>Network for the Protection of Electricity and Water for the Citizens, Alliance of Teachers for Saving the Nation 4 Regions, Saving the Nation Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labor</strong></td>
<td>Confederation of State Enterprise Workers' Relation, Provincial Electricity Authority, Thai Airways, TOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NGO</strong></td>
<td>Student Federation of Thailand, Four Region Slum Network, Network for Senior Doctors, Center for the Protection and Restoration of Local Community Rights, Network of HIV Positive in Northern Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmers</strong></td>
<td>Federation of Farmers in Northern Region, Assembly of the Poor, Farmers' Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Royalists</strong></td>
<td>The Royalty (Ratchanikul), Club for Truth and Transparency, the Noble Women Group, the Sakdina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

ALLIANCE

The PAD movement was formed on the basis of a number of alliances among groups, organizations and individuals. Broadly speaking, there were two levels of alliances inside the PAD. One is what I term “the core alliances”, while the other is what I call “alliances of convenience”. Despite being a rather loosely organized movement initially, there were a number of alliances that had been part of the movement in a more long-term manner. These core alliances were composed of two types of relationships to the core leadership: a) hierarchical and
b) vertical. The core alliances that had hierarchical relationships to the PAD leadership were those that followed the lines of command from the leadership. By contrast, the vertical ones operated on the basis of consultation with and support to the PAD leadership.

The core alliances that had hierarchical relationships with the PAD leaders were groups and individuals which either followed the leaders of PAD or were part of the groups that these leaders led or had strong relationships with. As mentioned earlier, each PAD leader brought with him a set of networks, organizations and followers. ASTV was a prime example of this. ASTV was owned and operated by Sonthi. ASTV became a core alliance of the PAD. More importantly, ASTV consumers, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, were core alliances of the PAD as well. The same goes with Santi Asoke and followers of Chamlong Srimuang. These groups are illustrated in the figure above with a relationship that suggests hierarchy.

The core alliances of the PAD that have vertical relationships to its leaders are core supporters that do not, essentially, take orders from the PAD leaders. These groups and individuals are characterized by the relationship of solid lines in Figure 14 above. They are, for instance, groups of media, artists, senators, teachers, and royalty. These groups have mutual understanding with the leaders of the PAD, support one another and consult regularly. Indeed many of these groups have personal relationship with core leaders of the PAD. For instance, a highly influential public intellectual/political figure, Prasong Soonsiri, who writes for the pro-PAD newspapers, Naewna, has been feeding “intelligence” to Chamlong and Santi Asoke prior to them joining the PAD and this was instrumental for their turning their back against Thaksin. Naewna newspapers continue to be one of the biggest opposition to Thaksin and the current government of Yingluck Shinawatra. Note that while this is not the same as Manager or ASTV
newspapers, which are owned by Sonthi, because Prasong and his networks are not related hierarchically to Sonthi (Table 15).

The second type of alliance was the alliances of convenience. These were characterized by the more transient nature of their relationship to PAD. In a nutshell, they become PAD allies when it suited their interests. Some were core supporters during the initial stage of the PAD movement and became more transient later on. These included the Democrat Party, which joined the PAD movement officially during the 193-day protests in order to overthrow the Thaksin-aligned government.

The logo of the PAD shows 4 arms and fists and in the middle are three stars, a bird, the moon and the sun. The four fists represent four religions: Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. These fists represent major religions in Thailand that unite to fight against the misery, suffering, discomfort and dissatisfaction caused by an oppressive and abusive state. This is quite contrary to the PAD's actual ideology, which was based on Buddhist principles. These fists also unite to become the People's Alliance for Democracy to fight against the abuse of state power. They seek happiness and benefits for everyone, for the nation and for truth.

The three stars are truth, righteousness, and beauty. Truth will conquer lies and dishonesty. Righteousness will conquer evil and beauty will conquer the ugliness and greed of the capitalists who wanted to conquer the nation. The bird represents peace that only comes when the people are no longer oppressed or intoxicated from the abuse of state power. Peace means we can all live in happiness with all the ethnic and religious groups. The sun represents the day, while the moon represents the night. The PAD will fight for peace, happiness and emancipation from state repression for all.
I must emphasize that "economic class" was not the key determinant of this political conflict, but it played an important role. Empirical evidence in this research has shown that the majority of the PAD supporters were the middle class who live in urban areas, nationwide. Some of their reasons for despising Thaksin and his policies may have been rooted in their economic positions, for example not liking populist policies because they felt they were the only tax-paying group not reaping the benefits. However, these reasons were merely part of their identity as PAD supporters. What became clear later on was the divergence between their vision of democracy and that of other groups, i.e. the Red Shirts, or what they saw as important for the Thai polity. In the end, we saw that while the class aspect shaped the current conflict in Thailand, it by no means defined it.

However, the class aspect that shapes the PAD membership base is different from what the scholars of the "revolutionary threat hypothesis" argue. Acemoglu & Robinson (2006) contend in their oft-cited work *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* that elites democratize to avert some form of social upheaval. Nondemocratic elites do not want to democratize, while the mass wants democracy because they believe elites cannot make credible commitment. This approach is not suitable to explain the emergence of the PAD in the Thai case.

First, the PAD was a *popular* movement that was anti-democratic. The author's model makes an assumption that the masses want democracy because it is a more credible commitment to the redistribution of power and wealth. There is no acknowledgement of the role of non-elites in driving the anti-democratic movement. Second, the revolutionary threat framework assumes elites' preferences are static, which means that preferences for political institutions remain the same over time. Yet the various stages of the PAD's development have shown that some groups
joined the movement and left, while others rejoined. Thus, if the PAD was to be made up of all elites then they should always maintain their preferences and never leave the PAD. But this is empirically not true. Last, Acemoglu & Robinson pin their hope on the middle class to bring about democratization. As the PAD movement suggests, however, its middle-class majority was a serious opposition to some aspects of democracy.

Rather than class, what defined this conflict and what accounted for why the PAD was broadly-speaking a "conservative-royalist movement" was the PAD's vision of the nature of the state and its relation with society. This was clearly a political and ideological conflict. The PAD saw the Thai state as composed of what Thais understand as the traditional sources of power: the monarchy, the military and the bureaucracy. The military and the bureaucracy have the duty to protect and safeguard the monarchical institution. All three units work to uphold the system of "constitutional monarchy" whereby the monarchy continues to be the ultimate source of moral authority and righteousness. The democratic institutions, such as parliament and senate, ought to accept such a hierarchy and work hand in hand to preserve this constitutional monarchy. Electoral democracy is an important aspect of the polity but it is deeply flawed due to ongoing corruption and money politics. As such, reforming the polity to halt the progression of this very corrupt form of "democratic" politics is necessary for Thailand to move forward. The middle class must become enlightened in order to educate others about what is right or wrong so that once the majority of the populace sees the light, then they will choose good leaders to lead the country. Only then Thailand can become fully democratic.
TABLE 16: KEY FINDINGS FROM NATIONAL SURVEYS OF THE THAI ELECTORATES (2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biggest problem facing Thailand</th>
<th>Poor Economy</th>
<th>Red: 24%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow: 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Conflict</td>
<td>Red: 42%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow: 24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is democracy?</td>
<td>Majority Rule/Election</td>
<td>Red: 34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow: 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rights/Freedom</td>
<td>Red: 62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow: 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity in Institution</td>
<td>Courts</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Election Commission</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parliament/MPs</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What explains the current division in Thailand?</td>
<td>Ideological/Political</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic/Class</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural/Urban</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the Army</td>
<td>Important independent institution</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too political/Too big</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Asia Foundation (2011).
An Asian Foundation Survey (2011) of 1,500 respondents nationwide showed that the majority of those identifying themselves as "Yellow" or "Yellow-Leaning" accounted for 10%. Within this, those that hail from Bangkok and the vicinity accounted for merely 11%, while the rest were drawn from the provinces, particularly in the southern region. The fact that the proportion of PAD members from provincial Thailand was greater than that from Bangkok is corroborated by accounts based on interviews with PAD top leaders. Moreover, I conducted a survey of all existing ASTV shops and spoke to a number of PAD provincial "heads" to confirm that indeed more PAD members were concentrated in the South and East of Thailand (Table 17). An interview with a PAD key man from Chonburi revealed how many PAD members from the provinces were able to attend rallies in Bangkok: "Many of us were shopkeepers or small business owners. Each family sent in one or two members to Bangkok and the rest stayed behind to tend to our business; those who stay behind are "visual" supporters through ASTV."215

**TABLE 17: PROVINCES WITH A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF ASTV SHOPS AND PRODUCT DISTRIBUTOR (2011)**

| 1. Bangkok |
| 2. South: Prachuabkirikhan, Rayong, Krabi, Nakornsri Thammarat, Songkla, Surat Thani, Chumporn, Phuket |
| 3. East: Ranong, Chonburi |
| 4. North: Kampaengphet |
| 5. Central: Samutsakorn |

Source: Author

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215 Interview Jan 2013
CONCLUSION

This chapter examines the Thaksin regime and the emergence of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) as an anti-democratic movement. It illustrates the development of the PAD formation, which goes through three stages of opposition mobilization. This chapter addresses the first two stages: formal and informal institutional blockage and opposition alliance formation. The first stage took place in the 1990s, a pro-reform phase, when a number of key figures who would later become PAD leaders engaged in the reform process. Following the leadership of Thaksin and his Thai Rak Thai party, opposition groups began to form to oppose a number of TRT policies as well as Thaksin himself. This stage of opposition politics is considered as an anti-incumbent mobilization, when opposition forces sought to pressure Thaksin to resign. Then, the last stage of opposition movement occurs - anti-democratic mobilization - when all other strategies have failed.

I argue that anti-democratic mobilization occurs when formal and informal channels of opposition in a democratic regime are, and/or are perceived to be, blocked - resulting in a perceived loss of access to power in the political system. This process of institutional blockage occurs in multiple stages and it is a dynamic strategic interaction between the government and its opposition forces. The stages are as follows 1) formal institutional blockage; 2) informal institutional blockage; 3) anti-democratization of opposition; 4) alliance between opposition and nondemocratic institutions and 5) democratic breakdown. This chapter has provided detailed accounts of each stage of the blockage, the alliance formation of the opposition and the PAD's appeals to nondemocratic institutions. Chapter 6 will discuss in detail the process of anti-democratization of the PAD Movement and the breakdown of democracy in 2006. For each stage of the process of institutional blockage, both the government and the opposition face a number of...
options. Their chosen strategy affects whether or not the process of institutional blockage continues. As such, both the sequence and timing of this process matters to the outcome.

An examination of the Thaksin government also reveals a number of key issues that drive both the actual and the perceived institutional blockages. At one level, the strength of the Thaksin government served to marginalize the voices of the opposition. At another level, however, the actions and the behavior of Thaksin and his government created the perception of exclusion among the opposition. Over the six years of Thaksin dominance, a number of triggering events occurred to fuel the opposition discourse for anti-incumbent dissent. What constituted the PAD opposition to Thaksin, I argue, is based on both substantive and constructed discourse. In other words, while Thaksin and his party sought to block a number of institutional channels for dissenting voices, the opposition also intentionally constructed this discourse to further its own case for opposition. Embedded within the early anti-Thaksin discourses were conservative, royalist, nationalist and anti-democratic elements that eventually evolved to form the identity of the PAD movement. At the heart of the PAD's characteristics lay its different conception of a democracy.
6. Anti-democratization of the PAD Movement

"A coup that overthrows an illegal government, a tyrannical regime, elected or non-elected, is necessarily good, but a coup that seizes political power for the coup-makers’ personal interest is undeniably evil...The recent coup in Thailand has been good for Thailand, for it has set out to cure the country’s numerous political ills permeating all social spectra. [It was] a coup de grace."

- Academic and 1997 Constitution Drafter, Khian Theeravit, October 18, 2006

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the process of anti-democratization of the PAD movement and the eventual overthrow of the Thaksin government. When opposition actors and groups feel they are shut out of access to power now and in the foreseeable future, they appeal to nondemocratic alternative sources of power to reverse, or at minimum, halt, this process of institutional blockage. In essence, the strategic interactions between the opposition forces and Thaksin matter to the former's perception of "blockage." Thaksin took a number of steps during the critical moments leading up to the coup to not only confirm the opposition's perception of permanent exclusion from access to power, but he also underscored on multiple occasions his lack of credible commitment. These two key conditions helped to further drive the PAD movement to mobilize around nondemocratic sources of power to help break the political deadlock.
The next section outlines the anatomy of the 2006 military coup d'état. I advance a claim here that the coup is not a purely elitist overthrow of an elected government. Rather, the alliance between the People's Alliance for Democracy and other opposition groups to the Thaksin regime, was crucial to the success of the 2006 coup. The PAD gives the basis for legitimacy to the coup by signaling strong mass support for military intervention that would overthrow the government. I argue here that an elite-driven approach to regime change, is no longer sufficient to explain Thailand's democratic breakdown. Elites must form a coalition with a group of citizens against the remaining citizens. The interaction between elites and social movement, in this case, the PAD, signifies the military overthrow of a popularly elected government.

To illustrate the importance of popular support for extra-constitutional interventions by nondemocratic figures, I provide empirical evidence such as public opinion polls and the analysis of the PAD discourse to demonstrate popular backing of the coup. I argue that nondemocratic actors moved against Thaksin on the condition of "sufficient popular support." To substantiate this claim that the 2006 coup hinges upon perceived popular support by the military, I later examine the absence of another military intervention at the end of 2008, following the world's longest street demonstration. The popular support for the movement was dwindling, on the one hand, while public opinion towards another coup d'état was also growingly negative. The military leaders also admitted to "making a mistake" for their 2006 coup. All of this suggests that an elite-centric explanation, which is centers on internal power struggle among elites alone, are insufficient to explain the democratic collapse in 2006.

The last section examines in great detail the discourse and ideology of the PAD Movement. The PAD is not an anti-democratic movement because its supporters are "bad", but rather there are some deep-seated beliefs in certain values and understanding that make them
wary of the democratic system. Understanding the PAD's disposition towards anti-democratic attitudes tell us much about how their previous experiences of democracy had adversely affected them. It is imperative to pay a closer attention to the PAD and not just brand it as a conservative, right-wing movement. Rather, we need to really get deeper in our understanding of how its supporters see the polity and society.

**Stage 3: Crisis and the Anti-Democratization of the PAD Movement**

The PAD movement began to transform itself from an anti-incumbent movement, to one of anti-democratic following a series of political deadlocks occurring in early 2006. These deadlocks are what the PAD perceive as "no other way out" or "no acceptable compromise" between the opposition and the Thaksin government. The anti-democratization of the PAD exemplifies both a strategic calculation of the PAD leaders as well as a reflection of some of the true nature of the PAD identity that has emerged more strongly as the movement evolves. In essence, the PAD partly becomes anti-democratic movement because it perceives the political deadlock is permanent. Following the coup d'état, the movement makes clearer its anti-democratic nature.

To elaborate, the process of anti-democratization occurs in two parallel steps. On the one hand, the strategic interactions between the opposition and Thaksin eventually convinced the former that a) their other strategies have failed; b) their future is foreshortened; c) they are likely to be excluded from access to power. This perception of "permanent exclusion" and "desperation" is a result of strategic calculations as well as outcomes from a series of interactions with Thaksin. As the following paragraphs will show, when the opposition does not get what it wants, the feeling of desperation escalates. Note that because the later stage of anti-
democratization of the movement is driven largely by emotions and perception, perceptions of actions by the opposition matter as much as the action themselves.

Moreover, part of the move to be an anti-democratic movement is strategic in the sense that the PAD leaders believe this is a strategy that could help them maintain/increase popular support and to drive the mobilization forward. However, the fact that by becoming anti-democratic resonates with much of the PAD movement does say something about the nature of those who join the movement themselves. As such, this section will also illustrate that the nondemocratic norms and beliefs, which have been residual to the movement during its anti-incumbent stage, will take center stage at this time.

Two things constitute an "antidemocratic" mobilization: 1) appealing to nondemocratic sources of power and 2) demanding a change to the political system. The pre-coup period of PAD mobilization is marked largely by their appeal to powerful nondemocratic institutions. Their demand to overthrow the democratic system occurred in the later stage of the movement's mobilization (post-coup) as the PAD's identity evolves. While the PAD reached out to nondemocratic institutions, namely the military and the monarchy, their responses and reactions to the PAD's appeals served to directly and indirectly empower the opposition movement. The military's conflict with the Thaksin government, in particular, provided hope to the PAD Movement that an intervention from the men in uniform could break this political deadlock.

**Appealing to Powerful Extra-Constitutional Institutions**

Given that the PAD is a pro-monarchy movement, composed of some right-wing, conservative members, it organizes itself around the issue of protecting the monarchy. The easiest and most damaging way to discredit someone in Thailand is to accuse someone of being
disloyal to the king. That is exactly what the PAD did. The uneasy relationship between the king and Thaksin made the story believable. Given that the majority of the PAD members are conservative in nature, by believing that Thaksin is disloyal and is ill-intent on the monarchy makes them believe he is really truly dangerous to "Nation, Religion and King" - the foundations of the Thai state. After all, the PAD began to wear "yellow shirts" because yellow is the color of King Bhumibol.

The PAD leaders exposed what they strongly believe is Thaksin's plan to subvert the monarchy and transform Thailand into a republic. This was called the "Finland Plan." PAD leaders argue that Thaksin's strategy is to: 1) create a one-party system; 2) weaken the bureaucratic system so that it would serve the politicians unconditionally; 3) transform state property into part of the neo-liberalism; 4) ensure that the monarchy is only a mere national symbol; 5) turn the party system into a cadre party under the guise of a mass party. Thaksin had succeeded in overtaking the Thai economy and political arenas with his money and capitalist ways, now he will take on the most important institution in Thailand - the monarchy, claims PAD leader Sonthi Limthongkul. A Bangkok senator went on PAD stage confirming the existence of Finland manifesto to be true, drawing thousands of supporters to the PAD rallies to drive away Thaksin.

PAD supporters were outraged that Thaksin was supposedly both disloyal and disrespectful to the king. They launched a powerful campaign called "Save the Nation" by illustrating that by overthrowing this evil man they would do the nation a favor and would save

the monarchy. Prapan Koonmee, one of PAD's leaders, who wrote a book called "This Life I devote to the King and to Serving the People" reflects a general sentiment among royalist supporters. "The king only sacrifices himself to serve the people. He is selfless and devotes his life to his people....and then came this Thaksin government whose behavior was every bit disrespectful to the king...I could not just stand there and do nothing!"219 Likewise, Pramote Nakornthap, another brain behind the PAD movement, also wrote a book called "How Dare you be Disloyal to the King" where he argues that Thaksin was such a danger to the country and to the monarchy that the only other option left for us to get out of this crisis was a coup. A coup would indeed be the only way to save democracy so that we could rebuild a new one, which would uphold the ideals of "constitutional monarchy."220

One of the most powerful appeals to the monarchy that the PAD had made was the call for a royally-appointed prime minister. Royal decree, in particular, the right for the king to appoint a leader, set forth by Article 7 in the 1997 Constitution was among the most widely discussed and admittedly controversial issues within the NGO community. Sonthi Limthongkul, through his talk show, Thailand Weekly, which mobilized opposition to Thaksin and Thai Rak Thai government, was responsible for the construction of this discourse. In late 2005, Sonthi had his audience (over 10,000 people) took an oath.

Your Majesty, the situation in Thailand right now is evident that a crisis is looming...the kind of crisis that cannot be solved within the existing political system. The issue of royal decree has been discussed so widely - something so unprecedented. This is no accident. Whenever the country has a political leader

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who has no morality, that's when the people look to you, your Majesty....the union between the king and his people, which has historically been our principle rule of law of constitutional monarchy is being challenged by the new capitalist monopoly...we the people wouldn't reject the government as long as the government still represents the people, as long as the government holds on to dharma, as long as the government still keeps its promise, to you, your majesty...but the current situation requires changes...The new political structure has to have a royally appointed person to lead...of course we will have a referendum on this.221

Then Sonthi asked the entire audience to say aloud the following: "I, [name], your majesty, will fight to the best of my ability and through peaceful means and constitutionally in order to return royal decree so that your majesty can appoint a new leader to embark on political reforms in order to sustain the system of constitutional monarchy...to provide happiness to all the people."222

Admittedly, the decision to accept Article 7 for the NGO leaders inside PAD was strategic, not principle. As Suriyasai reveals in a candid interview:

We [Committee for Popular Democracy] came to a breaking point in March [2006] when the situation was at a dead end. The majority of the PAD support already wanted Article 7. We kept pressing on, hoping to break Thaksin...perhaps he would concede, but he did not... I know some of the NGOs opposed this, a few even left PAD...But there was a rumor that Pipob and I worked for the leftists

222 Ibid.
inside Thaksin's government...that we are anti-royalist, that's why we're holding out on Article 7...we need to maintain our mass, our support and that this is not our last fight. We knew that if we didn't go ahead with Article 7, we would need to withdraw and we would be accused of leaving our supporters. We couldn't do it so we finally agreed.223

The PAD's appeals to the monarchy and their use of Thailand's most powerful institution as their symbol both unite the various groups inside the alliance and helps to propel popular support. The monarchy strikes a chord for many Thais as the majority of Thais have only lived under the rein of one king. Royalism and nationalism have become intertwined in the consciousness of many Thai people and the two concepts are inseparable. As such, when the opposition claims Thaksin is selling out the nation because of his plans to privatize many state enterprises, for example, such acts can be seen as an offense to the monarchy as well. "Today there's a person who disrespected the king. He wants to sell off our nation. He wants to give this land, which our ancestors have built, and give it to another country...The King has never neglected his nation, so how could we neglect our King, our nation," said a frequent PAD demonstrator.224

APEAL TO THE MILITARY

Thaksin understands the political importance of the military despite its weaker political roles following the Black May uprising. As such, he sought to engage with the military through cooptation (McCargo & Pathmanand: 2005). While a number of retired generals staffed

224 PAD supporter (personal communication, June 14, 2012).
Thaksin's first administration, Thaksin also created a loyal support base inside the military by placing several officers who were Class 10 graduates of the Armed Forces Academics Preparatory School like himself. Despite this, the relationship between the military top brass and Thaksin has not always been good.

Thaksin's relation with the military began to sour in 2005 when Prem Thinasulanond, former prime minister, openly criticized Thaksin's government. Prem is no ordinary former leader. He is one of the most respected individuals both in the army and within the palace circle. Prem is the head of the privy councilor, a position appointed by the King. His vast personal networks in key institutions ensure he maintains significant political clout despite not being actively in politics. Matichon Weekly ran a full cover page on Prem calling him the "fifth factor" - someone with significant barami who is being called to "step in" to resolve growing political crisis. In March 2006, just months before the coup, Prem told reporters that the situation had come to a complete deadlock and that some solution needs to be sought. In the weeks following, Prem had been reportedly giving talks at various military establishment criticizing Thaksin and his government. Prem later emerged as the key figure behind the coup of 2006.

The PAD movement appealed to the military to "step in" on a number of occasions, particularly as the situation escalated in 2006. Sonthi and Chamlong are the biggest proponents of the military intervention among the PAD top leaders. For Sonthi, he always sees the military is the defender of the Thai nation, and most of all, the monarchy. As such it is the "duty" of the military to act to save the nation. "We need to rely on the military now to solve the crisis

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227 Other top leaders insist that the PAD, collectively, never support the coup but each PAD leader differs on this. Such statement is contradictory to a number of speeches PAD leaders made over the years.
in our society," claimed Sonthi.228 Chamlong, who himself worked for Prem during his leadership, had spoken in support of "a coup for the people" and had reportedly told a number of military officers "not to be afraid."229 "I'm happy the military staged a coup," reveals PAD leader, Sonthi. "General Sonthi [Bonnyaratklin], I feel for him, he never thought he'd be a coup leader...but because he was surrounded by those who respect General Prem, he saw what was wrong with Thaksin regime."230

COUP NOT INEVITABLE

The height of the crisis and political deadlock that marks the few months preceding the September coup were critical to shaping the strategies of both the pro- and anti-Thaksin forces. Ultimately, I argue here that the coup is not inevitable. The coup is a choice the military elites made based on the unfolding of events. There was a point in time during this entire ordeal that some room for "negotiation" between the opposition forces and Thaksin may have been conceivable, possible. During the few months prior to the coup in September, the opposition forces, particularly the PAD, showed some signs of fatigue and waning as well, while Thaksin was suffering significant loss of political support, most notably from the TRT party itself. This "precarious" stage of the tug-of-war between Thaksin and his "adversaries" gave signals that some sort of compromise or deal between these forces could have been made. In the end, however, both sides were not making any concessions that were perceived as acceptable. Suriyasai discussed this period in detail:

I think the PAD did what they could to prevent the coup d'état...Thaksin should have at least announced his resignation from power to preserve the system and the constitution. This [the coup] is what the PAD has always warned him about. I was absolutely certain that as long as Thaksin remained center stage in politics, we would reach a complete dead end. If Thaksin wouldn't back down, the PAD couldn't back down either. None of us could back down and we passed the point of any compromise or reconciliation, which means some sort of extra-constitutional power would have to intervene...Thaksin essentially staged a 'coup' on himself before the military launched another one...As such I'm not surprised 89-90% of Thai people agreed with the coup and the subsequent Surayuth government. I don't blame the coup leaders for doing what they did. They prevented bloodshed.231

The army chief, General Sonthi, who led the coup also admitted that Thaksin brought the coup upon himself because he was unwilling to stay down. "Had Thaksin only been willing to announce publicly that he would not return as Prime Minister, this action could have been avoided. But his unwillingness to do publicly what he had repeatedly told many privately had led people to fear that his true intention was to seek a renewed mandate and return to power. Thus the military acted."232

Thaksin was facing the greatest opposition from both the opposition forces and from his own party - a situation unconceivable just a year ago when TRT won a landslide majority. The

massive corruption scandals, following the sale of Thaksin's Shin Corp. to Singaporean Temasek, coupled with rising tension within the TRT itself provided significantly weakened the authority and legitimacy of the embattled prime minister. Thailand has come to a dead end and unless Thaksin holds himself accountable to all the actions, the crisis will only escalate. Thaksin faced mounting pressure from inside his own Thai Rak Thai party, while trying to deal with mounting opposition from outside as well. The PAD was also not backing down and along with other anti-Thaksin groups organized nearly daily protests.

Thaksin decided to break the political deadlock by dissolving parliament. Note that he did not resign as the opposition party wished. This happened just two days before a major protest planned by the PAD in late February. Thaksin gave the following reason (Feb 24, 2006): “As many of you know there were efforts to overthrow the government by some political groups which the government has tolerated and explained the many accusations....but the majority of the people continued to support the government and asked us to fight. What the government has done received much attention from the rest of the world but it elicited political instability...I cannot accept mob politics...so I figured that the best way out of this conflict is to return the power back to the people.”

However, some critics argue that Thaksin took advantage of the situation knowing full well that no other party could get as many votes as TRT and only called a snap election to legitimize his own rule vis-à-vis the growing opposition. Moreover, Thaksin dissolved the parliament to avoid the no confidence motion, the opposition insisted. Thaksin had earlier promised the opposition in parliament and the senate as well as those on the streets that he would "explain" all these corruption allegations by allowing parliament to question him over the most controversial issue of his administration: the tax evasion following the Shin Corp sales. It would
have been the first time that Thaksin "unblock" channels for opposition inside the formal
democratic institutions by allowing this confidence motion. Thaksin even promised he would
allow 10 days of questioning where other issues like political reforms can be discussed.233 The
parliament-senate joint session was scheduled to take place on March 6. The opposition's dream
completely shattered when Thaksin dissolved parliament on February 29, just days after he
promised a more transparent leadership.

The house dissolution shows that Thaksin retracted on three key really important
"promises" that if he had followed through, would have, I argue, changed the course of
opposition-government strategic interactions in ways that could have possibly avoided his
downfall. First, he refused to be questioned by the National Assembly - an opportunity to not
only engage with the growing opposition but also his own supporters about the most
controversial corruption scandal to date. Second, he broke his promise to the opposition and his
own party that he would not dissolve parliament. Third, he earlier said he would never step down
from being a prime minister, but following an audience with the King, he did step down and
remain as a caretaker prime minister. This last development should have been good news for the
opposition but because a new election was called for October 2006, after the Election
Commission annulled the April election, the opposition was more than convinced that Thaksin
would return as a prime minister and their "life would be over." Thaksin has never, in the eyes of
the opposition, provided them with any credible commitment.

suggested a joint parliamentary session to find a solution]. Accessed on June 12, 2012. Retrieved from News Center
Database.
When Thaksin dissolved parliament, he more than convinced the opposition, from both formal and informal institutions, that he lacked any sort of credible commitment to make any future deals with the opposition. In November 2005, Thaksin told his own ministers he would "never resign or dissolve parliament" as his government was facing escalating daily protest activities. "Don't worry. I'm definitely not dissolving parliament or resigning...We'll have an election in April 2009. Now let's do our job the best we could," Thaksin reportedly told his cabinet ministers.\(^{234}\) Once he did dissolve parliament, effectively to avoid being questioned, the opposition was more than outraged. "Thaksin did not want to face the growing opposition who called for his resignation...He has lost all credibility, ethics or any sort of legitimacy to govern. After 5 years of corruption, and this last one where his family made off with 73.3 billion baht without paying any taxes, he completely broke all mechanisms for accountability and lost all credibility."\(^{235}\)

The historic election on April 2, 2006 was none like other in Thailand. The election announced allowed parties only 37 days to gear up, which put smaller and less established parties at a disadvantage. Since the day Thaksin dissolved parliament, key opposition parties, the Democrats, Chart Thai and Mahachon, had met on several occasions mulling over how to deal with the sudden and short notice election. Leaders of the parties then held a joint press conference declaring that the house dissolution and the upcoming April election lacks legitimacy that they unanimously sought a boycott and that they will not be fielding candidates. Sanoh Thientong and his Wang Namyen faction, which included figures like Pramual Rujanaseri and


Winai Sompong announced they felt ashamed for having helped propel Thaksin to power and that, in his entire political career, has never experienced anything like the Thaksin government. He then announced that his faction, which was part of the TRT party, would not participate in the election and they resigned from the TRT.

A number of TRT members have begun to desert the party since early 2006. This included Korn Tapparangsi, Prapat Panyachartrat, Saranyu Wongkrajang, Prapat Panyachartrat, Panlert Baiyok, Suvit Kunkitti, Thanit Thientong, Premsak Piayura, Sunai Sertbunsang, Likhit Dheravekin, and Sakrit Santimetanidol. There were a lot of rumor that key people close to Thaksin were contemplating defection: this included Somkid Jatusripitak, Thammarak Isarangkul na Ayudhaya, Pongsak Ruktapongpaisal, Surakiat Sathiernthai, Jaturon Chaisaeng, Somsak Thepsutin and his Wang Namym faction. They left the party right after the coup to form breakaway parties. Others in the cabinet such as Bawornsak Uwanno and Wisanu Krue-Ngam - highly respected veteran politicians - also left, causing much internal rift inside the TRT government.

P-Net, an important election watchdog came out in support of the call for Thaksin's resignation and resigned from its duty to observe the April 2006 election. The PAD also held major rallies to call for PM's resignation. Some 60 law academics from 14 institutions wrote an open letter to the head of the ECT to revoke Thaksin's right to stand for election as they believed he violated electoral rules on several occasions. Another network of some 500 academics gave a press conference entitled “To the People who are the Sovereign, please vote on April 2 by selecting 'Vote No’” Dr. Parinya Thevarniramitkul, representative of the group and former Black May uprising leader, announced “We academics from various universities feel that unless Thaksin explain himself with regards to the long list of concerns over his conflict of interest,
such as the Shin Corp sales, tax evasion, securities fraud and electoral fraud then the protests and the opposition will continue.” On March 11, 2006, Premsak Piayura resigned as a party-list candidate of TRT in the middle of the campaign resulting in TRT not having all 100 candidates for the party-list. Despite this, the election went ahead.

The April 2006 election was the most bizarre election in contemporary democratic times. Out of the 400 constituencies available, 247 of them only had TRT candidates and in 38 constituencies the candidates who got the most votes did not reach 20% of the votes. In BKK, 26 out of 36 constituencies had more No Vote than the votes gained by candidates. Some polling stations saw more invalid ballots than the No Vote ones. A Bangkok Poll also showed 42% of the respondents from the capital did not vote on purpose.236 If an election is supposed to solve a political deadlock, or at least bring the heat down a notch, it is not this election. More than 70% of respondents in ABAC Poll believed the political crisis would be improve after the election.237 "Even the most optimistic of Thais had to admit that Sunday's elections were unlikely to resolve the ongoing political conflicts," reports the BBC.238

Thaksin took the much boycotted election as a good sign for his party to gain an even stronger mandate. Despite the fact that TRT was pretty much the only party running for the election, the unusually high invalid and No Vote ballots, and the hundreds of thousands of protesters preceding this election, Thaksin was undeterred. "I've passed the test to prove my popularity," proclaims Thaksin, as he announced that his party had won more than 50% of the vote, the benchmark he set himself for continuing in power.239

239 Ibid.
time until he could figure out his next moves, the opposition was more than convinced that he
would not step down, nor commit to any effort to "reconcile" as Thaksin claim he would.
Effectively, any "promise" made by Thaksin to the opposition forces could not be taken
seriously.

Thaksin only conceded to some demands from the opposition following an audience with
the King. Just a day after the election results showed Thai Rak Thai to have received 16 million
votes nationwide, Thaksin refused to take up another term as a prime minister. In a televised
press conference, he explained: "If we only fight each other then the country is the one that will
lose. That is what the King said in 1992 [Black May uprising]...This year is a holy year. His
Majesty's 60 years on the throne will be celebrated....I want to see us Thais united...We need to
work together for the country and for King Bhumibol."240

The PAD movement got a major boost of legitimacy following the King's speech to
members of the judicial courts on April 25, criticizing the election results:

As for the [April 2, 2006] election, who did not even get 20% and that person was
running for election by himself...this is not a legitimate election...What Thai Rak
Thai did was an act done to gain power to govern the country that was
unconstitutional - a danger to national stability and illegal or contradicts the moral
ethics of the people, contradicts democratic principles, blatantly violates the law
and thus should not be able to maintain its standing as a political party for the
sake of Thailand's overall political system.241

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241 King Bhumibhol. (2006, April 25). Speech to the courts. For the full speech, see
The King’s speech prompted the courts and the independent bodies to reconsider their action towards the Thaksin government. The Election Commission declared the April 2006 election in violation of electoral laws. Three members of the ECT were the jailed for misconduct. Yet, Thaksin balked at his own promise to stay as a caretaker and re-assumed his leadership in May, just weeks after the election was annulled. At this stage, it seemed the clash between the opposition and government forces would be inevitable. The opposition movement continued to press ahead as it held a nationwide assembly to find ways to "overthrow Thaksin" before Thailand could embark on any future reform. Thaksin stood his grounds and vowed to not back down.

Thaksin's final remarks before his overthrow in September confirms what the opposition has believed all along: he would not resign, back down, compromise nor reconcile. Thaksin began to make references to "powerful extra-constitutional individuals" (phu mi barami nok rabob) that are vent on dislodging him. "Extra-constitutional institutions, and individuals who derive their barami from non-constitutional sources are interfering in the working of independent bodies...People don't follow the [democratic] rules. They don't like the outcome so they try to use nondemocratic means to change the situation. This is totally unacceptable." Most PAD supporters believe Thaksin was referring to the palace, particularly the Privy Council. General Prem, the military elites and the PAD needed no more confirmation about what to do next.

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THE PAD MOVEMENT AND THE COLLAPSE OF DEMOCRACY

The PAD is not the first social movement in contemporary Thai history. Yet, it is a unique movement for Thailand because it is the first time that a broad-based movement such as this contributed to the overthrow of a democratically elected regime. This raises two questions: 1) why did the military have to engage a social movement to stage a coup? 2) is the PAD, or more generally a popular movement, necessary for the success of the coup? This study advances the following claims in answering these questions. First, the military needed to involve a broad-based movement to legitimize its action of overthrowing the Thaksin government. Second, while the 2006 coup was not the first coup to be launched against an elected government, it was the first time in history that the coup overthrew a very popular elected government. This leads us to the second question about the necessity of the movement in creating conditions favorable for such extra-constitutional measure. I argue that the PAD was necessary to the success of the 2006 coup because it lent legitimacy, which means perceived public support, to the coup plotters. The coup makers admitted themselves that the opposition forces against the Thaksin government signaled the need for some kind of extraordinary intervention.

Supporters of the coup, many of whom are PAD members, will argue that the coup was a necessary step to restore democracy. Thaksin was not a legitimate leader, despite being elected, and that he would be able to continue to fool millions of his supporters to vote for him in every election. There is no other way to get rid of him but to overthrow his government. In the words of a PAD leader: "A military coup requires popular support to succeed. If we [PAD] are able to

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244 The first was Chatchai but it was a coalition government that is not particularly popular.
show the powers that be that we have a lot of supporters then we hope the military would know what to do. The military are there to serve the people. They must stand by the people.”

Wassana Nanuam, a well-known Thai journalist reporting exclusively on military affairs, writes in her best-selling book "Lub Luang Prang", which reveals the story behind the September coup d'état, that this coup is different from any other in the past. "It's a strange coup because it's not just the military officers alone...but also civilians, bureaucrats and social group like the People's Alliance for Democracy that makes this coup.” One of the generals close to the coup leaders, General Saprang Kallayanamit, had close relations with PAD's top leaders Sonthi and Chamlong. It is widely believed that General Saprang was the source of the PAD's intelligence that Chamlong often refers to as "sources from a general" when he spoke on PAD stage. This relationship, the coup leaders claimed, may have influenced the course of the coup. In the very few interviews General Sonthi gave about the coup, he always emphasized the importance of "popular opposition" against Thaksin as an indicator for military intervention. "The people are cheering us [the military] on to stage a coup...what happened was what the people wanted," said General Sonthi in a televised interview five years after the coup. The only people that were publicly calling for a military intervention were those in the PAD Movement.

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248 Following the coup, the PAD had a big party organized by the "Royalists" where all top PAD leaders and General Saprang attended.
251 See Sorayuth Rueang lao chao ni (2011, June 16).
Anand Panyarachun, in a Wikileaks document, also lends support for the importance of the PAD in prompting the coup. It is not only that the PAD was necessary in setting a stage for the coup, but it also matters to the timing of the coup. The PAD planned a major rally on September 20, which many believe Thaksin would respond with force by mobilizing his own supporters. As such the coup was "necessary" to prevent possible bloodshed. Many argue that the PAD used violent pressure tactics to encourage violent retaliation from the government.

The September 19 coup d'état forestalled an imminent violent confrontation between enemies [the PAD] and loyalists of former PM Thaksin Shinawatra...Thaksin already steered Thailand away from democratic governance and deprived the people of mechanisms to remove him from office peacefully...Thaksin's administration was undemocratic. Thaksin had controlled the media, suppressed the free flow of information, and manipulated an uninformed electorate...He had sabotaged the Constitution, manipulating political institutions that were supposed to be independent, destroying the system of checks and balances...Thaksin blocked all avenues for political change, leaving his opponents no option other than a coup. 252

The 2006 coup was intended to break up Thaksin’s political and electoral influence. A series of well crafted plans to dismantle Thaksin’s financial and political dominance was immediately carried out as the junta dislodged him. The so-called "4-step ladder" plan was hatched out, which included 1) dislodging Thaksin; 2) confiscating his assets; 3) dissolving his

party and eliminating his political influence and 4) putting the opposition back in power.\textsuperscript{253} For the next following years, exactly this plan was carried through. General Sonthi Boonyaratklin, a coup leader, outlined his reasons for the coup:

I received calls for the coup from many people. Soldiers are obliged to protect national security, safeguard the nation and uphold loyalty to the monarchy. The military cannot tolerate any leader who lacks or has limited loyalty to the King. Under the previous government, widespread corruption was evident...Independent organizations failed to function; the administrative mechanisms as per the 1997 Constitution were stalled...There was no functioning legislative body, and the judiciary could not function. There appeared to be no way out. This was before factoring in the social divisions. The country could not survive under the circumstances, and the coup was deemed necessary... I believe a little interruption is acceptable in order to enable everyone to move forward once again...I suspect many Thais still lack a proper understanding of democracy.\textsuperscript{254}

The coup of 2006 and the direct army rule of the country between 2006-2007 marks a return of the army to politics in a way previously unseen for more than a decade. The last coup launched by the army was in 1991 in which popular protest against the coup government led to its leader resigning from power less than a year after the putsch. Since then the army appeared to have retreated from politics and rumors of a coup - something usually "constant" in Thai politics – were not taken seriously by either the public or the politicians. Thaksin himself brushed off


numerous warnings by his close aids of any possible extra-constitutional overthrow of his
government. General Sonthi personally told Thaksin that a coup would be launched against
him.255 In retrospect Thaksin admitted he thought “no one would dare launch a coup in this 21st
century.”256 The 2006 coup brought the military back to the political arena after more than a
decade of being sidelined. Having a politically powerful military significantly increases the risk
of threats to the stability of government should the latter not tow the army line or seek to
intervene with the army hierarchy, especially by displacing its chief.257

Another major implication of the 2006 coup is the partisanship of the army. The 4-
stepped ladder did not reach its ultimate objective, which is to rid Thaksin of political power.
Thaksin-allied parties won the next two subsequent elections in 2007 and most recently 2011.
Although the army always says it respects the wishes of the people and respects the election
results, the fact that they have directly tried to influence electoral outcomes or openly revealed
their political positions is testament to the lack of political neutrality for an institution so
powerful in both the political arena and society. During the campaign of the 2011 national
election, polls after polls showed that the Thaksin-backed Peau Thai party would win. Army
chief General Prayuth Chan O-cha made a televised announcement – something usually done
only when the army declared a coup – that the Thai people should “choose only good people to
run the country and the people that would protect the monarchical institution.” 258 His
predecessor, General Anupong Paochinda, made similar statements. 259 It goes without saying

256 Ibid.
258 General Prayuth Chan o-cha, speech on Channel 5 (2011, June 14).
259 Krungthep Thurakij. (2011, June 9). Anuphong bok yak hai banmueang sa-ngop khuan lueak phak lae khon di
chat [General Anupong warns if we want peace, we must vote in good party and good people.] Accessed on April
ขาแก่ไปนี้แม้มีรองสหพันธ์อาวุธและดี.html.
that although the army didn’t out right endorse the Democrat Party, the chief made it clear that the army is against the pro-Thaksin movement and Thaksin-aligned party, Peau Thai.

The escalating crisis prompted a number of key political figures to look for signaling from the palace. Key institutions in Thailand, particularly the military, the judiciary, and the independent bodies began to respond what they perceived as signaling from the palace circle. Under the active guidance of Prem, the coup leaders were able to gain the necessary legitimacy from within the military institution itself for launching the coup. The "barami" and power of Prem in shaping the course of politics was even more evident when he handpicked retired General Surayuth Chulanond, known widely as his favorite, to serve as the prime minister of the coup government. Surayuth would later become a member of the privy council - an institution that acts as a proxy for the monarchy. Meanwhile, the coup government called itself the "Council for Democratic Reform under the King as the Head of State" - signifying the monarchy as the pinnacle of the political structure.

The palace engaged in a series of maneuvering to resolve the political crisis, beginning in early 2006. As the King addressed the illegitimate nature of the April 2006 elections, the Constitution Court immediately moved to annul election results - throwing Thaksin and his Thai Rak Thai party completely off course. This was the first of a series of interventions by the courts to resolve a political deadlock, which had occurred following the 2006 coup. Thaksin's audience with the King prompted him to step down following the April 2006 election, albeit temporarily, as a prime minister.

Yet his refusal to stand aground drove the coup leaders to act. The junta's audience with the king immediately after the coup was a decisive moment during those uncertain hours whether the coup would succeed. When Thaksin found out that he was ousted by a coup while he was at a

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meeting in New York, he was doing everything he could to reverse the situation. Most importantly, he was trying to get his allies inside the military to launch a counter-coup. But all that effort dissipated once the coup leaders were summoned by the King, led by privy councilor Prem. Wikileaks documents from Ralph Boyce, US Ambassador to Thailand (2005-2007), reported that Thaksin’s tough stance dissolved when he learned of the audience.

**TABLE 18: POLL DATA ON THE COUP AND COUP GOVERNMENT (2006)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pollsters</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suan Dusit Poll (Sep 20, 2006)</td>
<td>Do you agree with the coup?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Yes 84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. No 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABAC Poll (Sep 22, 2006)</td>
<td>How do you feel after the coup?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Politics will be calm again 83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Improved economy 67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Worried 37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABAC Poll (Sep 23, 2006)</td>
<td>How do you feel about the role of the military?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. The military are dependable 92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Unpleasant 8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABAC Poll & Suan Dusit Poll.

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The PAD's anti-democratic and anti-incumbent mobilization was thus instrumental to the successful coup d'état on September 19, 2006. The PAD mass gave what the coup plotters needed to launch a coup: political legitimacy. Although previous coups were conducted without consideration for public response, the incident of the Black May uprising and subsequent political reforms in the 1990s to reduce the role of direct military intervention in politics have made public support a key to a coup success. But no one can deny either that the people's movement [the PAD] and the "Sonthi phenomenon" was responsible for legitimizing the coup.

The public's overt support for the coup took many by surprise. Ordinary citizens and some organized yellow-shirt groupings greeted the soldiers with flowers, food, asked for photographs. It was not only a bloodless coup, but a seemingly popular one. Suan Dusit Poll and ABAC Poll reported overwhelming support for the coup d'état. Eighty-four percents of the respondents nationwide agreed with the military intervention, according to Suan Dusit Poll, while ABAC Poll reported that favorable views towards the role of the military (see Table 18). General Sonthi admits "I did not invite anyone to be part of the coup plotting but many people volunteered on their own term. It's not exactly like they are part of the plotting operation but they are supporters who kept encouraging us to stage a coup finally." (Nanuam: 48). When it was all done, we were greeted with so much popular support, from the flowers they put on our guns and tanks to chanting me as their white knight and hero, I was so touched and relieved."

The timing of the coup was opportunistic but based on a number of calculated moves. First, as some of the PAD leaders admitted, the PAD was pushing forward with their protests but was beginning to show signs of fatigue by mid-2006. Many of PAD groups have been protesting

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263 There are groups that came out against the coup but they were very small compared to the public support the coup leaders received.
for a few years prior. The PAD did plan to mobilize once again on September 20. General Sonthi told US ambassador, Ralph Boyce, that the coup happened when it did also because "Thaksin was at his weakest point, and we [the opposition] were at our strongest." Moreover, the planned election was scheduled for October while Thaksin was planning another military reshuffle that would have effectively removed most of the top military officers who became coup plotters.

The fact that the PAD leadership called out for a coup gave a strong signal for a military intervention. Sonthi is the biggest proponent of the coup, while Suriyasai, Pipob, Somkiat and Somsak are more ambivalent, albeit implicitly supported the coup. Sonthi explained during his daily shown on ASTV, Guarding the Motherland, that Thaksin's continued insult to the monarchy prompted him to declare war on Thaksin and fight for the nation. Indeed, the PAD's core leader and media tycoon Sonthi revealed: "If you asked me whether PAD called out for a military overthrow [of Thaksin]…I think so…I always say [political] change can only be brought about in two ways, one via a coup and another through gradual change. The army should launch a coup as long as they do it for the country, and not for themselves."

Suriyasai, another PAD leader, argues that a coup can be justified if an elected government has lost its political legitimacy (Katasila: 2009): "True that Thaksin was legitimately elected but once in power he lost his legitimacy through corruption, cronyism and abuse of power" [interview]. He believes that because Thaksin keeps winning elections, there is no other way to get rid of him but via a coup d'état. For Suriyasai, the mounting cases of corruption were not the key reason for why he was so strongly opposed to Thaksin, but rather the prime minister's

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266 Ibid.
obvious refusal to be held accountable by either the authorities or the people prompted him to support an alternative power transition mechanism. “Thaksin does not allow himself to be held accountable [by the people]...The coup took place inevitably.”

Somsak initially showed ambivalence towards the coup, but later admits a coup can be legitimate as long as it happens for the right reason. "The military top brass was opportunistic with the coup. I asked Sonthi (Boonyaratklin) why coup? Why? We talked about political reforms what kind of democracy we wanted. But you know if the coup is to lead to important reforms, in good direction, it’s fine. It has to be for the majority of the people. But if the military staged a coup and did nothing then it is worse than a bad quality democracy.”

TABLE 19: A SURVEY OF PAD ATTITUDES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vote buying and selling is a problem of Thai democracy</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing in good people to govern will solve problems of Thai democracy</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree with having a royally appointed prime minister (article 7)?</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thaksin regime is dangerous to Thailand's constitutional monarchy</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on 503-531 respondents (Chareonsin-olarn: 2008).

There is much internal disagreement even among the top five leaders of the PAD with regards to the coup. Collectively they issued an official press statement that they did not agree with the September 2006 coup, but individually they were deeply divided. Sonthi was the biggest supporter of extra-constitutional channels to resolve political conflicts, which include military

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intervention, judicial intervention and royal prerogative. Pipob, on the other hand, was the biggest opponent to the coup.²⁷⁰ Pipob immediately resigned from the sub-committee of the NHRC following the coming to power of the military-backed government of Surayuth. Other PAD leaders were ambivalent and inconsistent about their support for the coup, but noted they would accept it as the measure of last resort when a deadlock could not be resolved

UNDERSTANDING THE PAD ANTI-DEMOCRATIC DISCOURSE

In the post-coup period, the PAD Movement has evolved and solidified their identity as a firmly conservative, pro-monarchy movement. This "conservative" attitude encompasses a list of key attitudes that shape their understanding and vision of what "democracy" is and what is an "appropriate" political arrangement for Thailand. These ideas form that basis of the PAD ideology and will underline the socio-political perspectives of their New Politics Party, which was formed in 2009. An in-depth analysis of the PAD discourse reveals five important notions: 1) constitutional monarchy; 2) stupid voters; 3) good governance; 4) dhamic democracy; and 5) participatory democracy.

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY

The term constitutional monarchy took on a new emphasis in the PAD discourse. Although the term has been used to describe Thailand's political system since the abolishment of absolute monarchy in 1932, the political conflict has intensified the "true" meaning of constitutional monarchy. For the PAD, a constitutional monarch refers to a political system in which the monarch is "above" or "on top of" politics. This suggests that, for the PAD, the monarch has the ultimate legitimacy in Thailand. No career politicians could ever (dare to)

match with the power of monarch. The King remains the "Father" of the land - the original owner of the land, who gives sovereignty to his people. In this I agree with Winichakul (2008) who argues that the prominence of the monarchy was built up by being superior to corrupt political institutions. The PAD's version of constitutional monarchy preserves the royal institution as the pinnacle of the state. This conception of the constitutional monarchy sees the monarchy as a source of extra-constitutional power that is necessary in times of crisis.

Viewing a constitutional monarchy in this light, it is not hard to believe why the PAD could easily transform itself into an anti-democratic movement. After all, the notion that the monarchy remains at the top of the political hierarchy is fundamentally antithetical to the democratic ideals. Even as an arbiter of last resort, a powerful monarchical institution can weaken the actual formal democratic institutions. Such perception of the monarchy actually empowers the institution in the minds of the people. A strong palace, in turns, empowers other nondemocratic institutions, such as the Privy Council and the military.

**GOOD GOVERNANCE**

The PAD's understanding of good governance is a mixture of both traditional and elitist notion. Traditionally, as the term "good governance" was popularized among NGO community worldwide, the term has come to be understood as relating to building a more just society. Proponents of such conception within the PAD are largely academics and NGOs, particularly those involved in the drafting of the 1997 constitution. Overall good governance in the context of Thai society is really about building a "just society" whereby governments can be held accountable for their actions and respond to citizens' demands. It is a kind of relationship
between the state and society that is inclusive, interactive and transparent.\textsuperscript{271} Moreover, building good governance requires a strong civil society that can counteract against state abuse of power.

Thaksin's intolerance towards opposition voices; his marginalization of NGO activities and the crippled check and balance system inside parliament convinced his critics that he and his government could not possibly govern Thailand justly or fairly. Good governance must incorporate the minority voices, particularly those of the opposition. Thaksin's oft-cited statement that "19 million people voted for me so I won't let mere thousands of protesters to get in the way" is a slap in the face for those who don't agree with him. Thaksin should use his majority mandate to include opposing voices, not exclude them, argue his critics.

A more distorted and subjective understanding of "good governance" is related to the concept of "good people." Pro-monarchy and conservative elites among the PAD are drawn to this idea as the King has popularized this notion of building a political system to ensure good people are in power. Someone with shady business backgrounds like Thaksin, and most politicians, would certainly not qualify as "good people." As such, among the driving force behind the political reforms of the 1990s was to devise ways to ensure good people enter politics. This was the raison d'être for not allowing candidates for the upper house to come from political parties because politics corrupts.

Anand Panyarachund is a prime example of a "good person" who exercised "good governance." Anand, the twice unelected but vastly popular prime minister, who was behind the drafting of the 1997 constitution, was often touted by the conservative forces for his ability to govern well. Anand - who is known as "Mr. Clean" or "Nobleman" is idolized among the public because he's believed to be able to "rise above the political squabbles" and get things done.

\textsuperscript{271} See detailed discussion of various "good governance" definition in Nareumol Thachumphol in Good Governance and corruption in Thailand.
"When we mention the term “transparent” be it then and now everyone knows we are talking about “Anand Panyarachun”. This term is synonymous with him because he possesses the following leadership qualities: 1) honest; 2) effective; 3) politically independent.\textsuperscript{272} When Anand was appointed by Thaksin as the head of the National Human Rights Commission, his supporters felt he was "tricked" by Thaksin to clean up his dirty work as opposed to criticizing Anand for his failure in the new role.\textsuperscript{273}

For the PAD, "good people" like Anand, who should be governing Thailand, should be individuals who have spent their lives for the public good. Their "goodness" should have been evident in society that if they ever choose to enter politics, they will get elected without having to campaign. According to Suwinai Pornwalai, a PAD intellectual and the author of \textit{The PAD Party}, "super human" are people who are not only good, but they also have good mind beyond human.\textsuperscript{274} These super human can see the right from wrong and sacrifice themselves for the greater good. Suwinai depicts the PAD Movement as a force full of good people that are fighting against the "evil forces" who seek to destroy them.\textsuperscript{275} A war, argues the author, is needed to safeguard Thailand's constitutional monarchy from the forces of evil and to bring the entire nation "enlightenment."\textsuperscript{276}

The PAD's conception of good governance as good people bringing about just society sounds, at first glance, noble but it is not only elitist, but also anti-democratic. Who gets to decide who is a good person? Both Prem and Anand have been seen as "good people" who remained non-partisan, impartial and in some ways "above politics" are regarded as such because

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{275} Ibid, p. 63.
\end{itemize}
both individuals receive blessing for the palace. But none of them were elected when they served as prime ministers. Prem's direct involvement in the 2006 coup through his privy councillorship also shows that these "good people" can be detrimental to democratic politics. Anand, who was the biggest proponent of good governance during the reform period in the 1990s, also came in support of the coup. It is also unrealistic to expect individuals with such heavenly qualities to come from an electoral process.

**Middle Class and the Enlightenment**

The PAD movement sees the middle class as the bulwark of progress and political change in Thai society. The middle class not only has access to a variety of information, they can also distinguish between news that are credible and news that are not, claim a long-time activist and PAD key figure, Bamroong Kayotha. The middle class has access to information database of the PAD and they watch other channels besides the 3, 5, 7, 9 [free TV]...and they understand that democracy must have good governance, moral ethics, no vote-buying...They know how corrupt Thaksin really is. What this PAD leader suggests is that essentially the middle class joined the PAD Movement because they are more educated; well-rounded in their information and hold true to a higher standard of moral ethics, which makes them convinced Thaksin is unacceptable for them.

There is also a practical reason for why the middle class defines the PAD movement - cable TV. The PAD is largely mobilized through ASTV cable, which is owned and operated by Sonthi Limthongkul's Manager Media Group. Cable TV is neither cheap nor widespread - cable lines are only available in urban areas of Thailand, which makes it accessible to only the middle

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278 Ibid.
class in urban areas. Later on the PAD sought to enlarge its support base to a less well-off sections of the population by handing out ASTV satellite dishes free of charge, but that still could only reach urban pockets of the population. The middle class is also critical for the financing of the PAD Movement. Worakul's survey (2012) of PAD's 193-day rally reveals that the sources of funding for the PAD during its longest rally is composed of 70% donation, 20% revenues from ASTV and 10% are from sales of goods.279

The PAD also sees itself as this engine of change that is going to bring Thailand forward. According to Kamnoon Sithisaman, one of PAD's key advisors and a senator, the middle class remains the essence of Thailand's constitutional monarchy.280

There is a group of people in Thai society that wants to see more for their country - they are the progressive group, they are the tax-paying group, the middle class and up, the business owners, professionals. They are intelligent - more than us here in the [National] Assembly. They know what kind of politics is good and bad, they see the right from wrong. They know election alone is not enough to have good politics...They know we must get good leaders to govern the country and establish the rule of law, good governance.

The PAD movement gave a platform for the middle class to become a more engaged citizenry; to activate their political participation. The PAD sees itself as part of the people's sector and the role of the middle class inside the PAD should be regarded as an important participation of groups, which are usually either politically docile or self-interested.281

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the urban middle class does nothing to raise awareness to the issue of social injustice and inequality because they are the groups that benefited; only the poor are fighting. Now the PAD made them realize they needed to fight as well.” 282 The PAD transformed an inactive-TV-consuming middle class into active citizens mobilized and organized for the benefit of the greater good, claims an ASTV producer and key PAD organizer. 283

Yet the middle class was not fighting to protect their economic positions per se, they were fighting based on their understanding of democracy and what they considered right and wrong. Key issues that really drive the middle class participation in the PAD are mega corruption of Thaksin, the monarchy and the growing monopolization of power of Thai Rak Thai, explain a PAD leader, Terdpoom Jaidee. 284 “The middle class doesn't really mind a military intervention as long as they don't stay in power too long. After all they benefited greatly from years of military-dominated politics.” 285

PAD leaders admitted, however, that the role of the middle class has made the PAD less democratic. Suriyasai gave a succinct explanation of why the PAD is anti-democratic, as we reflected on the "failure" of the PAD 286:

The middle class understands democracy from a perspective of a group that has developed and grown from neoliberal economics and political liberalization during authoritarian times. They are very much selfish and are interested only in what would benefit their prosperity. They are self-centered. They don't really care whether the regime is democratic or not. They hardly care about the poor. The biggest challenge for our country today is to figure out how we can create a

283 Chana (personal communication, December 18, 2012)
284 Ibid.
political system that both the poor and the middle class can benefit and co-exist.

Right now the poor are concerned about access to resources, while the middle class are concerned about liberty and stability.

PAD's concept of democracy is intertwined with being righteous and moral because they see democrats as being the leaders and organizers in society, who bring order and governance. These leaders must be benevolent and moral so they can "shine the light" for the rest of us still in the dark. Also once you have your moral compass then you are going to be happy. Again, the PAD strongly believes that the middle class is the motor of change but the middle class has to be enlightened first. The middle class on the one hand values transparency and morality (dharma) but on the other they can sometimes get lost in the material world, lack patience or long term goal. These contradictions make the middle class unreliable and insecure, which can destabilize democracy in Thailand. Joining the PAD Movement, in essence, enlightens the middle class, who are needed to fight the evil of "bad" politicians and ensure the preservation of the constitutional monarchy.

One of Sonthi's famous campaigns is called "Enlighten Our Minds." (จุดเทียนส่องปัญญา) During various PAD rallies, Sonthi will light the candles and pray, many of the PAD supporters will follow suit (either on the streets or at home where they watch the rally live). During talk show session, "Give Back Royal Prerogative" he asked his listeners to light the candles to "chase away evil spirits" so that Thaksin and his Thai Rak Thai party will not win a re-election:

I have to light the candle, to protect it so that the candle continues to burn to give light to the darkened society... Candle is the brightness of our mind so that we

know what is right, what is good and evil. The more enlightened we become, the more likely they're not going to be able to find 19 million votes to support them [Thaksin and TRT]. The person who is self absorbed, who is ill-intent for the nation and uses his inferiors to bully other people. The end of him will happen if all the candles are lit.288

The PAD feels they are "the enlightened" who see through Thaksin's many colors and recognize the "evil" in him. Unlike Thaksin' supporters, who sell their votes and are duped by him, PAD voters are righteous and can tell the difference between right and wrong. "The Red Shirts [Thaksin supporters] are blind to the truth...these people are not qualified to be the host of the nation - to determine the nation's direction...If they truly want to save the nation or rescue democracy then they have to join the PAD," says the PAD Party Handbook.

GULLIBLE, STUPID RURAL VOTERS

The most potent and powerful discourse constructed by the Yellow Shirts is one about the "gullible, stupid voters." To legitimize the opposition movement and counteract the fact that Thaksin is massively successful in elections, the PAD has to justify how come if Thaksin is so evil, and he is so popular. The discourse on vote buying, which argues that rural, uneducated voters sell their votes in exchange for money and/or gifts is inherently elitist, but easy to sell. No one in Thailand denies that vote-buying is rampant. Over 30% of the electorates reported having been offered cash/gifts prior to elections,289 and more than 65% of the respondents surveyed in

the same poll express their voting preferences to whomever offering them money.\textsuperscript{290} Over 90% of the nearly 4,000 respondents in another nationwide survey believe that there will be vote-buying in the next general election.\textsuperscript{291}

A major reason why the PAD advocates for a partially appointed parliament is precisely because the Movement's leaders are convinced an electoral process cannot bring about a true representation of the people. "PAD proposed new politics that rejects electoral politics. We gave an example of a 70:30 ratio of appointed and elected MPs. I cannot accept election results that come from vote buying. What can we do then? We need to find ways to make people feel empowered...this is why we mobilized...the people have to be part of the power structure...This [PAD Movement] is power to the people," claims Pipob.\textsuperscript{292}

Many elites - be they political, academic or NGO activists, believe that vote-buying is a major impediment to Thailand's democracy. Since the 1980s, numerous academic research and various anti-vote buying campaigns have been launched to counteract this phenomenon. This means the discourse on voter buying is already pervasive among the elites. Nithi Aeosriwong, a well known public intellectual, argues that the current democratic system is not working. "In this globalization era we can no longer give the power to decide the fate of the country to the uneducated majority, even though they are good people."\textsuperscript{293} Charas Suwanmala, an outspoken academic who joined the PAD movement early on, is convinced that if the majority of the electorates become well-informed, they will not longer sell their votes or would not vote in

"crooks." He set up Thailand Political Database to educate the public about the role of MPs and expose the background and work track record of MPs. "Voters need to know whether their MPs ever go to parliament or legislate anything. They need to understand what MPs are supposed to do for the country, not just attend their weddings and funerals."294 Indeed even the Election Commission has bought on to the belief that much of the electorates are gullible and not well informed that during election times, they publish pamphlets on how to choose a good MP:

FIGURE 14: CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD MP

- Has a reputable and good work experience
- Possesses a moral high ground and knows the value of sacrifice
- Pays frequent visit to local communities; possesses good understanding of local problems and seeks to provide solutions through public policy
- Possesses a behavior that can be regarded as a ‘role model’ for the public; in particular, does not violate electoral laws, such as vote-buying"

Source: Election Commission of Thailand (ECT)

The PAD capitalizes on the already pervasive vote-buying discourse by arguing that those who support Thaksin's populist policies are stupid, poor and hurt. They are fooled by Thaksin' handouts (populist policies) and his seemingly unlimited wealth that they turn their eyes blind to his egregious corruption and danger to the nation. PAD supporters often call Thaksin

supporters "buffaloes" or "red buffaloes" because Thai people liken "stupid people" to buffaloes. "The evil man [Thaksin] was happily fooling people and duped them, the stupid buffaloes, all 19 million of them," says Anchalee Paireerak, a PAD activist now works for the Democrat Party.²⁹⁵ A frequent PAD protester, Chairojt, explains why he joined the PAD:

People who don't know who Thaksin truly is it's because they watch evening soap and not news or only watch government news. The government will sell state enterprises and use populist policies to dupe people...people are not well informed. It's like if you rent your house to someone and he turns around to sell it, how can you stand that? Politics is the affairs of the people; we must be able to hold our government accountable, not let them steal what belongs to us and then sells it for a profit. I'm fighting for myself but also for the future generation so that the roads, electricity, water still belong to them.²⁹⁶

As such the PAD movement is needed to get rid of this "bad blood" out of the structure of the constitutional monarchy and bring in "new blood" to replace the old one. The people's sector must be empowered. The new government must be moral and ethical, capable of governing. The new factors needed in this political crisis [the PAD] will redraw the rules of the game and set new boundaries for the society as a whole. The "old factors" were responsible for setting Thailand along the vicious cycle where those with power focus on their own interests, the mass are mostly ignored and taken advantage of.²⁹⁷ The country is not sufficiently developed, dirty politics, vote buying, society lacking order and peace, economy too dependent on foreigners and

global economy, culture losing ground, corruption within bureaucracy, cronyism, nepotism, Thai citizens have no dignity nor quality.

The PAD sees a coup as necessary to protecting the nation from a calamity caused by Thaksin and his allies. As Samran Rodpetch, a PAD leader, argues, Thailand needs three types of coup:

1. Popular coup - the fight for power from the people
2. Judicial coup - the fight for power from the courts
3. Military coup - the fight for power from the military

Source: Author

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These coups all work to protect the monarchy. The military and the judiciary, both nondemocratic institutions, are seen as the "protectors" of the monarchical institutions. Thus, any coup instigated by these institutions is in the name of the monarchy, according to the PAD. However, to really change the society and fully protect the monarchy, the people need to have a coup as well and this was why the PAD was crucial to the preservation of the monarchy. To solve the political crisis we need to use the power from the mass under the leadership of the PAD to fight and protect the nation and monarchy.

FIGURE 16: PAD'S CONCEPTION OF THE CURRENT POLITICAL SYSTEM

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DHARMIC DEMOCRACY

"Dharmic Democracy" has been prevalent within the PAD discourse, especially among NGO circles. Dharmic Democracy or Thammatippatai ( ธมมติปทัย) is a concept that derives from the teaching of Poh Aor Payutto, a senior monk, who published a book "Where there is no Dharmic Democracy, one cannot find Democracy." Pra Ajarn Payutto was regularly consulted by several groups of "concerned Buddhists" who confided with him about the brewing troubles of the Thaksin government. Dharmic Democracy is an "ideal" version of democracy whereby the leader who is democratically elected by the people exercise truthfulness, ethics and morale as a principle of rule.300 The elected leader must listen to the people, and uphold utmost sincerity and honesty in serving the people. Anek Laothamtas adopted this idea when founding a new party, Mahachon, in 2005, which was supported by a number of NGO leaders. He said that to achieve dharmic democracy, the people who would elect their leader need wisdom and education and to use dharma to guide them when they vote. They ought to think about public interests more than their own.301

Dharma - Buddhist teachings - figures prominently at the heart of the PAD's identity. "PAD ideology is one where dharma leads society...Dharma will always win over evil."302 Often at PAD rallies, there were a lot of Buddhist teachings, dharma-based story-telling and a lot of meditation. Many PAD leaders draw on teachings of Buddha when they talk on stage. Dharma is necessary for moral guidance so that individuals can see the right v wrong and make good

decisions. Pipob Thongchai also stresses that only dharmic democracy will lead to long lasting peace in society.303

Dharmic democracy is an opposite concept of "narcissism" whereby the self is the center of the governance. Dharma democracy uses dharma as its anchor. Thaksin is an example of a narcissist, who uses himself as the guidance for his rule. His lack of moral ethics, ability to tell from right and wrong and his various corrupt ways to abuse state powers and resources to benefit himself and his cronies exemplify his lack of dharma, argues the PAD.304 As such the PAD Movement believes the kind of democracy Thailand needs is one where dharma features prominently both in the minds of the leaders and its citizens. This dharma will help both enlightened the society and lead to good governance.

This dharmic democracy ideal is hardly "democratic". First, it's based on the Buddhist teaching which discriminates against the Muslim minorities living in Thailand, and goes against the PAD's attempt to form an all-inclusive movement. Second, dharmic democracy is not at all secular and would not only alienate other religious minorities in Thailand, but would also impose specific sets of Buddhist teachings on the conduct and behavior of political elites. Third, the PAD understanding of the principle of dharmic democracy centers on the "dharmic king" as a yardstick for how to behave according to the dharmic principles as a ruler.305 Again, the dharmic ruler should be selfless, "good" and always serve the public good. This romantic idea is not at all practical and subjective.

For many PAD supporters, especially those drawn from civil society, the Thaksin government merely confirmed their long-held belief about the failure of representative democracy. They regard the system of representative democracy as highly flawed in key areas: 1) accountability, 2) responsiveness and 3) participation. First, as long as there is vote buying, some NGOs argue, there can be no real "democracy" because elected politicians will necessarily represent their financiers' interests as opposed to their constituents. The system of representative democracy is backward, dirty and it lacks the ability to solve national problems. "Wherever there is an election, there is money. And if a candidate spends 10,000 million baht that person cannot represent you. This is not a real democracy - it's fake. It's money politics," argues a leading public intellectual influential within the NGO community, Prawes Wasi. Somkiat Pongpaibul, a long time pro-poor activist in Thailand's Northeast, argues similarly that democracy is not a system that can get at the root of the problems that plagues the majority of poor people because the system is designed to protect the interest of the ruling class.

Wanida Tantiwittayapitak, adviser to Assembly of the Poor, argues that democracy is a system designed by the few at the top so it tends to include and benefit the like-minded. As such even when we have decentralization, with the local representatives, the same type of people get elected. This is why the system fails to truly represent the majority. "Representative democracy, anywhere in the world, has failed to response to the majority of the population and can only answer to the few," says Pipob. Old style money politics can't solve the problems in this country and can lead to chaos. The world today is too complex for money to solve anything.

Issues such as growing inequality, injustice, environmental and resource destruction, cultural and spiritual destruction and social disintegration. Even the military power can't solve them. The solution lies in the strength of each society. Strong society means collective action and collective thinking.\textsuperscript{308}

Indeed the style of consultation is what many NGOs embrace. If all stakeholders can sit in a round-table and have their opinion heard, a solution can be reached that takes into account all sides. Given that many of the PAD top leaders are long-time activists, they prefer a consensus-based, participatory and open process of negotiation to a representative/delegative style of governance. "The process of conflict resolution has to be democratic," argues Pipob. "What I mean is we need a round-table and get representatives from all sections in society - both pro and anti Thaksin but they have to come from the people, not Thaksin's representative. Anyone who represents Thaksin can't call himself a democrat. Thaksin cannot be at this round-table, not for conflict resolution."

The PAD believes that grassroots democracy is the only way forward for Thailand because it is the only system that is in touch with the people on the ground. The current system of representative democracy cannot respond to the society as a whole. Grassroots participation in the political process is necessary, particularly in times of political conflict. Participatory democracy allows for an opportunity for day-to-day problems of the people to be heard and solved. Bringing in local elections, through the process of decentralization, will not help to increase grassroots participation because it is still a representative system. Besides, grassroots politics is not about expanding electoral politics to the local level, but rather it is about building consensus in society and encouraging participation even after elections. Those who come to

power through elections must not use that to legitimate all actions thereafter. Those in power must continue to listen to the people and find a point of consensus.

Prawes Was believes representative democracy perpetuates Thailand's vicious circle. He argues that the system of representative democracy is backward and dirty and it lacks the ability to solve national problems. Wherever there is an election, there is money, and if a candidate spend 10,000 million baht that person cannot represent ordinary citizens. Rather, that person represents the source of money. This is not a real democracy - it's fake. Elections alone cannot solve political conflict because politicians continue to be corrupt, dishonest and in turn lead to dissatisfied electorates then coup and then it goes in circle. In fact the 1997 constitution was aimed to promote citizens' politics - allowing citizens to have direct role in determining their own future, to demand state's accountability but the current government lacks sincerity to do anything of this for the people as according to the constitution. As a result, Thaksin's government sought to weaken the society vis-à-vis the state, making the people dependent on the state to solve their problems.

CONCLUSION

When Thaksin and his Thai Rak Thai party won the landslide election in 2005, the PAD Movement felt their anti-incumbent activities were numbered. While they pressed on with their allies to pressure Thaksin to resign from his leadership, the leader's immense popularity was rendering the opposition's strategies ineffective. Eventually the PAD appealed to the institution of last resort - the monarchy - for a royal intervention in the political crisis. Simultaneously the movement also pleaded to other powerful nondemocratic institutions - the military and the privy council - to step in and help "save the nation." Their call was answered and the coup d'état succeeded in overthrowing Thailand's most popularly elected prime minister in history.
This last stage of the process of institutional blockage - the anti-democratization of the PAD Movement - was a key turning point in the political conflict. I demonstrate here the importance of alliance between the PAD and the nondemocratic institutions in the breakdown of Thailand's democracy. I show how popular support for extra-constitutional intervention from the PAD was crucial to the timing and success of the coup. Public opinion polls immediately following the coup were also used to demonstrate the strength of popular support. The coup was ultimately contingent upon sufficient popular outrage against the incumbent leader as well as the PAD's call for nondemocratic institutions to step in.

The coup is not a purely elitist overthrow of an elected government. The PAD gives the basis for legitimacy to the coup by signaling strong mass support for military intervention that would overthrow the government. I argue here that an elite-driven approach to regime change, is no longer sufficient to explain Thailand's democratic breakdown. Elites must form a coalition with a group of citizens against the remaining citizens. The interaction between elites and social movement, in this case, the PAD, signifies the military overthrow of a popularly elected government.

The last section examines in great detail the discourse and ideology of the PAD Movement. The PAD is not an anti-democratic movement because its supporters are "bad", but rather there are some deep-seated beliefs in certain values and understanding that make them wary of the democratic system. Of note are key issues such as preference for moral, ethical and good leadership; Buddhist-based governance; and belief in royal guidance. Moreover, the PAD, whose members are drawn largely from urban middle class, sees themselves as the enlightened guiding force for a more progressive society. The understanding of democracy is not only based on their righteousness and moral ethics, but also in the value of a more consensus-based and
participatory form of rule. Their strong opposition to electoral and representative democracy, as well as their firm belief in the gullibility of the rural mass, prompt them to accept nondemocratic means of rule. The solution for the malaise of the Thai polity does not lie in the procedural form of democracy, but rather, in the conviction of allowing good people to rule.

Understanding the PAD's disposition towards anti-democratic attitudes tell us much about how their previous experiences of democracy had adversely affected them. It is imperative to pay a closer attention to the PAD and not just brand it as a conservative, right-wing movement. Rather, we need to really get deeper in our understanding of how its supporters see the polity and society.
7. The post-coup mobilization and the decline of the PAD movement

"We need to put democracy on hold for five years to clean up this dirty, corrupt politics,"

- Sonthi Limtongkul, leader of People's Alliance for Democracy

"My blood, flesh, legs and arms mean less than my country...I'm here today to fight for the fatherland and the monarchy."

- Jek Chumporn, PAD Activist, lost his left leg from an explosion during PAD demonstration, October 7, 2008

Introduction

This chapter examines the PAD movement's post-coup mobilization as a counter case for my institutional blockage theory. The main question I address here is: Why did democracy survive despite the existence of an anti-democratic movement? I argue that the process of institutional blockage was "reversed" in the post-coup Thailand. The blockage that was created prior to the coup became "unblocked" in ways that allowed oppositions forces to better channel their grievances. This process of "institutional" unblockage is shaped by the regime change and
elite learning. The coup government, lasting from 2006 to 2007, rewrote the rules of the game in ways that empowered the opposition forces and put them at a position of power. The majority of the PAD leadership ranks were able to get what they want and thus the movement lost its motive for mobilization. Following the country's return to electoral politics, however, the Thaksin-aligned parties won two elections prompting the PAD to remobilize. However, as I show in detail in this chapter, the PAD was able to open up channels for their voices both in formal and informal institutions to some extent. Moreover, there was elite learning in the post-coup period. The coup significantly weakened the political and economic dominance of Thaksin and his Thai Rak Thai party in ways that prompted pro-Thaksin elites to become more open to the opposition. The absence of institutional blockage in both formal and informal realms has provided little incentive for democratic reversal.

The first section addresses the PAD demobilization during the military-backed, authoritarian government in late 2006 until the 2007 election. The cessation of PAD activities during this period suggests their implicit support for the coup government. The third section examines the re-mobilization of the PAD movement beginning with the return to power of Thaksin-aligned party, Palang Prachachon. In 2008 we witness the peak of the PAD large-scale mobilization that culminated in the 193-day rally. The success of this round of mobilization will be analyzed in detail. I also argue that during this period, the PAD movement began to experience internal discord within the leadership rank-and-file. This internal conflict, coupled with the unblocking of access to power for the opposition, spells a movement decline.

The last section discusses the decline of the PAD Movement. I provide in-depth empirical analysis as to the causes of such decline. I argue here that the PAD suffered its worst decline during the Democrat-led coalition. The Democrats were among the PAD's biggest ally in the pre-
coup period. The fact that the Democrats were in the government between 2009 and 2011 signifies the opening up of institutions for PAD. The PAD was no longer marginalized, sidelined or threatened, which left little "cause" for mobilization. I showcase the decline of the PAD movement through a detail discussion of two major failures: the New Politics Party (NPP) and the Vote No campaign. The PAD lost significant popular support as a result of these two major initiatives.

Other major factors that contributed to the movement decline were related to the structure and organization of the movement itself. Structurally, the alliance was, from the very beginning, loose and temporary in nature. This makes it difficult for an alliance to sustain itself. Ideologically, one section of the PAD has become more radicalized, and right-wing, which alienates those in the left. Organizationally, the PAD leadership had a serious breakup, which contributed to further weakening of the movement.

PAD DURING AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT (2006-2007)

The PAD leadership declare cessation of activities immediately following the coup of September 19, 2006. Their leaders declare the "victory" for their success in helping to oust the government of Thaksin Shinawatra. After the coup and the subsequent military-installed government of Surayuth Chulanond, the PAD ceased its activities. By October of 2006 the PAD changed its name to "the People's Assembly for Political Reform" to work in parallel to the Council for Democratic Reforms (CPD) as a shadow wing of the coup government composed of "representatives of the people." The PAD's main task during this time was to discuss the process of constitutional drafting, following the coup, to ensure that their voices are heard.

PAD aims to be part of the second wave of political reform (first was 1997 constitution) within the framework of a constitutional monarchy according to Thai tradition and history. This
political reform must close off all loopholes that allow businessmen and vested interests to influence politics. The constitutional monarchy system has helped steer us out of crises in the past. Those who govern Thailand must not be influenced by vested interests, have legitimacy and follow the constitution both in practice and verbally and follow along the traditions of political framework that we have long operated in.

For many supporters of the PAD, particularly those involved with the reformists from the 1990s, saw the coup as an extension of the reform process that is yet to finish. The coup was, in essence, a corrective mechanism of the unintended consequences of the 1997 constitution (i.e. Thaksin and TRT). Ironically, a new constitution is needed to right the wrong of the 1997 constitution, particularly concerning articles that have allowed the rise of Thai Rak Thai and the "tyranny" of the Thaksin leadership. A number of PAD supporters and 1997 constitutional drafters took part in drafting the new one. The 2007 constitution, which contains clauses aimed to constrain behavior of politicians and curb civic liberties (see Table 21), among other things, were voted in favor through Thailand's first-ever national referendum. The referendum was held despite many parts of Thailand being under emergency decree and reports of "irregularities" during voting day abounded. Nonetheless, 58% voted in favor of the new constitution, which of course provided immunity to all coup leaders.

Evidently the PAD was not in a position to be critical of the newly formed CPD. For one, the PAD was asking for the coup. More importantly, however, many of the PAD figures were appointed to the military-backed National Legislative Assembly. Note that a number of Yellow Shirt members and associates became part of the coup government in some capacity or the other. Sonthi announced as soon as the CPD took over that the PAD would cede all activities because

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309 For example: Jermsak Pinthong, Jaras Suwannamala, Karun Saeng-ngam, Klanarong Janthik, Somkid Lertpaitoon.
310 Note that if the referendum did not pass, the CPD can choose to adopt any other previous constitution.
there is a PAD insider in the CPD ruling government, who would be responsible for the constitutional drafting process. Beginning with the selection process from the members of the Assembly, the PAD leadership took significant role in the process. The Committee for the selection of the members of the assembly was led by Prasong Soonsiri, a key leader in the anti-Thaksin mobilization and also for the PAD. Key PAD leadership figures then were appointed in the 242-member National Legislative Assembly. Of note include PAD leaders such as Prapan Koonmee, Chamlong Srimong, Samran Rodpetch, Kamnoon Sithisaman, and Prasong Soonsiri. The fact that the CPD incorporated key leaders of the PAD in their ruling government provides another testament to the close alliance between the coup leadership and the PAD.

**INSTITUTIONAL (UN) BLOCKAGE IN THE POST-COUP PERIOD**

The post-coup period, between 2008 and 2011, saw the weakening and radicalization of the PAD Movement. I argue that the PAD weakens because the same conditions of institutional blockage both in the formal and informal institutions that gave rise to an anti-democratic mobilization are no longer present. The key mechanisms that would have created the condition of institutional blockage a) perception of permanent exclusion of power and b) relative change in access to power in the post-coup period were changed. The perception of being excluded has significantly weakened while there is *positive* change in access to power for the opposition. The PAD Movement in the post-coup period is driven largely through discourse and perception, and less so through actual institutional blockages. The end result is a much harder point of mobilization to sell, a less convincing grievance, and a weakening movement. This coupled with a lack of popular support for a military intervention has made this extra-constitutional measure neither desirable nor possible. This is particularly true within the realms of formal democratic

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institutions. While the PAD movement has grown more anti-democratic and radical in its identity, it continued to lose popular support. By early 2011, the leadership of the PAD Movement broke the ranks; numerous splinter groups defected and the PAD's networks of alliance were coming undone.

**TABLE 20: KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 1997 AND 2007 CONSTITUTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party merger</td>
<td>Allowed</td>
<td>Not allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs taking up cabinet or PM posts</td>
<td>Vacate MP positions</td>
<td>Keep MP positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Fully Elected</td>
<td>Half elected-appointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator candidate campaign</td>
<td>Not allowed</td>
<td>Allowed on certain issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator selection committee members</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Independent institutions and the judiciary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator qualifications</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Not be parents, children or spouses of existing MPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM vote of no confidence required</td>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>1/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM term limit</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to overthrow constitutional monarchy</td>
<td>Party dissolution</td>
<td>Party dissolution; banning of key members for 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral misconduct and consequences to political party</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>If there is evidence that anyone in party commits electoral misconduct, the entire party is dissolved and key figures banned for 5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author
Despite the PAD’s vehement opposition to the return of Thaksin’s political dominance, via a proxy party, PPP, formal institutions were not blocked. First, the new 2007 constitution was not only written by some of the PAD’s strongest supporters, but also set up by the coup government of Surayuth Chulanond to rewrite the wrong of the 1997 constitution. The new constitution is seen widely as another attempt at constitutional engineering to punish Thaksin and avoid creating conditions that would bring him back to power.\textsuperscript{312} Mechanisms that have enabled Thaksin to consolidate power, avoid being held accountable, and render the opposition ineffective were "corrected" in the new constitution. Party merges are no longer allowed during parliamentary sessions; no family members of existing MPs can run for the upper house; and half of the senators must be elected are all but various devices for the opposition forces to ensure power in not easily consolidated in the formal democratic institutions. Furthermore, opposition in parliament now needs only one-fifth of the votes to launch a no confidence motion on the prime minister.

Second, neither did the PPP have an absolute majority in parliament nor it want one. The PPP managed to gain 233 out of 480 seats, which accounted for 48.5\% of the seats. This is close to what TRT got in the 2001 election. In contrast, the Democrat Party – the runner-up – trailed by nearly 15\% of the seat share at 164 seats. Samak immediately formed a 6-party coalition with five other mostly small parties. This was meant to safeguard against any potential coup threat that may arise should the PPP go solo as a minority government or even form a small majority with just one other party. Essentially the PPP did not want a minimal winning coalition, rather a

maximal one. This six-party coalition translated into 316 out of 480 seats, accounting for more than 63% of seats in parliament.

The coalition government of Samak was very different from that of Thaksin. For one, Samak did not have the same control of the coalition partners as Thaksin did. Samak called his own coalition make-up "ugly" and admits his coalition partners did not give him much opportunity to lead.313 "Nobody in the coalition government cares or listens to Samak. They do whatever they want and they often give contradictory statements over government policies....The biggest threat to the stability of this government comes from within," argue academics.314 For example, Jaturon Chaisaeng, a banned member of the TRT, wanted his brother, Wuthipong Chaisaeng, to get a cabinet post but the PPP's coalition partner did not budge.315 The media also reported of the "backroom deal" Samak had to make with coalition partners in exchange for their vote of confidence.316 There was also constant rumor of coalition parties defecting from government.

While the Democrats were the only official opposition party during the Samak government, it had no trouble getting one-fifth of the votes to launch a no confidence motion on the prime minister. Less than six months of the PPP-led coalition in power, Samak and seven ministers got grilled by the opposition in June for three days before they survived the no confidence vote.

The clearest evidence that opposition forces were not blocked in the formal democratic institution is that Samak was eventually removed from power by one of the independent bodies -

314 Ibid.
315 Ibid.
the Constitutional Court. It was not the case anymore that independent institutions were "crippled" by government interference. In September of 2008, a group of 29 senators and the ECT filed a petition against Samak for moonlighting as a chef on TV. He was then found guilty of violating section 182 of the constitution, which prohibits individuals in political office to be employed elsewhere. Once Samak was removed from power through constitutional court ruling, his party refused to bring him back as the PM.

Somchai Wongsawat, Thaksin's brother-in-law took over from Samak as the new prime minister, he too was facing a growingly difficult situation. The 72 MPs, who were part of the Newin Faction inside the coalition government, did not want to support Somchai's nomination unless they were given ministerial portfolios.\textsuperscript{317} This is reminiscent of the old-style politics in the 1990s where coalition partners and factions inside the main party bargained for cabinet posts in exchange for loyalty. In fact, the PPP was growing so divisive with many factions wanting to go their own way that Somchai at one point had to plea to fellow MPs not to be "cliquey" and to stay united as a party, not "faction" otherwise the PPP will collapse.\textsuperscript{318}

A soft-spoken or what Prawes described as a "mild-mannered" person, Somchai was nothing like Thaksin or even his sharp-tongued predecessor, Samak. Somchai made sure he maintained a conciliatory attitude with the "powers that be" - whether it be privy councilor Prem, the army chief, the PAD leaders or even his own party's faction leaders. Somchai visited Prem at his residence to ask for "help" and "guidance" for solving the ongoing political conflict that seemed ever more intense.\textsuperscript{319} Eventually his government would lose the government house to PAD protesters, who after weeks of encircling key government buildings, finally occupied


\textsuperscript{318} Matichon. (2008, October 1). Somchai sang 1 romoto kem soso samak ting hono [Somchai told minister to control 10 MPs; Samak left the leader]. Accessed on September 8, 2012. Retrieved from News Center Database.

government headquarters. Somchat’s government was displaced until its downfall just a few months later.

**JUDICIAL ACTIVISM**

A key feature of the post-coup period is what Theerayuth Boonmee calls "the judicialization of politics". Following the coup, the Council for Democratic Reforms began putting in place their own people in various independent bodies, beginning with the ECT, appointment of judges, anti-corruption commission, etc. The 2007 constitution also gave specific enhanced power to the judiciary, in comparison to the 1997 constitution. For instance senate is now half elected and half appointed, as opposed to the previously fully elected senate. There are also other powers such as being on the search committee for other independent bodies. Indeed two thirds of the search committee are judges.

One of the consequences of this judicial activism is an unprecedented party dissolution and banning. After the coup, the ECT filed a case for the dissolution of Thai Rak Thai, Prachatipatai Kaona, Democrat Party, Pattana Chart Thai, Pandin Thai as a result of allegations of electoral misconduct committed by members of these parties on April 2, 2006. The ECT proposed the case to the Attorney General. Then the director-general, department of special cases, also proposed to the Attorney General to ask the Constitutional Court to dissolve these parties for violating article 66 in the 1997 constitution. TRT was charged for having the intention to overthrow the constitutional monarchy by gaining power unconstitutionally. Ironically, the Democrat Party was also charged for having acted in ways that would harm the constitutional monarchy. The TRT, DP, Pandin Thaim Prachatipatai Kaona, Pattana Chart Thai were alleged to

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have harmed national security or violating the rule of law. All parties, except the Democrats, were dissolved and key party figures banned from politics for 5 years.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Dissolution</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>No. of Banned Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thai Rak Thai</td>
<td>30 May, 2007</td>
<td>Paying small parties to field candidates in Apr 2, 2006 election</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandin Thai</td>
<td>30 May, 2007</td>
<td>Paid by Thai Rak Thai to field candidates in Apr 2, 2006 election; fraudulent registration record</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prachatipatai Kaona</td>
<td>30 May, 2007</td>
<td>Candidates did not meet the minimum 90 day party membership requirement; fraudulent registration record</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattana Chart Thai</td>
<td>30 May, 2007</td>
<td>Paid by Thai Rak Thai to field candidates in Apr 2, 2006 election; fraudulent registration record</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palang Prachachon</td>
<td>Dec 2, 2008</td>
<td>Electoral misconduct by a member (Yongyuth Tiyapairat);</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart Thai</td>
<td>Dec 2, 2008</td>
<td>Electoral misconduct by a member (Monthien Songpracha)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machimatipatai</td>
<td>Dec 2, 2008</td>
<td>Electoral misconduct by a member (Sunthorn Wilawal)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat Party</td>
<td>Not Dissolved</td>
<td>ECT found DP guilty of misuse of campaign funds and irregularities in campaign donation; Constitutional Court countered the claim that there was insufficient evidence</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author's compilation.
Following the 2007 election, the ECT found electoral misconduct regarding Monthien Songpracha, candidate and deputy secretary of Chart Thai party and Soonthorn Wilawan, candidate and deputy chief of Matchimatipatai party. The ECT voted 4:1 in favor of dissolving Chart Thai and Matchimatipatai. Chart Thai, Matchimatipatai and PPP were sued for electoral misconduct. Then a PPP MP, Yongyuth Tiypairat, was handed a red card for electoral fraud. After that things went downhill for the PPP as several ministers were stripped off their position, or were pressured to resign. The case of PPP being a nominee of TRT was already decided for party dissolution since 2007. Then on December 2, 2008 the Constitutional Court delivered a verdict to dissolve all three parties and revoke the voting rights of members of the party committee, PPP (37 members); Chart Thai (43 members) and Matchimatipatai (29 members) for 5 years.

The opposition party, the Democrats, emerged as the victor when governing coalition parties defected and supported the nomination DP Abhisit Vejjajiva as the new prime minister to replace Somchai. The coalition partners and PPP factions did not have to abandon the government since even after the bans, government MPs still amounted to 271 seats out of 480 - more than 50%. But the increasingly untenable situation in parliament prompted massive defections from governing coalition to form an alliance with the Democrats. "I have 4 cell phones for each party," admits DP secretary Suthep Teugsuban, to be used for each defecting party to call the Democrats per line. With the defections of the Newin faction and some of the coalition partners, Abhisit received 235 MP votes to be a prime minister. Many observers believe the new DP-led government was formed inside the military barracks, while the men in uniform

321 Noppadol Pattama resigned following scandal over the Thai-Cambodian temple row. Chaiya Sasomsap was stripped off his ministerial position because of financial possessions.
had a say in the make-up of Abhisit's cabinet.\footnote{Matichon. (2008, December 19). Pak ruam tahan tun potomo krob pochopo [Party, military, finance, PAD took over the Democrat Party]. Accessed on September 8, 2012. Retrieved from News Center Database.} This is among the most significant victory of the PAD-aligned opposition forces.

**INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS**

While the opposition was gaining grounds in various formal democratic institutions, the PAD was re-mobilized to exert even greater pressure against the PPP governments on the streets. The alliance between the PAD and key opposition groups inside the formal democratic channels, such as parliamentarian opposition, the senate, and independent bodies, solidified. This period witnessed both the decline in popularity and the growing violence of the PAD Movement.

The second phase of PAD activities restarted officially on February 25, 2008 when the movement's leadership regrouped and called for their supporters to fight against the newly elected Samak government, whom they consider as "Thaksin's nominee." The PAD believes Samak is merely a puppet for Thaksin and the Palang Prachachon Party (PPP) is still run by Thaksin from exile. The PAD leaders make a number of demands, all of which centers around their opposition to Thaksin. For instance, the PAD opposes any effort to amend articles 237 and 309, which they believe are intended to give Thaksin amnesty and bring back the banded members of Thai Rak Thai party. Such claim by the PAD is not far-fetched given the PPP campaigned on bringing back the TRT government and giving "justice" to Thaksin. Moreover, the PPP policy is very much the same as that of TRT, which means a continuation of state projects that so many of organizations inside PAD fought hard against. The grievances of the PAD pre-coup seemed to have all but return under the Samak government, infuriating their leadership and much of their supporters.
The first major rally took place in late March 2008 at Thammasat University, which drew thousands of supporters from academics, students, media, artists, NGOs and others nationwide (Katasila: 2009, p. 125). It became clear during this period that the PAD was fighting what they believed was the "Thaksin regime" - a system of deep-rooted corruption that was instigated by the Thaksin administration for the benefit of Thaksin and his allies. This regime was the threat to the entire nation and the foundation of the Thai state, particularly their beloved monarchy. The PAD reckoned that the Surayuth government has failed to uproot Thaksin's immense political influence and set out to take on the tasks themselves. As Sonthi declared during his new TV show, "Guarding the Nation" (yam fao pandin):

"This is the last war for us. We have to fight until the end. Why? Because my father taught me to love our nation...Brothers and sisters, these are my final words. If you love the country, the nation, the land and you want to see our country stands on the foundation that is righteous, then you have to join me. Do you love our nation, religion and king just like me? If so, stand by me and the People's Alliance for Democracy. We must make our nation, our country, moral, ethical and righteous. We must drive away the evil; the disgusting person who sold out our nation."^324

The PAD movement in this second phase focused on two issues: nationalism and royalism. Even more so than the first phase, the identity of the PAD movement was being constructed in this second period. The first phase of the PAD movement, its largest in size, was a coming together of people and groups that shared their opposition to Thaksin only, but had little in common with one another. In the first phase they came together under the campaign of

324 Limthongkul, S. (2008, May 24). Talk during Yam Fao Pandin show, ASTV.
"Saving the Nation" (koo chart) most wearing t-shirts that say "We fight for the King" (rao soo peau Nai Luang). The second time of mobilization, following the ousting of Thaksin, the PAD had lost some support from the NGO community and labor, but gained support from the public who was not mobilized in the first round. While smaller in size than the first round, the second phase of PAD mobilization was more focused in its direction and one begins to actually see its identity taking shape. This has led to the period of PAD's longest sustained street mobilization, known as the "193 Day Protest" - the longest protest in contemporary Thai history. This round of mobilization, the PAD refocused on the issue of the monarchy but also emphasized other issues that evokes patriotism. As such, the campaign is called "Guarding the Nation" (yam fao pandin), implying that the PAD acts as the guardians of the nation protecting the monarchy and the state from harm and evil, and seeking to preserve the status quo.

The focus on royalism and nationalism was a strategic choice on the part of the PAD leaders. Admittedly, claiming that the monarchy is under threat evokes a lot of emotion from the mass and tends to mobilize more supporters than any other issue (interview with Panthep, Suriyasai). No other issue gets more people mobilized more than the issue of the monarchy, argues the PAD's spokesperson, Panthep.325 The majority of Thais still revere King Bhumibhol, so we are not surprised that we get more people out on the streets when the issue of the monarchy was capitalized. "The Yellow Shirts used the issue of the monarchy for their own benefit. Do they [the leaders] really love the monarchy? I don't know...In fact, I don't even think the monarchy likes the Yellow Shirts very much. The royal family did say the Yellow Shirts

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cause problems for them.\textsuperscript{326} PAD leader, Terdphum Jaidee admitted that the PAD was using the monarchy for their own gain as a way to mobilize supporters.\textsuperscript{327}

The PAD resumes its work shortly following Palang Prachachon being elected largely because Samak and the party showed clear indication of ignoring both PAD's demands and seeking to bring Thaksin back. For the PAD, Samak government would continue the "Thaksin regime" by following along the Thai Rak Thai's footsteps. Not only was Samak government continue to worsen the violence in the deep south, violating human rights, sidelining civil society; it was clear for the PAD that Thaksin was still very much in command of the government from exile. The writing on the wall became obvious to the PAD leaders when the Samak government was seeking to amend the constitution, particularly articles 237 and 309, to deter future party dissolution and to rescind those who have been punished for whatever reason by the coup government (including Thaksin). As such, the PAD leaders announced the next rounds of mobilization: "The nominee government of Thaksin reaffirmed to us that the Thaksin regime is still alive and that its nominee intends to wash away the crimes of Thaksin and his cronies....Such shameful and damaging actions must be stopped...The PAD will oppose any actions to amend the constitution for the benefit of the Thaksin regime."\textsuperscript{328}

Moreover the PAD strongly believed that the anti-monarchy movement was emerging and gaining strength in Thailand, which the Samak government did nothing about. The PAD refers to this as the "Movement to Overthrow the Monarchy" (kabuan karn lom jao) which is associated strongly with some key Red Shirt leaders. In the book entitled "Who do you think you

\textsuperscript{326} Referring to Princess Sirindhorn's interview with a Connecticut newspapers. See http://prachatai.com/journal/2008/10/18540.
\textsuperscript{327} Jaidee, T. (personal communication, December 19, 2012).
are? Note to the Anti-Monarchists" (2011)\textsuperscript{329} written by one of the first public opponent to Thaksin government and close advisor to PAD, Pramote Nakornthap, he argues that those who fight for democracy in Thailand must understanding the country's political culture and structure which is based on the Thai monarchical institution. Royal intervention, as guaranteed by Article 7 of the constitution, provides a recourse to conflict resolution so, argues, Pramote, which means a coup would not have been necessary. The author believes: "Royal intervention is neither against the constitution, nor the democratic system in Thailand. Sometimes, not using the constitution is a way to save democracy and allow the system of constitutional monarchy to be preserved."\textsuperscript{330}

By allowing the rise in Article 112 cases, anti-monarchist comments and defamation against the royal family without much punishment, the PAD argues the Samak government was allowing such unacceptable actions to flourish. The most damaging is the fact that some key Red Shirt players indeed violate article 112, which further infuriated the Yellow Shirt supporters and reaffirmed to them that the Red Shirt was, collectively, an anti-monarchist movement that plans to overthrow the constitutional monarchy and turn Thailand into a republic. This makes sense given what the Yellow Shirts believe they uncovered during the pre-coup period, which they labeled the "Finland Plot" discussed earlier. Jakrapon Penkair, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office during Samak government and a founding member of the Red Shirts, who resigned due to allegation of lese majeste following a speech given at the Foreign Correspondent's Club of Thailand in 2008.\textsuperscript{331} Previously he has been openly criticizing the privy councilor, Prem Tinsulanand, which could constitute a violation of article 112 as well. A few Red Shirt leaders

\textsuperscript{330} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{331} Many academics agree the speech was an academic critique that the current system in Thailand was antithetical to democracy because the powers of the courts and the military rest too much on the monarchy.
have been charged similarly, some are incarcerated as a result. All of this further convinced the PAD that the Samak government and its supporters are truly a threat to the nation and the monarchy.

The period of PAD-Democrat alliance marks by a growing recognition of mutual benefits and expected rewards. The astounding victory of the PPP, a proxy of Thai Rak Thai, pushed both the Democrats and the PAD on the brink. The PAD changed their strategy. In what their leaders termed "the last war" (Limthongkul: 2008) the movement engaged in the longest, most violent anti-government rally to date. The 193-day protest began soon after then prime minister Samak Sundaravej of the PPP announced he would seek to amend the 2007 constitution, which the PAD saw as a "national crisis" and that the Thaksin regime was very much alive and remains a threat to Thailand's constitutional monarchy (Katasila, 2007). While not engaging directly with the Red Shirts' Prai versus Ammat discourse, the PAD believes democracy in Thailand will not work like in Western countries because politicians are corrupt, while many citizens sell their votes. For the PAD, elections are essentially steeped in “money politics” (PAD, 2008). After a long drawn-out rally that included raiding the Government House, occupying the country's main airport, among others, the PAD declared its "victory" in December 2008 when the PPP was dissolved by the court, paving the way for the Democrat Party to cobble together a coalition and ascend to power.

This period saw the PAD and the Democrats on the united front. As Somsak Kosaisuk, PAD's former core leader, argued "we turned our eyes blind to the differences among us, and focused on our common goal: to rid of the Thaksin regime". The PAD-Democrat alliance ran from top to bottom. At the leadership level we saw a number of Democrat MPs frequented PAD

332 For more discussion on this see Pongsawat, P. (2011); Aeosriwong, N. (2010).
protest site, many were regular speakers on PAD stage. Prapan Koonmee, the party's executive member at the time, became part of the PAD's leadership structure. It's an open secret that he's a close friend of the Democrats' MP and one of the largest financiers - Kalaya Sophonpanich - indicating the coalition approval at the highest level. Indeed some PAD frequent protesters revealed they have seen Abhisit visiting the rally site, offering "support" to the PAD leaders backstage. The biggest contribution the Democrat Party could make to the PAD movement has actually been to provide mass support. In fact, Democrat Party leaders admitted mobilizing their mass to PAD rallies – most notably the infamous 193-day protest. While figures vary, according to party estimates, the Democrat Party forces accounted for at least 50% of total PAD mass. "Democrat Party members, mostly southerners, mobilized the mass to join PAD rallies." Democrat southern MPs, particularly Suthep Taugsuban, have been instrumental in bringing in the masses from party supporters from its stronghold.

What is clear, however, is that their memberships overlap, which means that the extent to which they support each other's objective has an impact on their popularity. "Officially the [Democrat] Party does not have a specific policy to endorse the PAD. Abhisit told us not to go on PAD stage and let the mass movement take its own course. Unofficially, however, if you [Democrat MPs] want to attend PAD rallies you do it on your own terms," argues Dr. Pusadee Thamtaï, Democrat MP and former party executive. The end result of this strong PAD-Democrat alliance is not only sheer mass, but it contributed significantly in bringing down both Samak and Somchai governments and allowing the Democrats to form a government coalition. "It's a victory for the PAD...we rid of the Somchai government...Abhisit can bring us the new

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334 Based on interviews with various PAD demonstrators during the 193-day rally and the 2011 round.
335 Dr. Witaya Kaewparadai, Democrat MP and former minister. Interview. Democrat Party Headquarter, Bangkok, July 12, 2011.
336 Thawil Paison, Democrat MP and former minister and a long time party member (30 years). Interview. Democrat Headquarter, Bangkok, July 12, 2011.
kind of politics with policy innovations and good people to govern the country," proclaims Limthongkul (2008).

This period also saw significant radicalization of the PAD movement, which resulted in occupation of Government house and Thailand's international airport causing significant economic loss. The top leaders of the PAD were also arrested on charges of terrorism. The largest and most intense mobilization of the PAD during this period on May 25, 2008 and escalated after Samak declared the state of emergency. Confrontation between the security forces and the PAD protesters led to deadly clashes between late August and October. The PAD employed new strategy in this 193-day protest whereby protesters established a main base where they permanently camped (for the duration of the protest) and the base was used for PAD leaders for meetings, organization and planning of their operations. It was also used as the center for all sorts of services for PAD protesters. Any rallies or protest activities will begin from the base camp. The PAD used a variety of protest tactics including petitions, protest outside state agencies, the courts, etc; law suits against key political figures, boycott, work stoppage for workers of member organizations (i.e. state enterprises); service disruption of public services such as railway; mobilization online; mobilization of PAD communities abroad, etc.

The October 7 Incident, which occurred during the 193-Day Protest, became a key turning point of the PAD. This marks the day of major loss for PAD members as well as escalating violence and state use of force. Today the PAD remembers this as their D-Day or "the Day Police Killed Innocent People" and annual remembrance day is held to pray for those who have lost their lives. During that time the PAD continued with their Starburst Tactic, one of which included encircling the Government House. The PAD leaders also announced that their

protesters will begin to encircle the Parliament on October 7. By morning of that day, more than the police bombarded the protesters with more than 100 tear gas shooting to open ways for Prime Minister Somchai and his cabinet to gain entry to the parliament. The protesters continued to push on, while another bomb exploded nearby. By the end of the day, the PAD suffered 2 deaths and 381 injured as well as additional 11 police officers injured. At the end of the 193-Day Protest, the death toll rose to 11 while the injured was more than a thousand. General Chavalit Yongchaiyuth resigned from deputy prime minister to take responsibility for what happened that day.

Despite successfully unblocking channels for opposition, the PAD Movement was showing signs of weakening as they continued to lose popular support. This becomes even more evident in its third phase of mobilization, which began following the rise of the Democrat-led government. There are multiple factors that contributed to the weakening of the PAD Movement. One key important factor is the successes of the PAD Movement in opening up access to power that were blocked or rendered ineffective by the Thaksin administration. As the above paragraphs have shown, a number of channels for opposition both in formal and informal institutions were no longer closed off. The perception that the opposition "had no choice" was rapidly weakening. With the victory of the long-time PAD ally, the Democrats, in government, the future seemed brighter than ever for those who loathed the Thaksin regime.

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For a detail account of the October 7 Incident, see Limthongkul, W. and Wongchukruie, D. (2009). *Banthuek lueat 7 tula klang siang puen lae kaetnamta [Remembering the Blck October 7 Incident in the Midst of Gun Shots and Tear Gas]*. Bangkok: Ban Pra-Athit Press.
THE RED SHIRTS MOVEMENT

The United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) or the Red Shirts was formed in response to the September 2006 coup and the dismantling of the Thai Rak Thai party. The Red Shirts are often described by the media as the rural and urban poor, the majority of which hail from the poor regions of the North and the Northeast of Thailand. Such purely class-based characterization of the Red Shirts glossed over the many layers of interests represented in the Red Shirt movement. Recent scholarship had acknowledged a more complex picture of the movement and contends that a class-based characterization of the Red Shirts is too simplistic. The Red Shirt movement represents what Taylor (2011) describes as "a number of broad interest groups brought together by a desire to see full representative democracy." The class elements within the Red Shirts, while multi-layered, are best understood as largely representing the people who "straddled between both urban and rural society."

Well-respected public intellectual, Nithi Aeosiwongse, once argued that the Red Shirts are largely "lower middle-class" - they're not the poor, but rather the poorer section of the middle class. A revealing field work conducted by Chiang Mai University-led research (2010) shows that the Red Shirts are better understood as a "political movement", not class-based economic movement. While statistically speaking, the Red Shirts are relatively poorer than the Yellow Shirts, the former don't necessarily view themselves as poor. Indeed, much of what constitutes

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the grievances of the Reds are political in nature, most notably political disparity\textsuperscript{345} and socio-cultural inferiority.\textsuperscript{346}

The UDD came together as a more organized movement in 2007 that comprises largely of two groups: the pro-Thaksin supporters (electoral base in the North and Northeast) mobilized by former Thai Rak Thai politicians and the anti-coup civic groups/NGOs. The latter was the first to mobilize immediately following the September 2006 coup - protesting what they believed was the country's unacceptable democratic reversal, blatant injustice and unfairness.\textsuperscript{347} This portion of the Red Shirts, Sombat Boon Ngam-anong, leader of the Red Sunday Group, argues include NGOs, activists, intellectuals, students and some sections of the "idealistic" middle class.\textsuperscript{348} Members in these groups did not all favor Thaksin and his policies but they shared the deep sense of injustice for Thaksin as a result of the coup. The latter group, or what Phongpaichit and Baker (2010) term "the Thaksinites"\textsuperscript{349} truly made the Red Shirts a mass movement, with membership of at least around 5.5 million.\textsuperscript{350} The grass-root supporters of Thaksin were initially mobilized by the Veera-Nathawut-Jatuporn trio through People’s Television (PTV) talk shows and subsequently through a series of Truth Today rallies between 2008 and 2009. Not only that

\textsuperscript{345} The researchers mean the feeling that their political views are not respected, the system works to suppress their political participation, their votes don't count, etc.
\textsuperscript{347} Notable groups to protest against the coup in the aftermath of Thaksin's overthrow were the 19 September Anti-Coup Network, Saturday People Say No to Tyranny, Red Sunday Group, White Pigeon Group, 24 June Group, Tehmujin Network (Chanapat Na Nakorn and various academics.
\textsuperscript{348} Boon Ngam-anong, S. (personal communication, June 10, 2011).
\textsuperscript{350} Estimates as to the number of Red Shirt members vary given a lack of systemic calculation. Attempts to better record the membership of the Red Shirts through the issuance of identity cards were started but not followed through (statements made by UDD staff, personal communication, January 12, 2012). 5.5 millions is the most official estimate there is so far of the number of Red Shirt members, which is based on the number of petitions filed for Thaksin amnesty in August 2009. We believe this is a conservative estimate.
the three leaders were first and foremost former Thai Rak Thai politicians, it was clear that the plight of Thaksin played center stage in the struggle of the Red Shirts:

Since 2001 when Thaksin’s party – Thai Rak Thai – first contested in the national election, his party and subsequent nominees alike have consistently won elections by a wide margin. The 2011 elections forcefully reinforced this trend (See Figure 17). Like the 2005 elections, the Thaksin party won an outright majority of seats. In 2001, Thai Rak Thai’s seat share accounted for 49.6% of the total. By 2005, when Thaksin’s popularity was at its height, his party swept 377 out of 500 seats in parliament, forming the largest ever majority in Thailand’s history. The 2006 coup may have reduced Thaksin’s electoral support from a whopping 75.4% of seats in parliament; nonetheless, his parties still won two subsequent elections by a large margin.

Second, this election solidifies a pattern that has begun to emerge in 2005: elections are no longer competitive for the two largest parties. The landslide victory of Thaksin-aligned parties for the past several consecutive elections have created an electoral gap with the second runner-up, the Democrat Party. The Democrats have not won an election since 1992 and its electoral performance in 2011 confirms the party's continued failure in the electoral front. Indeed the overall degree of contestation among political parties has declined in 2011 compared to 2001 and 2007 elections. This is evidenced by looking at the number of candidates contesting an election in a particular district. In the 2011 election, only four parties sent candidates to compete in 50% of the available seats. This is a drop compared to 9 parties in 2007 and 5 in 2001. In theory parties send in candidates to compete in areas where there is some chance of winning. The fact that the degree of contestation of the national elections has declined over time is due to a decline in smaller parties and the emergence of parties with nation-wide appeals and to some extent, regional electoral bases.
FIGURE 17: PERCENTAGE OF SEAT SHARE OF MAJOR PARTIES IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS (2001-2011)

Source: ECT
Note: *Thai Rak Thai, Palang Prachachon and Peua Thai are treated as same party ** Chart Thai merged with Chart Pattana in the 2011 election and changed the name to Chart Thai Pattana

The north and the northeast have become indisputably the Red Shirt heartland where Thaksin parties, under whichever names, would surely sweep seats. Such was not even the case back in 2001, when the Thaksin government came to power for the first time. The effective number of parties (nationally) was nearly 4 in 2001 and it was 2.7 in the 2011 election, signifying a decline of small parties.\(^{351}\) Back in 2001 the voting pattern remained largely fragmented, with the exception of the Democrat-dominated south, whereby several small and medium-sized parties were winning seats at the district level. In 2001 in the north, the Democrats were strong in provinces like Maehongsorn and Tak and Prae, Nane, Utradit as well as Pichit where fierce battles were waged among several different parties. Likewise, the northeast of

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Thailand in 2001 was represented by 9 different parties with no political party claiming to be able to sweep entire provinces under their control. By 2005, however, Thai Rak Thai swept 377 out of 500 seats – with the majority of the North and Northeast under its wings. Even the Central Plains where electoral competition has always remained fierce with no particular party able to claim dominance, TRT managed to gain more than three-quarters of the region’s districts under its control.

The trigger for arguably the largest mass protest ever in contemporary Thai history came as the Supreme Court seized $1.4 billion of Thaksin's assets. The UDD leaders quickly finalized what they termed "the last battle" – a mass anti-government demonstration where over a million Red Shirts were expected to turn up (Bangkok Post, 2010, February 23). What was planned as a seven-day rally\(^{352}\) turned into 64 days of drawn out protest\(^{353}\) that ended with a violent crackdown and the deaths of 91 people and more than 2,000 injured. This was the worst episode of mass violence that Thailand has experienced. The incidents of Bloody May 2010, however, instrumental in pushing the Democrat government to call for house dissolution about a year after the protests. Following Abhisit’s announcement in early May, the Red Shirts switched gears and retreated from the street to work to campaign for Peua Thai.

The landslide victory of Peua Thai, sweeping fifty-three percents of the seat shares, was without a doubt due to the strength of its Red Shirt supporters. From political rallies to the dissemination of voter knowledge, the Red Shirts served as a powerful wing of Peua Thai and were instrumental in the Thaksin party’s resounding victory. Despite the risk of running afoul of rules that may limit the relationship between the Red Shirts and Peua Thai, the Red Shirts were deeply involved in the campaign. Red Shirt leader and Peua Thai candidate, Jatuporn Prompan,\(^{352}\)\(^{353}\)

\(^{352}\) Kamol. (personal communication, July 9, 2011).
\(^{353}\) The Bloody May lasted from March 14 to May 19, 2010.
noted that "this election [2011] the Red Shirts are fighting for Peua Thai...the Reds don't take orders from the party...they support the party on their own initiatives. Without the Red Shirts there won't be Peua Thai today." 354 Kwanchai Praipanna, leader of one of the largest UDD sub-groups, "We Love Udon Club," echoed similar concerns: "Peua Thai campaign trails are full of Red Shirt supporters 355 and without the Reds "Peua Thai would have long been crushed" (Krungthep Turakij, 2011, April 27).

The direct and most immediate beneficiaries of the Peua Thai-led coalition government are undoubtedly the Red Shirts. Since Yingluck was sworn in as Thailand's 28th prime minister just a little over a month ago, her party has made securing the release of 132 Red Shirts from various prisons throughout the country a priority.356 In addition, Red Shirt leaders both at the local and national levels became MPs themselves or were given advisory positions in the government. Most importantly, Yingluck made it clear from the very onset that her government would seek for ways to bring her exiled brother, Thaksin, back to Thailand - a prospect of which looks increasingly plausible.

PAD THIRD STAGE OF MOBILIZATION (2009-2011)

This section discusses the decline of the PAD Movement. I argue that the Movement's dwindling support is a result of multifaceted reasons. Structurally, the alliance was, from the very beginning, loose and temporary in nature. This makes it difficult for an alliance to sustain itself. Ideologically, one section of the PAD has become more radicalized, and right-wing, which alienates those in the left. Organizationally, the PAD leadership has had a serious breakup, which

355 Fieldwork observations, Peua Thai campaign trail in Bangkok, May-June 2011. Many Red Shirt supporters attended every function where Peua Thai candidates would attend. Base on our observation they often came groups of more than 8 people, wore red and often had either hand clappers with Yingluck photos on.
356 Note that thus far only those on charges of terrorism have been granted bail - not those on charges of lese majesty.
contributes to further weakening of the movement. A major evidence for the Movement's loss in popularity is the failure of both its political party, the New Politics Party (NPP) and its Vote No Campaign, both of which were launched for the purpose of the 2011 election.

The third phase of mobilization of the PAD, which began during former ally, the Democrat Party's administration, marks the Movement's official decline from power. The PAD faced a sharp decrease in public support and leadership breakup - casting serious doubt to the viability of the movement's future. The internal crisis of the PAD revealed just how impermanent and fragile the relationship between various groups, and even among the top leaders themselves, is. The decline of the PAD movement between 2009 and 2011 was a result of multiple factors. However, the key reasons include: 1) serious disagreement within the leadership rank; 2) movement fatigue; 3) breakup of major allies. All of this has led to the following consequences: 1) loss of public support; 2) dwindling financial support; and 3) leadership change.

Chamlong and Santi Asoke's Dharma Forces were the leaders in the third round of PAD mobilization. The nationalists and religious sections of the PAD took center stage in this round of mobilization. Under the slogan "Let's United to Protect Our Land" (ruam palang pokpong pandin), Chamlong tells PAD protesters that "We need to make merit to our country and repay what we all Thais owe to our nation, the land where we were born and before we die we must pay back what we owe." Santi Asoke took charge of this round of protests because nationalism and protecting national sovereignty has always been part of the political discourse of Santi Asoke itself. Santi Asoke has always been involved in politics since Palang Tham party. The lesson from Black May taught them that only Chamlong cannot lead, that is why the PAD has five

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357 Chamlong speech at various occasion (2011-2012), fieldwork observation.
Chamlong himself has a mass base of some two to three thousands, the majority of which are Santi Asoke followers.\textsuperscript{359}

The 158-day protest focused on the "loss of sovereignty" as a result of the Prasart Khao Pra Viharn territorial dispute with Cambodia. Beginning on January 25, 2011, the PAD led by the Dharma Forces occupied areas outside of the Government House and camped there for a total of 158 days. The PAD leadership demanded that the Abhisit government of the following: 1) withdraw Thailand from the World Heritage Convention to rejection of the UNESCO and World Heritage Committee's decision over the temple; 2) pressure Cambodian forces to vacate Thai territories; 3) annul or reject any MOU related to the disputed area.\textsuperscript{360} PantheP Pongpuapan, PAD spokesperson argues that the PAD has to fight over this issue because Thaksin's legacy of "selling out the nation" continues and if Thailand lost territories to Cambodia, we would stand to lose other disputed areas as well.\textsuperscript{361}

The issue of nationalism as related to national sovereignty resonated with far fewer supporters than the leadership anticipated. This was not only evidenced by the meager number of protesters during the 158-day protest, estimated at most no more than 30,000\textsuperscript{362} - a far cry from their earlier days, but it was also a period where several groups broke away from the PAD to form their own. "During the 158-day protest, few people came because the issue was about borders. People from urban areas are interested in this but not those from the provinces. They do not understand why 'nationalism' matters," reveal PAD leaders.\textsuperscript{363}

\textsuperscript{358} Saengsuriyachan, T. (personal communication, July 10, 2011).
\textsuperscript{359} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{361} Interview pantheP
\textsuperscript{362} Sinsuwong, C. (personal communication, July 17, 2011).
\textsuperscript{363} Pongpraibul, S. (personal communication, January 7, 2013).
This round of protest also brought out a number of PAD sub-groups and allies that are more radical, right-wing nationalistic. Notable groups such as Thai Patriot Networks, Network of Thais who Love Their Nation are groups that used to be part of the PAD but eventually formed their own group as they disagreed with the direction of the PAD. Some of these groups believed the PAD does not go far enough in their fight over the Praviharn Temple. Between 2009 and 2011, the Thais Who Love Their Nation Group, led by former PAD member and Santi Asoke member, Veera Somkwamkid, conducted aggressive protest activities regarding the dispute temple both against the Thai government and its Cambodian counterparts by mobilizing supporters on numerous occasions to the border areas. Finally on August 21, 2010 Veera and seven others of Santi Asoke and Thais Who Love Their Nation Group were arrested by Cambodian soldiers for allegedly crossing into Cambodian territory. Veera remained in Cambodian prison until today.

The honeymoon period between the PAD and the Democrats was over soon after Abhisit came to power. The Democrat Party was, in PAD's view, reneging on their promises they made when they fought together against the Thaksin regime. Resentment began to build up as the PAD felt it was not getting their share of what they wanted even though they were responsible for Abhisit coming to power. The straw that broke the camel's back, which became the key issue of the third wave of the PAD protest was the one involving the Thai-Cambodia territorial dispute. The more radical wing of the PAD, which included the ultra-nationalist and ultra-royalist groups\textsuperscript{364} The PAD began to hold anti-government rallies during the Abhisit administration, the mass of PAD dwindled significantly. One by one Democrat MPs who used to vocally and

\textsuperscript{364} For example, the Thai Patriot Network and SantiAsoke.
proactively support the PAD began to distance themselves from the movement. During the PAD rally in early 2011, Sonthi Limthongkul outlines "the lies of Abhisit Government": a) not protecting Thai citizens who were taken away by Cambodian authorities, b) allowing Thailand to lose sovereignty (land), and c) corruption. Kasit Priomya, Foreign Minister under Abhisit Administration and former PAD vocal supporter, along with several other Democrat politicians who took active role in PAD demonstrations parted ways either with the movement or the party.

When the PAD Movement began to hold anti-government rallies during the Abhisit administration, the mass of PAD dwindled significantly. In retrospect, "Sonthi overestimated mass support for PAD and started a feud with the Democrats because they didn't get what he wanted." While PAD leaders felt that the decline of their organization’s popularity beginning in 2010 was a result of several factors, including dwindling financial support, leadership break-up, poor coordination, and fatigue, having lost the Democrat Party support was severely detrimental to PAD mass appeal. The Democrat-PAD feud weakened the movement and contributed to a number of defections into splinter groups. The Thai Patriot Network, for example, broke away from the PAD because they believe ASTV had conflict of interest and tried to gain benefit from the PAD movement. Father Potirak (Santi Asoke) told us to create our own

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365 Kasit Piromya, foreign minister during Abhisit Administration, took part in the PAD's occupation of Suvarnabhumi Airport. He gave an interview to the Telegraph on December 21, 2008, saying that the airport protests were "fun with good food."
367 Kasit took part in the PAD's occupation of Suvarnabhumi Airport. He gave an interview to the Telegraph on December 21, 2008, saying that the airport protests were "fun with good food."
368 Democrat members who left PAD are, for instance, Kasit Piromya and Anchalee Paiererak. Prapan Kunmee, who was an Advisor to Deputy Minister of Science and Technology left the Democrat Party to be with PAD.
369 Ungsongtham, P. (personal communication, July 12, 2011). She is a well known activist in the slum areas of inner Bangkok and a long time political activist. Among other things she was a leader of the mass demonstration against the 1991 coup government (Black May) and has been close to Chamlong Srimong. In the interview she said many Democrat MP whose constituencies contain some "slum areas" went on stage with PAD.
network. At the beginning there were 77 organizations in the Thai Patriot Network - all of them were disappointed with ASTV. Our network is a true people's movement and we could live with Yingluck government as long as there was no effort to give Thaksin amnesty. We would not spill blood just to get Peau Thai out of power.

NEW POLITICS PARTY

The real breakup of the PAD leadership occurred following the founding of its political party, the New Politics Party. This should have been a key milestone for the PAD Movement, but it turned out to be the last straw its leadership needed for them to part ways. What we witnessed by the time an election was called in 2011 were two parallel electoral campaigns from the PAD camp: one is the NPP running for election, while the other is the PAD's Vote No Campaign. This is a zero sum game for PAD supporters: you either vote not to vote (Vote No) or you vote for the NPP. At the end, both efforts failed miserably and the Movement suffered its weakest point in its development.

The New Politics Party (NPP), earlier known as the People's Alliance Party (phak panthamit), was founded following the 193-day Protest. The PAD leaders held a PAD congress at Thammasat University Rangsit Stadium on May 25, 2009 as there has been talk about PAD's "next step". Tens of thousands of PAD supporters who were present at the congress overwhelmingly supported the PAD leaders to established a party. In fact subsequent interviews with PAD's leaders and close aids reveal that none of the five PAD leaders, with the exception of Somsak Kosaisuk, favored the idea of a party. "We had been talking it about

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371 See history of the NPP. http://www.npp.or.th/PDF/NPP.pdf.
373 Personal communication with various PAD key figures (2010-2013).
having a party for years, me and Pipob," claims Suriyasai, "but we never thought we would see it through. We are from the NGO sector and having our own party will be controversial." Sonthi had casually mentioned setting up the Save the Nation Party (pak yam fao pandin) in 2007 but the idea died.

In contrast to the ambivalence expressed by these leaders, Somsak had always thought of a party as a solution to increase popular participation among the previously excluded groups. Given his background as a long-time labor activist and union leader, and influenced by reading of the European's labor parties, Somsak believed labor rights can only be protected if labor increases its bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the state. Forming a party is a viable option to achieve this goal. Fortunately for Somsak, prior to the party inception, there has been a lot of talk among PAD supporters themselves about the possibility of setting up a political party. As such to some extent, the NPP was formed as a grassroots initiative.

The "new politics" for the PAD rests on the belief that the old style politics in no longer working because it cannot respond to new problems in society. The old style politics rests the belief that state and society should be separate or that state and civil society should be separate. This prompts a problem of "binary opposition" whereby ordinary people are excluded from the process of state making and political decision making process. New Politics does not support the notion of state as being the center of the polity. New Politics is also not interested in initiating political transformation through class struggle. There needs to be less dependence on political parties to bringing about change or building any new institutions. New politics aims to change the value and attitude of the people more than institution building. The battle for political power is not with competition for state capture but rather it is a conflict over discourse on particular issues.

374 Interviews with PAD leaders at various times between 2011-2013.
The NPP was founded as a natural extension of the PAD Movement. For one, the PAD leaders see an opportunity to create a real mass party that can become the revolutionary party in the future. The NPP will provide space for ordinary citizens to partake in various activities and exchange ideas. This will bring in previously excluded groups into the political process. In a way this is also a "deliberative democracy" - if society has space for people to discuss and exchange ideas and "reason together" then we can really transform politics. Moreover, the NPP would counteract the UDD which is the "civic" wing of the Peua Thai party. Since the Democrats and the PAD come from different organizations and can never merge, the PAD leaders thought perhaps they needed their own party. Since the PAD estimated that it had roughly some 10

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million supporters\textsuperscript{376}, they were convinced that could have a successful party based on the "members" they already had.

The "new politics" in Thailand is the constitutional monarchy that aims to a) support and encourage good people to govern the country b) people can participate in politics and c) drive away Thaksin nominees.\textsuperscript{377} The pillars of the NPP rest on four key issues: 1) all Thai citizens have the duty to worship and protect the monarchy, 2) real political participation for all 3) good people govern and 4) strengthen the popular sector.\textsuperscript{378}

Since its inception and under the leadership of Somsak Kosaisuk, the NPP contested in two major elections - the Bangkok by-election (2010 and the National election 2011). Both of these elections, the NPP stood a chance of winning a seat given the support base of the PAD. But the party failed to gain much electoral support and suffered devastating results at the polls (Table 23).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 22: ELECTORAL RESULTS FOR THE NEW POLITICS PARTY (2011)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Election</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party List Candidates Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constituency Candidates Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes Gained (party list)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes Gained (constituency)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Election Commission of Thailand (ECT).

\textsuperscript{376} This is an estimate given by 3 PAD top leaders, which correspond to the survey by Asia Foundation on yellow shirt attitudes. This figure is a gross overestimate because it also includes PAD supporters who vote for the Democrat Party.


\textsuperscript{378} Ibid.
The Vote No campaign of the PAD was detrimental to the NPP. Mostly because PAD supporters and the NPP come from the same base - many were indeed confused to see the NPP campaign posters and the Vote No posters at the same time. "I go campaign and people said Vote No and I said no, this is NPP. They were confused. Indeed three groups were competing for the same votes: the PAD, the Democrats and the NPP. If it was just a conflict over this, I would have been OK but then Sonthi began badmouthing me in public, alleging me for taking money to run against Vote No. I can never speak to them again." The NPP fielded 40 candidates for the national election and received some 38,000 votes in the party list. It was a resounding failure.

VOTE NO CAMPAIGN

Troubles for the newly formed NPP had been brewing for quite some time before the party had begun to send candidates for elections. Serious disagreement regarding who would run the party eventually led to the PAD leadership breakup. Sonthi, who was voted in as the leader of the party, wanted to retreat from party business to take care of his media company. Sonthi eventually resigned in May of 2010 and Somsak took over. Pipob and Somkiat were never interested in the posts, and neither was Chamlong who was the only one that had ever run a political party before. Then in early 2011, when it became clear to everyone that a national election would be held, the PAD leadership, with the exception of Somsak, declared the Vote No campaign. Somsak then resigned from PAD to run in the election as the leader of the NPP. "Sonthi cannot manage the NPP because he only does things that would serve his interests," Somsak grudgingly complained. For Somsak, Vote No campaign could only allow Thaksin's
It would not lead to any kind of reform in this country, claims Somsak.\textsuperscript{383}

In the 2011 elections, the People’s Alliance for Democracy’s most notable action was the “Vote No” campaign, in which the PAD called on voters to check “none of the above.” Although voting “no” is not new for the Thai electorate, the PAD’s campaign should be viewed as a strategy to create a “protest vote movement” that its supporters believe could lead to a real change in Thai politics. Sonthi Limthongkul gave an interview on May 12, 2011 discussing the purpose of the Vote No campaign.

“Vote No means you don’t like any parties, you don’t like the current party system because parties run like corporations, MPs act like lackeys of whoever will be the next PM – they don’t represent you. If no less than 5 million people Vote No then it will have some legitimacy. Existing politicians are highly corrupt and money-driven. They can’t represent their electorates therefore we need new politics. Ideally the new political system needs 1) partial appointment to get fair representation of people from entire society and 2) partial direct election. Appointed representatives will be no worse than highly corrupt elected politicians.\textsuperscript{384}

The fall-out between the PAD and the Democrat Party was also bad news for the latter's electoral performance. The Red-Yellow cleavage that emerged and deepened as the political crisis dragged on meant that the Democrats' hope of electoral gains could only come from the Yellow camp or the undecided. The Democrats obtained between 19\%-34\% of seats in the 2001, 2005, and 2007 elections, whereas the Thaksin-backed parties garnered 49\%-75\% of seats for the


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same period.\textsuperscript{385} While the combination of the Yellow Shirts’ “Vote No” campaign and its own breakaway party, New Politics Party (NPP),\textsuperscript{386} was unlikely to contribute to the Democrat's overall defeat to Peua Thai in the 2011 election, the breakup of the PAD-Democrat Party alliance did make a difference in some constituencies. Given that the electoral rule was changed to one-person, one-vote at the constituency level, the “Vote No” campaign and NPP took away votes that could have gone to the Democrats and could have meant a victory for the Democrat Party in a tight race.\textsuperscript{387} A Democrat local MP revealed how the “Vote No” campaign adversely affected her election campaign: "My constituency has the highest Vote No...around 10%...I was kicked out from some houses...that never happened to me. Before the coup I was attending PAD rallies everyday because the majority of people in my constituency went...I went to garner votes...now the Vote No campaign really hurt the Democrat Party.”\textsuperscript{388}

In the 2011 elections, the PAD’s most notable action was the “Vote No” campaign, in which the PAD called on voters to check “none of the above.” Although the “Vote No” campaign was a resounding failure, with less than 3\% of the constituency vote, it created a massive rift between the Democrats and the PAD, as well as the latter's breakaway party, New Politics Party. The fall-out between the PAD and the Democrat Party did make a difference in some constituencies as the “Vote No” campaign took away votes that could have gone to the Democrats and could have meant a victory for the Democrat Party in a tight race.\textsuperscript{389} The PAD suffered additional setbacks internally, including dwindling financial support, leadership break-

\textsuperscript{385} Election Commission Thailand.
\textsuperscript{386} The Yellow Shirts rather incoherently ran both a party and a “Vote No” campaign.
\textsuperscript{387} Of note are Bangkok districts 5, 11, 16.
\textsuperscript{388} Democrat MP in Bangkok central district. Interview, District Office, Bangkok, July 14, 2011.
\textsuperscript{389} A Democrat incumbent from Bangkok reveals, "Before the coup I was attending PAD rallies everyday because the majority of people in my constituency went...I went to garner votes...now the Vote No campaign really hurt the Democrat Party...I was even kicked out from some houses." Interview, District Office, Bangkok, July 14, 2011.
up, poor coordination, and fatigue, losing the Democrat Party support was severely detrimental to PAD mass appeal (Nelson, 2011).

**TABLE 23: PERCENTAGE OF VOTE NO IN ELECTIONS (2001-2011)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>PR</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1.77%</td>
<td>3.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2.85%</td>
<td>4.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2.72%</td>
<td>4.03%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Election Commission of Thailand (ECT).

The “Vote No” campaign was a resounding failure. Less than 3% in the party-list and 4% in the constituency ballot chose to “vote no.” Indeed, these percentages were even less than the 2007 elections (see Figure 5). It is thus clear that Thai voters still view elections as the most legitimate form of transfer of power. The continued efforts of the Yellow Shirts to put democracy on hold, through the “Vote No” campaign and their proposed five-year “transition” period of no elected government, lost significant support even among original members.

The fact that the PAD lost much of its popularity and mass support, in comparison to previous campaigns, is partially the lack of mass appeal of the “Vote No” campaign. In an interview, one of the PAD leaders and former MP, Chaiwat Sinsuwan, admitted the PAD lost a lot of support and their last round of 157-days of demonstration attracted at the most 20,000

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390 Somsak Kosaisuk, one of PAD core leaders, left PAD in early 2011. He is now the head of the New Politics Party (NPP), a new party formed after the PAD general meeting in 2009. Today the NPP and the PAD are no longer officially affiliated.

391 Note that Chaiwat is not the core group leader officially but he is considered a leader by the PAD followers. As the head of the People’s Assembly of Thailand, he was instrumental in gaining popular and NGO support for the PAD. He was often seen on stage during various PAD rallies.
people – a far cry from its heyday: the 193-day protest drawing an estimated 100,000-300,000 supporters that ended with the occupation of Suvarnabhumi Airport. The abject failure of the “Vote No” campaign suggests that the PAD’s vision of political reform did not resonate well with both their supporters and the general public. More tellingly, it indicates that Thais see their parties and politicians as legitimate vehicles for articulating their political interests. This is a healthy note for Thailand’s shaky democracy.

Besides the failure of the “Vote No” campaign, record voter turnout could also be taken as evidence of citizens’ rejection of the Yellow Shirts’ demonization of politicians and of the democratic process. Prima facie, the 1997 constitution may be seen as a reason for the increased voter turnout in the past polls because it made voting mandatory. However, mandatory voting in Thailand is often not enforced. While technically voters who do not vote will not be eligible to run for office or sign a petition (to be submitted to MPs), such rules are a concern to few. Indeed since the new laws came into effect as a result of the 1997 constitution, two national elections have been held and there has been an increase in the level of voter turnout for each consecutive election (see Table 25). Indeed, the 2011 election recorded the highest voter turnout ever in Thailand’s history at 75%, which translates to 35.2 million votes out of nearly 47 million eligible

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392 The “Vote No” campaign was replete with billboards and posters of politicians dressed up as animals: monitor lizards, tigers, and water buffalos (the latter being the ultimate insult in Thailand).
The fall-out between the PAD and the Democrat Party was also bad news for the latter's electoral performance. The Red-Yellow cleavage that emerged and deepened as the political crisis dragged on meant that the Democrats' hope of electoral gains could only come from the Yellow camp or the undecided. The Democrats obtained between 19%-34% of seats in the 2001, 2005, and 2007 elections, whereas the Thaksin-backed parties garnered 49%-75% of seats for the same period. While the combination of the Yellow Shirts’ “Vote No” campaign and the breakaway party, New Politics Party (NPP), was unlikely to contribute to the Democrat's overall defeat to Peua Thai in the 2011 election, the breakup of the PAD-Democrat Party alliance did make a difference in some constituencies. Given that the electoral rule was changed to one-person, one-vote at the constituency level, the “Vote No” campaign and NPP took away votes that could have gone to the Democrats and could have meant a victory for the Democrat Party in

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393 Election Commission of Thailand.
a tight race. A Democrat local MP revealed how the “Vote No” campaign adversely affected her election campaign: "My constituency has the highest Vote No...around 10%...I was kicked out from some houses...that never happened to me. Before the coup I was attending PAD rallies everyday because the majority of people in my constituency went...I went to garner votes...now the Vote No campaign really hurt the Democrat Party.”

Despite losing significant support from the die-hard Yellow Shirt members, supporters of the Democrat Party also came out in large numbers to champion the party. At a major rally that was held in the Rachaprasong area where the Red Shirts had held out against the military in May 2010 and where the violent climax of the protests finally took place, about 15,000 middle-class supporters of the Democrat Party came out to hear speeches by the party’s luminaries. A few days before the election, an even larger crowd attended in pouring rain at the party’s final rally.

CONCLUSION

The PAD Movement was crucial to the success of the 2006 coup d’état. While not dismissing the importance of the elite-driven approach, I argue that a social movement is imperative to the military intervention because it lends popular support and legitimacy to the coup leaders. Elites alone could no longer execute a successful coup because of the massive popular backlash following the Black May uprising. Elites must form a coalition with a group of citizens against the remaining citizens. The interaction between elites and social movement, in this case, the PAD, signifies the military overthrow of a popularly elected government.

The second part of this chapter considers the PAD Movement's post-coup mobilization as a supporting evidence for my institutional blockage theory. The question is: why wasn't there

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394 Of note are Bangkok districts 5, 11, 16.
another coup between 2008 and 2011? The situation in Thailand was as dire and divided as ever, with the emergence of a new counter-movement, the Red Shirts, more violence, and even more protests. I argue that the conditions that would make the coup likely, in terms of the nature of institutional blockage, was not present in the post-coup period of 2008-2011. The opposition forces no longer felt that they were completely blocked from access to power, nor were they unable to effectively channel their grievances. In fact the coup administration put the opposition in power. The re-mobilization of the PAD was thus driven largely by its own discourse of residual institutional blockage and exclusion of power. The Movement began to experience a decline as their grievances are no longer credible to the public. The opposition's success spells also the decline of its movement.

The PAD's last phase of mobilization prior to the 2011 election marks its weakest position. The Movement suffered from a plethora of internal conflicts and loss of popular support, which led to a leadership breakup, defections of sub-groups and failure of its political party, the NPP. The PAD's Vote No Campaign to counteract political parties was also an abject failure. The PAD Movement is not dead but it weakens as the politics have become more open to the opposition.
8. CONCLUSION

"Democracy is the art of the possible."

- Anand Panyarachun, former Prime Minister of Thailand (1992-1993)

Democracy is something we constantly have to work on....The work of democracy never stops. All citizens have to be vigilant to make democracy work.

- Barack Obama, President of the United States, Joint US-Thailand Press Conference, November 18, 2012

INTRODUCTION

After the 1991 coup d'état and the bloody popular uprising the following year, Thais were hopeful that would be the last: no more coups and no more military repression. The reformists worked hard to design a new constitution and pushed for a number of political and economic reforms to liberalize the political system, reduce the influence of the military in politics and hamper the abuse of state power by politicians. A decade later many of the same reformists found themselves supporting and actively mobilizing an anti-democratic movement in the name of the People's Alliance for Democracy. How did this happen?
In this dissertation, I have advanced the argument that institutional blockage in Thai democracy drove the pro-democracy reformists into mobilizing against the democratic system. This anti-democratic mobilization, which drew largely on networks of civil society organizations and the urban middle class, was in response to what they perceived as an unacceptable "illiberalization" of a democratic regime. Ironically, the PAD movement attempted to reverse the tide of the growing "authoritarian democracy" by appealing for extra-constitutional interventions by nondemocratic institutions. The end result was a military coup and a return to the "real" authoritarian regime. While Thailand managed to regain some elements of an electoral democracy, the implications of this anti-democratic mobilization and the return of authoritarian rule was catastrophic to the country's democratic development.

SUMMARY OF INSTITUTIONAL BLOCKAGE THEORY

Recently a growing number of Third Wave democracies have become more unstable and less free. Some of these democracies have reverted back to authoritarian rule, while others have remained in perpetual political instability. Scholars of comparative politics, particularly in the study of democratic consolidation, have provided a variety of explanations as to why young democracies face these challenges. This dissertation presents a theoretical contribution to the understanding of how, why and when democracies break down. I propose a novel approach to understanding democratic collapse through an examination of "anti-democratic mobilization." I fill a gap in the literature of democratization and regime study by bringing the "ordinary people" back in the debate when explaining the failure of a democratic regime.

My theory of institutional blockage offers a theoretical framework for understanding movement-induced democratic breakdowns in developing democracies. I argue that when a
highly mobilized society perceives access of channels of influence permanently blocked, we may see a rise of an anti-democratic movement. The role of popular mobilization takes center stage in my theoretical framework as a crucial factor in creating conditions for democratic collapse. I see institutional blockage as a process that is contingent on actors, institutions and the interaction among them.

This dissertation provides a typology of opposition movements: pro-reform, anti-incumbent and anti-democratic. Popular movements in democracies often start out as being pro-reform or anti-incumbent (or both). They mobilize to voice their grievances and make their demands heard to the incumbent. Anti-democratic mobilization is only an available option in cases where there exist nondemocratic institutions. In my definition of anti-democratic movement, it must be able to appeal to nondemocratic bodies to extra-constitutionally intervene on its behalf. Ultimately, the actual collapse of democracy necessarily involves intervention from these nondemocratic bodies.

I provide an original contribution to the study of democracy and regime type by bringing "the people" back in the debate. Political movements can bring a democratic regime down by creating conditions for extra-constitutional intervention by nondemocratic actors. Ordinary people in a democracy mobilize against the system because they feel "cornered" and "powerless" in a system that should, in theory, empower them. Their loss of access to power and the perception of permanent exclusion from power drive them to mobilize against the very system that is supposed to give them voice.
RESEARCH FINDINGS

My research on the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) provided confirmation of the argument of institutional blockage as a central factor in anti-democratic mobilization in Thailand. My dissertation finds that the PAD initially emerged as a broad-based alliance of opposition against the government of Thaksin Shinawatra. Drawn largely from civil society organizations and the urban middle class, PAD supporters felt that channels for opposition voice in both formal and informal institutions were purposely closed off or rendered ineffective by the government. The growing authoritarian and illiberal rule of the Thaksin-led government appeared to threaten some of the basic democratic rights of the opposition. As such, the PAD began mobilizing and forming an opposition alliance to pressure for government change.

The emergence of the PAD had its seeds in the reformist politics following the Black May uprising. Reformers sought to make Thailand more democratic, open, and less dependent on the military. The political reforms in the post-coup period exemplify contestation over both the meaning of democracy and the way in which the current political system in Thailand ought to be changed. The compromise between the middle class, civil society and elite conception of "democracy" resulted in the 1997 constitution (chapter 4). Reformists hailed the constitution as a major milestone in the country's political development for they believed it was the first time the constitution was written by the people and for the people. The 1997 constitution, however, provided grounds for both the rise of the Thai Rak Thai party and eventually the formation of the PAD.

The Thaksin government turned out to be the opposite of what the reformists had hoped. The 1997 constitution gave Thailand the first majority government; one that over time sought to consolidate its power through acquisitions of other parties. Newly created constitutional
measures further strengthened the executive, while significantly weakened the opposition in formal democratic institutions. The growing power of Thaksin and his party alienated those who disagreed with them. Opposition forces began to emerge to protest against what they saw as the marginalization of opposition voices and encroachment on democratic rights. The biggest trigger to the opposition came when TRT won another landslide election in 2005. This triggered the loss of power would become permanent. Facing a cohesive absolute majority in government, the opposition was losing both political space and access to power. To enhance bargaining leverage with the government, various opposition groups from both formal and informal realms banded together and formed the PAD movement.

The anti-democratization of the PAD occurred when the opposition perceived their exclusion from power and marginalization to be likely permanent and that other strategies would not work. This perception was triggered by the fact that elections were no longer competitive and that there was "no way" electorally to get rid of the Thaksin government and his Thai Rak Thai party. As elections no longer seemed to be an option for punishing the incumbent, the PAD appealed to nondemocratic institutions - the military, the monarchy and the courts. By appealing directly to these nondemocratic bodies and demanding extra-constitutional intervention, the movement effectively became anti-democratic.

In tracing the development of the PAD movement, I also showed why the movement was necessary to the collapse of democracy in Thailand. While some sections of the political elites were not happy with the rule of the Thaksin government, there was no concerted effort to overthrow the regime until there was strong and clear signal from the PAD that any regime change would be legitimimized and supported by "the people." Given the large support base of the PAD, measured in terms of both active (protesters) and passive (PAD media consumers)
supporters, the opposition elites felt that any move against the Thaksin government would be successful. Extensive interviewing and discussion with key actors confirmed that the 2006 coup d'état was a reaction to the anti-democratic mobilization of the PAD.

Placing the PAD movement in a historical perspective, it is clear that Thailand possesses certain structural conditions that make a democratic collapse more likely (chapter 3). The country's political development was littered by long periods of authoritarian rule, frequent coups d'état, a powerful military and monarchy. There was popular support for unelected leaders as well as right-wing movements. While these factors matter to our overall understanding of the state of democracy in Thailand alone, they fail to account for why the PAD emerged when it did.

Given the conventional wisdom that democracy is the "best" political system that exists, why would ordinary people mobilize against democracy? A detailed analysis of the PAD discourse (chapters 6 & 7) coupled with participant-observation of the movement over time reveals that different conceptions of "democracy" represents an underlying grievance of the movement supporters. In general, the movement was opposed to the idea of "majoritarianism" that was embedded in the democratic system. For the civil society actors inside the PAD, they view democracy as an "inclusive", "participatory" and "consultative" political system where everyone's voice matters beyond election day. For many activists and NGOs, the true meaning of democracy is the power of the people and this can only occur in a grassroots democracy. As such, the current system of representative and electoral democracy is not the desired type of political system they see as empowering the people.

The middle class inside the PAD saw themselves as the enlightened group of citizens who believed democracy could only work if it were governed by the right people. They viewed moral authority, good governance and traditional power holders (nondemocratic institutions) as
being important to the political system. "Good" people, who are educated and righteous, should govern the uneducated masses until the latter becomes enlightened. The PAD's large support base of the middle class is both conservative and royalist in the sense that they believe that the monarchy should have veto power in the political system. The monarchical institution remains the pinnacle of the nation. Any attempt to undermine the power and authority of the monarchy (and to a lesser extent, the military) constitutes a threat to national sovereignty. Such conception of "democracy" contradicts most basic definitions of democracy, as the former emphasizes strong roles played by nondemocratic institutions in the political arena.

EMPIRICAL VALIDATION OF THE RESEARCH

The key point of this dissertation that mass political movements can play the central role in the collapse of democratic regimes is underrepresented in both the popular and scholarly literature. Previous scholarship on anti-systems/anti-democratic mobilization focuses largely on economic, elite-centric and institutional explanations. Economic approaches typically argue that when new democracies face severe economic crisis, the public react negatively towards the regime by supporting anti-democratic/anti-system movements or political parties (Kitschelt & McGann: 1997; Brustein: 1991; Olukoshi: 1998; Allen: 1973). I show in chapter 2 that such an economic explanation is unsuitable for the Thai case because the PAD movement emerged during a period of economic boom. While the growth was no match to the level experienced in the pre-1997 Asian Financial Crisis period, the economic conditions in which the PAD movement emerged were by most accounts good.

Some scholars believe the extent to which a democratic regime survives depends most critically on elite choices (Linz: 1978; O'Donnell & Schmitter: 1986; Malloy & Seligson: 1987; Ake: 1991). It is the elites, not the people, who make or break regimes. Elites mobilize the mass
to oppose democratic regime for their own gains. This research does not disagree with the notion that elites matter in any regime change, but it challenges the centrality of elites in understanding anti-democratic mobilization and democratic breakdown, more generally. While elite action clearly matters in any regime change, this research suggests that social movements may have more agency than is typically assumed in such theories. Anti-democratic mobilization may rise not simply due to elite manipulation, but from mass movements that see no alternative to getting their voices heard.

To provide support for my argument, I ask whether the coup d'état in 2006 was contingent on the PAD movement. I show in chapter 6 that the coup would neither have been launched nor succeeded without mass support. Not only did the coup leaders admitted that popular opposition movement was crucial to their decision to overthrow an elected government, the PAD itself was calling for a military intervention. How do we know whether the opposition elites did not misconstrue or misinterpret public opposition towards the government as a signal or a military intervention? I provide public opinion support for anti-democratic mobilization through the use of both surveys and polling. Immediately following the 2006 coup d'état, two major pollsters reported more than 80% of the respondents nationwide agreed with the coup. Follow-up polls showed strong public support for the coup government in the rest of 2006. Moreover, the PAD was actively calling for extra-constitutional interventions, which garnered them much support from their members. It was not the case that the PAD was somehow "duped" into supporting nondemocratic elites.

The intra-elite competition framework sees elite unity as crucial to regime stability. When elites are not unified, democratic breakdowns become more likely (Higley & Burton: 1989; Lopez-Pintor: 1987). An anti-democratic movement is thus a reflection of the power
struggle among rival elites. In the Thai case, scholars argue that the rise of the PAD movement and the eventual coup was a manifestation of the conflict between traditional elites - the military, monarchy and the bureaucracy - and new business elites led by Thaksin (McCargo: 2008; Ockey: 2008; Nelson: 2007). The traditional power brokers were threatened by the new elites, most of whom were career politicians, over access to power and spoils. The traditional elites thus mobilized people to help them legitimize their seizure of power from a democratically elected government.

In chapters 6 & 7 I illustrate the importance of the masses in the PAD as driving the movement. The intra-elite competition approach overlooks the very foundation of the PAD movement: its members. Indeed, the fact that so many PAD leaders took up political positions during the coup government signifies the extent and importance the traditional elites placed on the PAD. This alliance was crucial to the coup being successful. Furthermore, elite-centric approaches fail to adequately capture how and why ordinary people joined the PAD in the first place. Clearly, they are not risking their lives to protect some self-interested, narrow-minded elites. Any elite-focused explanation to the PAD movement insufficiently captures the movement as a whole.

The class-conflict approach sees the conflict between the PAD and the incumbent government as a demonstration of deep-seated tension between the rural poor and the urban elites. Fearful of the rising political influence of the rural poor, the rich mobilize against them by seeking to subvert the democratic system that gives the former the power in the first place. The anti-democratic movement is thus an upper and middle class reaction to the threat imposed from below (Pasuk & Baker: 2008; Thitinan: 2008; Funston et al: 2009). An implicit assumption in this class-based framework is that economic positions shape groups in society along class lines.
and motivate their behavior. Yet I show that elites' preferences changed over the course of the PAD movement's development, which conflicts with key underlying assumptions of this revolutionary-threat hypothesis. If the PAD was to be made up of all elites then they should always maintain their preferences and never leave the PAD.

My dissertation fits most closely with the institutionalist approach, which sees institutions as critical to the success and failure of democracy. The weak political institutionalization argument (Huntington: 1968; Berman: 1997; Fiorina: 1997; Armony: 2004) sees democracies as most vulnerable when faced with highly mobilized society and weak institutions. Poorly designed institutions are unable to cope with increasing societal demands, prompting society to mobilize against the democratic system as a whole (Berman: 1997). While I agree with the focus on institutions, my approach addresses the flaw of the weak institutionalization framework in two key ways.

Anti-democratic mobilization emerges because institutional channels for opposition are blocked, not because institutions are not sufficiently institutionalized to respond to the people. Indeed the Thai case illustrates that the Thaksin government was responding to the people, largely through his pro-poor populist policies. His Thai Rak Thai party successfully enfranchised the majority of Thais, whose prior engagement in politics was limited to mere voting, by bringing them in to be an active part of the Thai political arena. But Thaksin was not responsive to the opposition. In fact, consistent with my argument, he was shutting the opposition out and taking their political space and access to power away, which resulted in them mobilizing to overthrow his administration. Furthermore, the weak political institution argument does not tell us what triggers democratic collapse. Under what conditions do states that are weakly institutionalized experience a breakdown? My institutional blockage theory addresses
specifically the process, sequence, and conditions under which we can observe an emergence of anti-democratic movement.

So why was there not another coup after the Thaksin-aligned government return to power? I show in chapter 7 that the absence of the coup in the post-2006 period, despite the continuance of the PAD mobilization, was due largely to the "unblocking" of institutional channels for the opposition. Channels for the opposition in both formal and informal realms, previously blocked under the Thaksin administration, were opened up to the PAD. Key PAD figures were instrumental in the drafting of the 2007 constitution, which "reset" the rules of the game to significantly reduce political dominance of Thaksin and his party, and allow for more active roles of the opposition. Many of the PAD leaders took up key positions in the national assembly and the senate. The PAD's key ally, the Democrat Party, eventually became the government, prompting the movement to lose its popular support base as people no longer felt marginalized and sidelined by the government.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

My research on anti-democratic movements contributes to the study of democratization and democratic consolidation in two major ways. By focusing on movements that oppose democratic regimes, I fill in the gap in the existing literature that focuses largely on pro-democratic movements. Understanding the process of anti-democratic mobilization is important to explaining the failures of democratization in developing democracies. Given that the majority of the world today has electoral democracy, it becomes especially important to understand the internal workings of democratic regimes that make them conducive to collapse. Political movements have been given little regard in contributing to democratic collapse than other
factors, such as economic crisis, intra-elite conflict and class conflict. As such, my work in institutional blockage theory fills in the gap in our understanding of why democracies fall generally but also specifically how political mobilization plays a central role in regime breakdowns.

Second, this dissertation illustrates how institutional engineering can have unintended consequences to a country's democratic development. Some of the scholarship on political institutions emphasizes the importance crafting the "right" institutions in order to create stronger and more institutionalized democracy. Yet the Thai case provides a warning to political reformers that perhaps devising new institutions to shape the behavior of political elites can have negative effects on democratic development as a whole. Perhaps it is not the question of crafting new institutions, but rather for whom these institutions are created. If political elites continue to find loopholes to get around the new institutions created to constraint them or, worse, create institutions to serve their vested interests, then institutional design alone simply cannot make democracy work better.

The PAD movement also provides valuable empirical contribution to the study of social movements by highlighting the importance of agency. Structural approaches dominate the existing literature on social movements due largely to the oft-cited political opportunity structure (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald: 1996; Tarrow: 1994). Too much focus on structure, however, leads to theories that fail to explain the process and the timing of movement development. My theory on institutional blockage offers a more nuanced approach of understanding the dynamics of mobilization, by prioritizing the roles played by movement leaders and groups inside the movement. As such, my work helps to bridge the structure-agency divide that has characterized some works in the study of social movement.
Since 2000, more than half a dozen countries have witnessed a collapse of their democracy. Factors such as economic crisis, weak institutions and social cleavages have been cited as explanations for these breakdowns, yet few have paid attention to the role of political movements and how they contribute to the fall of democratic governments. This dissertation brings political movements back to the debate on the causes of democratic collapse. Specifically I focus on the phenomenon of anti-democratic mobilization. Democratic breakdowns have occurred in important countries like Egypt, Bangladesh and Thailand in recent times. Why do people in democracy oppose the democratic regime? How does anti-democratic mobilization contribute to our overall understanding of the state of democracy in the world today?

Institutional design is seen as a key factor in providing democratic stability in developing democracies. The main idea is that if institutions are properly crafted, democracies have a better chance of surviving (Power & Gasiorowski: 1997; Robinson & White: 1998; Lijphart: 1999; Taagepera: 2003). This conviction spawns a vast research on electoral, party, and constitutional design that can contribute to the strengthening of democratic foundations. Efforts have been made to "engineer" the democratic institutions in ways that would facilitate democratic success. The Thai elites have been obsessed with designing the institutions: from changing constitutions and electoral systems to creating new bodies to increase political participation. While there is no denying that efforts have been made to craft democratic institutions, the question remains: for whom? If institutions designed allow elites to ignore the voice of the people, why should we be surprised when people mobilize against democratic regimes?

The Thai case is one that has experienced both an anti-democratic movement and a collapse of democracy. The theory of institutional blockage should be able to "travel" and
explain similar anti-democratic mobilization in Egypt, Bangladesh and Honduras, for instance. It should also shed light on cases of anti-incumbent mobilization that led to democratic collapse. In Venezuela, there was a presence of civil society mobilization against democratically elected Chavez, which created groups for an eventual coup d'état in 2002. Encarnacio (2002) calls this a "civil society coup."

**FIGURE 20: CLASSIFICATION OF CASES BY REGIME AND TYPE OF OPPOSITION MOVEMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anti-Democratic Movement</th>
<th>Anti-Incumbent Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Collapse</td>
<td>Democratic Survival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali (2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh (2007)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Venezuela notes a short-lived democratic collapse

Figure 21 provides recent examples of Third Wave countries that have faced either a democratic breakdown or major mass political movement. A major extension of my future research should involve, first, the testing of my institutional blockage theory in countries that experienced both anti-democratic mobilization and democratic collapse, such as Egypt. Was the anti-Morsi movement in Egypt mobilized because of institutional blockage? If so, how?
Then I could test whether my theory would hold in cases where there is a presence of an anti-democratic movement but where democracy survives. The Philippines in 2001 witnessed a protest movement that called for extra-constitutional intervention, but its democracy ultimately survived. The anti-Estrada movement, or “EDSA 2,” had some anti-democratic elements as the armed forces withdrew support for Estrada to join the movement, which was calling for a presidential impeachment. Yet, their democratic system survived a major political crisis as Estrada eventually stepped down. Why?

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Theoretically, the dissertation is concerned with anti-democratic mobilization in developing democracies. Practically, this work is interested in the issue of democratic breakdown and survival in Third Wave democracies. What makes new democracies endure? Do measures aimed at strengthening young democracies have unintended consequences? If so, what? How do ordinary people play a role in the demise of the democratic system? To this end, I outline six key policy implications my dissertation makes.

First, the case of Thailand illustrates a sober reality: civil society is not always pro-democracy. Conventional wisdom seems to imply that civil society is a "good" thing and that the more of it, the better. What the PAD movement in Thailand has shown is the "dark side" of civil society. Civil society, under certain conditions, can be an illiberal force. As such we cannot subsume that civil society is inherently democratic or liberal. Indeed, authoritarian rule is not antithetical to civil society and in some countries, authoritarian regimes support an expansion of civic life. Moreover, civil society is neither apolitical nor static. Just like interest groups, civil society organizations have their vested interests in maximizing their goals. For this reason, they
can become political when their interests are threatened. Such interests can also change over time, making civil society organizations dynamic actors in the social and political arena.

Second, a healthy democracy gives space for opposition voices. Democratic governments ought to ensure that regardless of the kind of government formation, there is space for the opposition both in formal and informal spheres. Majoritarian governments are the most at risk of alienating opposition voices simply because their power is the most concentrated. Consequently, any attempt by a majority incumbent to further marginalize opposition voices can give rise to anti-democratic mobilization. To guard against this, opposition groups must be given appropriate space and channels to voice their concerns and grievances. There is merit to respecting opposition "rights" and giving them "voice" even if they are not able to affect any outcome. Respecting their space and the "right to oppose" and providing them with some form of power will result in a healthier and stronger democracy.

Third, an existence of powerful nondemocratic institutions makes democratic consolidation more difficult, but not impossible. These nondemocratic bodies are powerful because they provide alternatives to democratic institutions. In cases such as Thailand, where citizens accord more legitimacy to nondemocratic institutions as opposed to their democratic counterparts, consolidating democracy becomes especially hard. From a policy standpoint, one remedy to the problem of competing powerful institutions in a democratic polity is some form of power-sharing arrangement that sets out clear boundaries for each powerful entity in democracy in the short-term. Any attempt to undermine the power of one institution by the other will result in political conflict in the short-term (as witnessed in the Thai case). In the long-run, however, incremental steps can be taken to empower formal democratic institutions vis-à-vis
nondemocratic ones, as has been the history in many "classic" cases of gradual democratization like the UK.

Fourth, building a strong party system weakens elite cohesion in the \textit{short-term} and can cause political conflict. While generally there is a consensus among scholars of party politics that a well institutionalized party system strengthens democracy as a whole (Mainwaring & Scully: 1995; Randall & Svasand: 2002), the issue of short-term implications of party system institutionalization on the democratic polity has been largely neglected. What my dissertation shows is that measures to better institutionalize the party system can have unintended negative consequences to the democratic regime. In cases where political elites are not fully committed to democratic ideas, party system institutionalization can weaken elite cohesion. Weakly institutionalized party system, in other words, produces elite cohesion. Political elites view the "democratic rules of the game" as a way to access power and rents. When the party system is weak (i.e. it has many patronage-based parties), there is no incentive for elites to subvert the system. However, strengthening party system institutionalization can prompt some elites to abandon the democratic system if they feel they lose access to power and rents in the foreseeable future.

Fifth, the findings of my research suggest that low quality of democracy can lead to a complete regime breakdown. In the democratization and democratic consolidation literature, there is an implicit assumption that there is a linear progression between a minimal/procedural level of democracy to a well-established democracy. Once elections are institutionalized then new democracies can work towards becoming more "mature" by developing democratic qualities such as responsiveness and accountability, so that eventually these countries will become "high-quality" (Diamond & Morlino: 2004). Yet, the Thai case shows that \textit{institutionalized elections}
do not necessarily prevent regime breakdown. Countries with routinized and institutionalized elections can still face democratic collapse if their quality of democracy is poor. Consequently, we need to break free from the order of "items" democratizing states need to get right in order to become consolidated. O'Donnell (1996) is correct to point out the "illusion" about democratic consolidation as we prioritize formal rules of democracies before informal ones. Both ought to work hand-in-hand because a poor quality of democracy may be as much a threat to regime survival as not having routinized elections.

Finally, given a key role played by civil society in recent cases of anti-democratic mobilization, policymakers of Western nations ought to be wary of blindly supporting "civil society development" in developing democracies as a matter of foreign policy. Civil society should not be automatically considered as "apolitical," "democratic" or "liberal." The key question foreign donors should address should no longer be about building civil society, but rather, building "participatory" and "inclusive" civil society that will help a country's democratic development.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Matichon. (2004, August). *Chu wit 2 ma laeo khwang raboet sanghan nakkanmueang pan hun* [Chuwit no. 2 is here; threw a bomb; told politicians to tamper with stocks], p. 16.


Matichon. (2008, October 1). Somchai sang 1 romoto kum soso samak ting hono [Somchai told minister to control 10 MPs; Samak left the leader]. Accesed on September 8, 2012. Retrieved from News Center Database.


Mekosophon, R. (2010). *Bueng luek phruetsa pha 35 prachathippatai puexat muean ma klai tae pai mai thueng* [Behind the scenes and stories of May 35: Democracy in blood, it seems we have come so far but we are never getting there]. Bangkok: Tawan Ok Publishing.


Naewna. (2008, November 11). *Ratchanikut " rabu sathaban yu nai chuang antarai mi khabuankan min paiyanno chi " thaksin " yu nai ko sang khwam taekyaek won prachacon pokpong sathaban* [Royalists point out monarchy is in danger; anti-monarchy movement; Thaksin creates division; plea to citizens to protect the monarchy]. Accessed on February 9, 2012. Retrieved from News Center Database.


Thai Post. (2000, April 12). Phon chi ' chuan ' yup sapha prachachon rabu mai phochai thuk dan wang mai le ' chaturon ' la-ok! [Poll reveals house dissolution; people unhappy with government in every way; Wang Mai going down; Chaturon, quit!]. Retrieved from News Center Database.


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CHRONOLOGY OF THAILAND’S COUP HISTORY (1932-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Regime change from absolute to constitutional monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Coup in March (successful); Coup in October (failed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>First election to the lower house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Bicameralism introduced; New constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Coup; New constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Coup (failed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Coup (failed); New constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Coup in March (failed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coup in November (successful); New constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>New constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>New constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>New constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>New constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Coup; New constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Coup in March (failed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coup in October (successful); New constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>New constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electoral system: Bloc Vote with multiple constituencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Coup (failed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Coup (failed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Coup; New constitution (two times)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1995  Voting age limit lowered from 20 years to 18 years
1997  New constitution
      Electoral system changed to a mixed-member majoritarian system (MMM)
      with First Past the Post and party-list PR (5% threshold for list tier)
      Direct election to the Senate (single non-transferable vote)
      Constitutional Court established
      Election Commission established
      National Counter Corruption Commission established
      Compulsory voting law introduced
2006  Coup
2007  New constitution
      Senate half appointed, half elected
2011  Electoral rules changed
### APPENDIX B: MAJOR EPISODES OF MASS POLITICAL PROTESTS IN THAILAND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-government</td>
<td>Anti-corruption</td>
<td>Anti-corruption</td>
<td>UDD: Anti-coup, anti-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-corruption</td>
<td>Anti-government</td>
<td>Preferred PM</td>
<td>establishment, pro-Thaksin,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-military</td>
<td></td>
<td>nominated by the</td>
<td>pro-democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominance in politics</td>
<td></td>
<td>king</td>
<td>PAD: Anti-Thaksin, anti-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leftist insurgency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>democratic, anti-corruption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University students</td>
<td>University students,</td>
<td>University students,</td>
<td>UDD: Mixed, all over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farmer and labor</td>
<td>urban professionals,</td>
<td>urban professionals,</td>
<td>Thailand but N &amp; NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organizations</td>
<td>Bangkok residents</td>
<td>Bangkok residents</td>
<td>regions in particular, lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>middle class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime type</th>
<th>Authoritarian + Democratic</th>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>Authoritarian + Democratic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1976, Maj Gen Sangad Chaloryoo; PM</td>
<td>Suchinda Kraprayoon</td>
<td>Chulanont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kriangsak Chamanan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Demands               | New constitution            | PM resignation    | UDD: New election, justice |
|                       | Greater participation       | Military out of   | for their supporters, return of |
|                       | Reduced military role       | politics          | Thaksin                    |
|                       | in politics                 | New constitution  | PAD: Ousting PM Thaksin     |
|                       | Socialism                   |                   | and his regime; "new       |
|                       |                            |                   | politics", break from      |
|                       |                            |                   | democracy                  |

| Govt response         | Violent repression          | Violent repression | Coup                       |
|                       | Martial law                 |                   | Judicial coup              |
|                       | Right-wing counter movement |                   | Violent repression         |

| Outcomes              | Govt forced to resign       | Royal intervention | Royalist alliance           |
|                       | (1973)                     | PM resigned        | Coup 2006                   |
|                       | Royal intervention (1973)   | Election           | Party dissolution           |
|                       | Election (1975)             |                   | Banning of political actors |
|                       | Coup (1976)                 |                   | Protracted crisis           |
|                       | Right-wing military        |                   | House dissolution           |
|                       | government                 |                   | Elections                   |


APPENDIX C: NEWSPAPERS SOURCES FOR THE PROTEST DATABASE

1. Matichon
2. Thai Rath
3. Daily News
4. Bangkok Post
5. ASTV
6. Manager
7. Khao Sod
8. Thai Post
9. The Nation
10. Khom Chat Luek
11. Krung Thep Thurakij
12. Siam Rath
13. Naewna
14. Post Today
APPENDIX D: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Note: Names in quotes are nick names or pseudonyms

1. Orn-anong Kanjanachusak, MP, Democrat Party
   Democrat Party branch office, central Bangkok, July 10, 2011

2. Chaipan Prapasawat, PAD leader
   PAD rally, Bangkok, June 24, 2012

3. Opas Pasbutch, Red Shirt community leader
   Baan 111 Foundation (former Thai Rak Thai headquarters), Bangkok, June 23, 2012

4. Dr. Sant Hatharath, leader of the Black May uprising
   Duang Prateep Foundation, Bangkok, June 8, 2011

5. Manit Chitchanklab, Red Shirt lawyer
   Red Shirt rally, Bangkok, July 20, 2011

6. Wirat Pansri, Prison Head Officer
   Klong Prem Prison (for political prisoners), Bangkok, July 8, 2011

7. Maruth Bunnag, Veteran politician and Democrat Party advisor
   Bunnang Law Office, Bangkok, July 19, 2011

8. Suchada, Red Shirt protester
   Red Shirt rally, Bangkok, July 10, 2011

   Peau Thai Party headquarter, Bangkok, July 2, 2011

10. "Jo", Black May uprising student leader and Democrat Party assistant
    Baan Ratchakru, Bangkok, July 13, 2011

11. Thakorn Wanthawee, Red Shirt community radio host
    Baan 111 Foundation (former Thak Rak Thai headquarters), Bangkok, July 10, 2011

12. Somsak Kosaisuk, PAD leader and New Politics Party leader
    New Politics Party headquarters, Bangkok, July 11, 2011

    Democrat Party branch office, central Bangkok, July 14, 2011

    Democrat Party branch office, central Bangkok, July 14, 2011
15. Witthaya Kaewparadai, MP, Democrat Party  
Democrat Party headquarters, Bangkok, July 12, 2011

16. Poj Adireksarn, Vice President, Baan 11 Foundation  
Baan 111 Foundation (former Thai Rak Thai headquarters), Bangkok, July 10, 2011

17. Kraisak Choonhavan, MP, Democrat Party  
Baan Ratchakru, Bangkok, July 19, 2011

18. "Peon," Economic advisor to Finance Minister Somkid Jatusripitak (Thai Rak Thai)  
Board of Investment, Bangkok, May 28, 2010

19. "Anonymous," Advisor to Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (Thai Rak Thai, 2nd term)  
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, June 10, 2010

20. "Pilai," PAD supporter and local PAD leader  
Resident, Bangkok, June 6, 2009

21. "Dam," PAD supporter  
PAD rally, Bangkok, May 30, 2011

22. "Pas," PAD community leader  
Resident, Bangkok, June 7, 2009

23. Thamrong Saengsuriyachan, Palang Tham Party MP and Santi Asoke key figure  
Santi Asoke headquarters, Bangkok, July 10, 2011

24. Kwanchai Praipanna, Red Shirt community leader and Head of We Love Udon Club  
We Love Udon Club, Udon Thani, June 11, 2011

25. "Kamol," Head of People's Channel Newspapers (Red Shirt media)  
Imperial Ladprao, Bangkok, July 9, 2011

26. Taxi driver, Red Shirt supporter and member of the Red Shirt Taxi Group  
Bangkok, July 9, 2011

27. Yolsiri Damchua, Secretary of Dharma Forces (Santi Asoke)  
PAD rally, Bangkok, June 21, 2011

PAD rally, Bangkok, June 21, 2011

29. Poomtham Wetchachai, Peau Thai Party advisor (former MP during Thaksin government)  
Baan 111 Foundation (former Thai Rak Thai headquarters), Bangkok, July 4, 2011
30. Banyat Banthatthan, MP, Democrat Party
Democrat Party headquarters, Bangkok, July 12, 2011

31. Trairong Suwannakiri, Deputy Prime Minister to Abhisit Vejjajiva (Democrat Party)
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, July 20, 2011

32. Jaras Suwannamala, Academic and PAD supporter
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, June 28, 2011

33. "Pa," Red Shirt community leader
Imperial Ladprao, Bangkok, June 8, 2011

34. "Gun," Red Sunday Group
Imperial Ladprao, Bangkok, June 6, 2011

35. "M," Red Sunday Group
Imperial Ladprao, Bangkok, June 6, 2011

36. Sombat Boon-ngam Anong, Red Sunday Group leader
Red Sunday Group headquarters, Bangkok, June 28, 2011

37. "Chareon," Leader of the Thai Patriot Networks (PAD spin-off)
Udon Thani, June 11, 2011

38. Prateep Unsongtham, Founder, Duang Prateep Foundation and leader of the Black May uprising
Duang Prateep Foundation headquarters, Bangkok, July 2, 2011

Kwam Wang Mai Party headquarters, Bangkok, July 8, 2011

Kwam Wang Mai Party headquarters, Bangkok, July 8, 2011

Australian National University, Canberra, May 29, 2012

42. Samdin, Santi Asoke leader and Head of the Heaven & Earth Party (Chamlong Srimaung's right hand man)
Santi Asoke headquarters, Bangkok, June 24, 2011

43. Chaiwat Sinsuwong, PAD leader and Palang Tham Party MP
PAD rally, Bangkok, June 12, 2011

44. Sermsuk Kasiditpradit, Senior Editor, Thai PBS
Thai PBS headquarters, Bangkok, May 28, 2011
45. Shawn Crespin, Editor of Asia Times
Ambassador Hotel, Bangkok, May 25, 2011

46. Nelson Rand, Journalist, France 24
Emporium, Bangkok, May 24, 2011

47. Noppadon Kannika, Director, ABAC Poll
ABAC Poll headquarters, Bangkok, May 24, 2011

48. Catteleya, Freeland photographer
Emporium, Bangkok, May 25, 2011

49. Deunden Nikomborirak, Economist, Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI)
TDRI head office, Bangkok, May 25, 2011

50. Ackadej Chaiperm, academic, Chulalongkorn University
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, May 27, 2011

51. Pasuk Phongpaichit, academic, Chulalongkorn University
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, May 27, 2011

52. Chulapan Amornwiwat, MP, Peua Thai Party
Chiangmai, May 20, 2011

53. Anupan Dherakupt, Founder, Dherakupt International Law
Dherakupt head office, Bangkok, May 26, 2011

54. Sean Boonpracong, Red Shirt foreign correspondent
Nasa Vegas Hotel, Bangkok, May 26, 2011

55. Pitch Pongsawat, academic, Chulalongkorn University
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, June 2, 2011

56. Viengrat Netipho, academic, Chulalongkorn University
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, June 2, 2011

57. Kitti Prasertsuk, academic, Thammasat University
Thammasat University, Bangkok, May 20, 2011

58. Kanok Wongtra-ngan, Advisor to Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and Democrat Party MP
Democrat Party headquarters, Bangkok, July 12, 2011

59. "Napas," Red Siam leader
Baan 111 Foundation (former Thai Rak Thai headquarters), Bangkok, July 4, 2011
60. "Panat," Red Shirt community leader
Baan 111 Foundation (former Thai Rak Thai headquarters), Bangkok, July 4, 2011

61. Chachawal Chatsuthichai, PAD leader and ASTV host (Sonthi Limthongkul's right hand man)
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, July 28, 2011

Pea Thai headquarters, July 21, 2011

63. "To," Red Shirt community leader
Baan 111 Foundation (former Thai Rak Thai headquarters), Bangkok, July 4, 2011

64. "Wahaema," Democrat Party local leader, Narathiwas province
(phone interview), July 27, 2011

65. Jirapa Limplertsathian, Red Shirt supporter
Red Shirt rally, Bangkok, July 4, 2011

66. Suchat Thadathamronwej, MP, Peua Thai Party
Peua Thai Party headquarter, July 8, 2011

67. Jatuporn Prompan, Red Shirt leader and Peua Thai Party MP
Klong Prem Prison, Bangkok, July 8, 2011

68. "Anonymous," UDD Election Watch Center (Red Shirt)
Imperial Ladprao, Bangkok, June 29, 2011

69. Thida Thawornseth, UDD Acting Leader (Red Shirt)
(phone interview), Bangkok, June 21, 2011

70. Chana Phasukskul, ASTV producer, PAD organizer
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, December 18, 2012

71. Terdpoom Jaidee, PAD leader and Kwam Wang Mai Party MP
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, December 19, 2012

72. Monthol Pudphong, PAD community leader
(phone interview), Bangkok, December 4, 2012

73. "Anonymous," PAD supporter
PAD rally, Bangkok, July 29, 2011

74. Somkiat Pongpaibul, PAD leader
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, Bangkok, December 19, 2012
75. "Hia Mung," PAD financier
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, Bangkok, December 19, 2012

76. Yuthiyong Limlertwethi, ASTV host and PAD leader
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, Bangkok, December 19, 2012

77. "Jethjan," ASTV producer
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, Bangkok, December 19, 2012

78. Santithan, Cahir of the Yam Fao Pandin Foundation
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, Bangkok. December 18, 2012

79. Uchane Chiansaeng, academic, Thammasat University
Siam Square, Bangkok, December 24, 2012

80. Bamrung Kayotha, Labor leader
(phone interview), Kalasin province, January 9, 2013

81. PantheP Pongpuapan, PAD leader
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, Bangkok, January 11, 2013

82. Nipol Naksompob, ASTV Cable Service Director
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, Bangkok, January 10, 2013

83. Warit Limthongkul, ASTV manager, PAD organizer
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, Bangkok, January 9, 2013

84. Suriyasai Katasila, PAD leader
Payathai, Bangkok, January 10, 2013

85. Nitithorn Lamleou, PAD lawyer
Payathai, Bangkok, January 10, 2013

86. PAD guards (5 members)
Payathai, Bangkok, January 10, 2013

87. Pipob Thongchai, PAD leader and founder of Foundation for Children
Foundation for Children, Nakorn Pathom, January 12, 2013

88. Ajarn Suwat, ASTV host
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, Bangkok, January 11, 2013

89. Nipon Naksompob, President of the Association of Cable TV (Thailand)
Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, Bangkok, January 11, 2013
90. Amorn Amornraksasat, PAD leader
  Baan Pra Athit, PAD headquarters, Bangkok, January 12, 2013

91. Worawuth, PAD leader of Nakorn Sri Thammarat province
  (phone interview), January 8, 2013

92. "Kan," PAD leader of Surat Thani province
  (phone interview), January 8, 2013

93. Arichai, PAD leader of Prajuab Kiri Khan province
  PAD rally, Bangkok, June 12, 2011

94. "Moo," PAD leader of Phuket province
  (phone interview), January 9, 2013

95. Umaporn, PAD leader of Phan-nga province
  (phone interview), January 9, 2013

96. Sahas, PAD leader of Saraburi province
  (phone interview), January 9, 2013

97. "Ple," PAD leader of Rayong province
  (phone interview), January 12, 2013

98. "Jeh Hong," PAD leader of Chumporn province
  (phone interview), January 12, 2013

99. "Pa," PAD leader of Trang province
  (phone interview), January 13, 2013

100. "O," PAD leader of Samutsakorn province
  (phone interview), January 13, 2013

101. Sunthorn, PAD leader of Kampangpetch province
  (phone interview), January 14, 2013

102. "Pin," PAD leader of Samut Prakan province
  (phone interview), January 14, 2013

103. Barami Chairath, Assembly of the Poor advisor
  Sueb Naka Sathian Foundation, Bangkok, December 27, 2013