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Counter-movements in democratic transition: Thai right-wing movements after the 1973 popular uprising

Prajak Kongkirati

Abstract
After 1973, the Thai student movement was limited and weakened by several right-wing movements that collectively operated as counter-movements. This paper explores the factors and processes that account for the emergence and success of these counter-movements. The impact of the student movement, the changing political rules, and the incapacity of the Thai elite to employ old tactics to crush the student movement created critical conditions for a counter-movement to mobilize. Such conditions, however, cannot guarantee success. The success of the right-wing movements resulted from three factors: 1) effective organization and framing; 2) fragmentation of authority; and 3) state inaction. This Thai case suggests, in contrast to existing arguments in democratization literature, that it was not the radicalization of the progressive movements alone that was responsible for the failure of democracy but the complex if manipulated interaction between them, right-wing movements, and the state.

Introduction
After 6 October 1976, our society is getting back on track, no protests day and night. We have been successful although some might condemn us for using excessive violence. We have to admit it. (Somsak Kwanmongkol)³

I don’t think 6 October 1976 was violent. A handful of people died, but it was over quickly, not even a day, only from 6 to 7 am. … It depended how people might think about this, but to me, I’m proud that we have saved Thailand’s democracy. (Maj Gen Sudsai Thephassadin)³

Some scholars who have studied Thai social movements have concluded that social movements in Thailand were a new political

phenomenon of the mid 1990s which represented “some of the first sustained examples of mass social action.” I argue in this paper that, historically, social movements had emerged and had taken root in Thai society long before that. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, the period in which social movements became a widespread phenomenon in Western societies, Thai politics was also changing tremendously in many aspects. Both left and right-wing social movements played crucial roles in this change.

In early October 1973, the National Student Centre of Thailand (NSCT) organized protests and mobilized support to demand a constitution and the resignation of the then military government. From a modest beginning, the protests rapidly evolved into a large demonstration that snowballed into an unprecedented popular uprising. Eventually, the popular uprising was able to overthrow the military dictatorship that had ruled the country for sixteen years. This historic event was known as the 14 October 1973 popular uprising.

The fall of the military regime paved the way for a civilian parliamentary democracy. After political repression was ended, social grievances were expressed and political forces were unleashed. New political opportunities benefited the progressive social movement. Students, peasants, and workers created their own movements and collaborated with each other in progressive networks. However, opportunities for one social movement can simultaneously be a threat against other movements. This was the case in Thailand, as the radical activities of student movements and their leftist allies began to threaten traditional beliefs, as well as the economic interests and political power of many social groups. By mid 1975, the right had begun to create organizations to counter the left-wing coalition. A variety of right-wing movements emerged, including the Krathing Daeng (Red Gours), Nawaphon (Ninth Power), and Luk Sua Chaoban (Village Scouts). Within only two years, these right-wing organizations together recruited nearly two million people. A mobilization of this magnitude on the right was unprecedented in Thai politics. By early 1976, these movements gained greater popular support and political strength than the left-wing coalition. They were able to paralyze the student movement and its leftist allies. The right-wing movements were successful.
Academic discussions regarding this period have focused mainly on the political institutions and the left-wing movements. There are very few studies that pay attention to the right-wing movement. Moreover, this movement has not been studied within a framework of social movement theories. In this paper, I want to explain the emergence and success of the right-wing movements in Thailand from 1973 to 1976 utilizing social movement approaches.

**Theoretical framework**

I will examine Thai right-wing movements by posing two main questions: 1) how did they emerge? 2) and how did they obtain popular support and political strength over the leftist movements?

According to existing literature, there are three conditions that promote the rise of counter-movements: first, a social movement shows signs of success; second, the interests of some people are threatened by the movement’s goals; and third, political allies opposing the social movement are available to aid in oppositional mobilization. But the Thai case suggests that these three conditions are only necessary but not sufficient conditions for the rise of right-wing counter-movements. I disagree with Meyer and Staggenborg’s proposition that: “When a movement succeeds in posing a real threat to a powerful interest, some elites may conclude that the social movement form is a highly effective political tool and so they try to foster a counter-movement.” My argument is that under these conditions, the opposition against a social movement can use other methods to suppress, disrupt, block, or mitigate the effects of the social movement. They do not necessarily have to adopt the social movement’s form of popular mobilization. Although movements can have a “demonstration effect” for counter-movements, demonstrating that collective action can affect (or resist) change in particular aspects of society, it is not strictly necessary for those who oppose the movement to adopt the organizational form of a social movement. Counter-mobilization could manifest itself in many forms such as: establishing a private institution, creating a government organization, or even instigating a military coup. The clearest examples are cases in which totalitarian states use terror campaigns to devastate the
movement. More interestingly, some modern democratic states, such as the United States, also engage in repressive strategies, though more subtly through attempts to disrupt the organizational structure of protest groups.\textsuperscript{13} The important questions at this point are: in some cases, why does the opposition use other repressive means? And under what conditions do opposition movements adopt the social movement form as a way to mount a successful counter-movement?

In addition to the success of the social movement, I would argue that the Thai right-wing counter-movements' successful mobilization depended on: 1) the changing rules of governance under a democratic regime; and 2) the inability of elites to use other means to suppress the student movement.

My explanation is that an oppositional force adopted the collective action form of a counter-movement under conditions constrained by political opportunity. I suggest that under the flourishing democratic environment after October 1973, the Thai elite, particularly the military, could not employ the old method of a military coup to thwart the leftist movements. Thus, the formation of right-wing movements was the appropriate option. The right-wing movements could not have emerged unless these additional factors were working in conjunction.

In explaining the success of the right-wing counter-movement, I use the framing process approach, resource mobilization approach and the interaction model between movement, counter-movement, and the state. I found three main factors that explain the success of the rightist movements: 1) effective organization and framing; 2) fragmentation of authority; and 3) state inaction.

The Thai right-wing movements succeeded by borrowing the organizational structure of their opponents. Nawaphon and the Village Scouts employed an organizational cell structure parallel to that of the leftists. The Red Gours emulated the organizational model of the progressive student movement. By doing this, they successfully increased their membership, obtained abundant resources, and competed with the left-wing movements in the same space. More importantly, as I will demonstrate below, they succeeded in working together as a loose network similar to the left-wing movement.
According to the framing processes approach, framing is one of the crucial factors of movement mobilization and success. According to David Snow's definition, framing is the conscious strategic effort by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action. We can use the framing process approach to understand the complex interaction between movement and counter-movement. When the demands of a social movement seem to symbolize a set of values and behaviors, these demands are likely to be threatening for a broad range of constituencies who will support the counter-movement for different reasons. In addition, "the likelihood that opposition to a movement will take the form of a sustained counter-movement is directly related to the opposition's ability to portray the conflict as one that entails larger value cleavages in society." In contrast, if counter-movements framed their issues in narrow economic terms, they would face more difficulties in initiating and sustaining grassroots activity. I will demonstrate how the Thai right-wing movements succeeded in framing their issues in broad terms which resonated with Thai traditional values and beliefs.

Fragmentation of authority is another crucial factor in the success of counter-movements. Some scholars suggest that "divided governmental authority" is a good opportunity for counter-movements to mobilize their resources. Generally however, theorists tend to focus on federal states as a model of divided governmental authority. Their argument is perfectly understandable given that, in a federal state, political authority is divided between different levels of government—the local and central governments. I argue here that fragmentation of state power can apply also to a unitary state undergoing a transitional period. According to democratization theorists, during transitional periods, it is almost impossible to predict which groups, sectors, and institutions will take what role or support what alternatives. It is a period of high indeterminacy. Actors are likely to experience tremendous changes as they try to respond to the rapidly changing contexts presented to them by liberalization and democratization. Generally, during crucial moments when choices on transition are made, most actors are likely to be divided and hesitant about their
interests and ideals and, hence, incapable of coherent collective
democratic transition. Most institutions, particularly the army and
the national security organization, were internally divided.
Therefore, they provided the opportunity for counter-movements to
obtain resources and secure political protection from factions of Thai
authority. This was a crucial factor which helped right-wing movements
obtain popular support and political strength over the leftist movements.

State inaction is the last significant factor in my explanation.

According to Meyer and Staggenborg, the stance of the government
is a critical influence on movement strategies and tactics: “It is not
just positions on policy matter that are important, but also
government response to various protest tactics. By imposing heavy
fines or other harsh penalties on civil disobedience, authorities may
deter use of that tactic. Conversely, tolerating protest, authorities
may effectively encourage certain tactics, such as mass
demonstration.” Similarly, Joseph Luders point out that “states
shape counter-movements and counter-movements affect the
movement to which they are opposed. By opting to suppress,
tolerate, or encourage counter-movement mobilization, states can
decisively affect the intensity of counter-movement activity directed
against the initial movement.”

State action can be varied. State
punishment, arrest, or conviction can limit the prospect of the
counter-movement intensifying the level of violence.

Leigh Payne suggests that there are various strategies which democratic
governments can employ to reduce the power of an “uncivil
movement.” Governments may inform, investigate, or prosecute
militants, and/or negotiate with pragmatists. She correctly
concludes that “the militant hard core exists in part because the
costs of violent political action are relatively low compared with its
thrill.” Thus, Payne prescribes that, as the cost of violence
increases, its appeal should decline. The absence of law enforcement
by the Thai state during that time significantly reduced the cost of
violent tactics. Right-wing movements engaged in various kinds of
violent actions against the progressive movement with little fear of
legal punishment. By using violent tactics to intimidate and suppress
the student movement and its allies continuously for two years, right-
wing movements finally succeeded in weakening the left.
The emergence of right-wing counter-movements

In order to understand the emergence of Thai right-wing counter-movements, I will start by describing the three necessary conditions: 1) the student movements were successful; 2) the interests of the Thai elites and middle class were threatened by the student movement’s goals; and 3) political entities were available to aid the right-wing mobilization. After that, I will explain two additional sufficient factors mentioned in my theoretical section.

Success, threats, and allies

The popular uprising led by the student movement created the conditions for the collapse of the long-standing American-backed military regime of Sarit Thanarat and his lieutenants Thanom Kittikajon and Praphat Jarusathien. The 1973 event ushered in an extraordinary period of transition to civilian democracy in Thai politics. Under the interim regime (October 1973 to February 1975) of prime minister Sanya Thammasak, a royalist judge, the country witnessed greater political participation than in any other period before or since. During this period, press censorship virtually disappeared to the delight of editors, newsmen, and readers; genuine trade unions were rapidly formed, pressing a host of demands through strikes and marches; peasant organizations were created to urge land reforms; and even high-school children demanded the expulsion of hated principals. 26

It was unsurprising that, after the October 1973 uprising, student leaders became heroes for many Thais. People, especially the poor and marginalized, sought help from the student movement on a diverse range of problems. They viewed the student movement as a channel to articulate their interests. 27 These popular demands, combined with the political commitment of the student movement itself, involved the student movement in contentious politics.

After October 1973, the Thai student movement gradually turned radical. This process happened as a result of two parallel factors. The first factor was the influx of Marxist ideas from China and the West and the revival of Thai radical ideas from the past. Prior to October 1973, Marxist ideas were still marginal in the student movement, which was dominated by liberal thinking. After
the sudden disappearance of dictatorial control in October 1973, the barriers to political education and experimentation were removed. Intellectuals imported radical ideas from various sources: Maoism from China, the New Left from the US and Europe, and Marxist-Leninist ideology from the former Soviet Union. They translated and published works that once had been banned, including classic Marxist texts. In addition, Thai radical works from the late 1940s and 1950s were unearthed and republished. This literature provided enthusiastic students with direct access to Marxist ideas and terminology, which in turn equipped them with new tools to interpret political and socio-economic problems in the past and present. They interpreted the whole course of Thai history in terms of fundamental conflicts between oppressive rulers and the struggling ruled. Consequently, students discussed social problems in sophisticated terms of the commercialization of agriculture, foreign penetration and domination, labor exploitation, and so forth. By thinking in these terms, they not only challenged but rejected the Thai conservative ideology that emphasized the historical centrality and nationalist legitimacy of the army and monarchy.

The second factor in the radicalization of the movement was underground publications from the maquis and students’ first-hand experiences in rural areas. Through these experiences, they “discovered” the state-neglected, resource-depleted, and impoverished countryside. Shortly after the new democratic regime began, the student movement realized how fragile that fledgling democracy was. In their view, due to the long period under dictatorship, Thai people had little experience with democratic norms, practices, and institutions. The student movement saw this as a possible obstacle to the sustainability of the democratic regime. They then took on the task of promoting democratic ideas and values as one of the most important goals of the movement. They proposed the idea to the new civilian government. In 1974, the Sanya government gave the State University Bureau 15 million baht ($750,000) to dispatch students to villages throughout the country to “propagate democracy,” which entailed educating peasants on their rights and duties in a democratic system. Unexpectedly, this project led the students to realize there were more serious problems
than a lack of democracy in the countryside. As a top student leader at that time, Seksan Prasertkul, reflected:

"After October 14, the "democracy propagation" project in rural areas pulled us to the left inadvertently. "Democracy" was a luxury for poor people. They had been overwhelmed by injustice and unfairness. They had been bullied and ill-treated by authorities."

From this point on, the student movement realized that the authoritarian regime had left Thai society not only with an unpleasant political legacy but also with socio-economic malaise. The "unbalanced growth" development strategy of the military dictatorship had created deep structural disparities between the increasingly prosperous city and the impoverished countryside; between the better serviced central region and the neglected rest of the country; and between the developed modern industry and service sectors of the economy on one side and the withering rural agricultural sector on the other. The student movement gradually became involved in solving the villagers' problems of socio-economic injustice. As student leader Seksan explained:

"When we knew of these problems, we reported them back to the government. We attempted to cooperate with the government in finding a solution, though we had to protest against the government sometimes. Through the repeated activities, we became overwhelmed by these problems; we did not have time to think about democracy anymore. The forms of protest or the act of presenting these problems [to the government] in themselves turned us into leftists inadvertently. By talking about the minimum wage or land reform, we were labeled by the ruling groups as leftists."

The radicalization of the student movement was unavoidable due to the confluence of the two key factors discussed above. The student movement maintained pressure on the government to sustain constitutional democracy. Moreover, the students broadened the agenda to include issues of social and economic justice. They campaigned for ending the American use of Thailand as a military base for the Vietnam War. They helped organize labor strikes, formed a new coordinating body of the labor
movement, and pressured the government for labor reforms. The years 1973 and 1974 witnessed 501 and 357 strikes respectively, more than in the entire previous decade. These strikes dealt mostly with improving wages and working conditions. During this time, street protests were almost daily events in the Thai political scene. Strikes proved successful, and many proposals from the labor movement met with a positive response from the civilian government. In 1974, the government raised the minimum wage and passed a new labor law which legalized labor unions and consequently created a machinery for settling disputes.

Peasants also started to mobilize. In early 1974 peasants in the northern region demanded higher paddy prices, controls on rents, and allocation of land to the landless. In June 1974, two thousand peasants traveled to Bangkok to stage a rally. Later that same year, they founded the Farmers Federation of Thailand (FFT), which grew rapidly with branches in forty-one provinces and membership of nearly 1.5 million. FFT leaders traveled to villages around the country educating peasants about their rights. The student movement helped FFT frame issues and negotiate with government officials. Again, the civilian government reacted positively to the FFT demands by establishing a price support scheme and introducing the Rent Control Act. In May 1975, students, workers, and peasants announced a "tripartite alliance" to fight for social and economic justice. Given this new agenda, the struggle went beyond political rights.

The emergence and existence of a "tripartite alliance" began to threaten the traditional beliefs, economic interests, and political power of many social groups. Given its radical goal of change, it was inevitable that this alliance would challenge the power of the old ruling group and the economic interests of elites. The ruling cliques of generals, business leaders, rural landlords, bureaucrats, and royalists strongly felt that their long enjoyed privileges and interests were threatened by this tripartite alliance. Some factions in the army were increasingly alarmed by radical ideas that challenged the military's concept of a controlled orderly society and their national security policy. The student movement's campaign for the withdrawal of US troops from Thailand was especially threatening. Under dictatorship, government bureaucrats were accustomed to
exercising arbitrary authority and enjoyed virtual immunity from criticism. Now, however, they found themselves being criticized and questioned by the poor and the disadvantaged. Business entrepreneurs could no longer enjoy the extremely cheap labor that the military dictatorship had guaranteed in the previous decades. Now, they had to negotiate with labor unions supported by the student movement. Landlords felt frustrated by the FFT's demand for land reform. From their perspective, the civilian government was favoring students, peasants, and labor unions. They believed this came about because parliamentary democracy was too "weak" and yielding to left-wing forces. Therefore, they abandoned institutional political practices and sought extra-parliamentary tactics to suppress the student, peasant, and labor movements.

The middle class was also frustrated and dissatisfied with the increasingly radical activities of the student movement. It should be noted that the middle class was at that time a new stratum in the structure of Thai society as a result of the tremendous changes since the early 1960s. The middle class emerged as a result of the economic development plans which pursued a strategy of "unbalanced growth." These plans and the economic boom of the 1960s, when American and Japanese capital poured into the country on an unprecedented scale, greatly benefited the middle class. Initially the middle class supported the student movement in the student-led mass demonstration of October 1973, and many of them even enthusiastically participated because of their dissatisfaction with the corruption, incompetence, and absolute power of the military regime. However, their support for the student movement was neither permanent nor unconditional. After October 1973, the middle class became paranoid and horrified by the radicalization of the student movement, the prevalence of labor strikes, and peasants' mobilization. They feared that the daily protests of left-wing movements would frighten away foreign investors, and consequently bring the long economic boom to an end. With little experience in democratic politics and an insecure political mentality, the middle class provided the social base for right-wing movements. Thus, right-wing movements emerged from the convergence of interests and ideas between Thai elites and the middle class.
Democratic rule and the weakness of the military

Circumstances after October 1973 created an environment ripe for the emergence of a counter-movement. Three conditions that promote the rise of counter-movements were present at that time: leftist social movements showed signs of success; the interests of some of the population were threatened by the movement’s goals; and middle class and elite political allies were available to aid oppositional mobilization against the leftist movements.

The student movement and its allies had much success in pressing for change in government policies on various issues. In March 1975, the newly elected liberal government of prime minister Kukrit Pramoj announced several radical policies to the House: getting the US troops out of Thailand within twelve months, abolishing the anti-communist law, raising the minimum wage, building public housing, providing free bussing for the poor, and creating a special fund for village development. At the same time, the interests of the elite and middle class were threatened by the tremendous success of the student, peasant, and labor movements. They were horrified by the student movement’s radical goal of transforming Thai society into one based on equity and social justice. This situation duly led the elite and middle class to become political allies in the rightist counter-movement. However, as I argued above, these three conditions are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the rise of right-wing counter-movements. Here, I will suggest that we have to add two sufficient factors into the model: changing political rules, and the inability of the opposition against the leftist movements to employ other means.

As I have described above, the success of the student movement and its radicalization after 1973 motivated conservative elements and the elites to counter-mobilize. Thai politics was turned upside down by the 1973 popular uprising; it changed from elite politics to mass politics. The democratic regime created new rules of the game and new political legitimacy. In late 1973, the National Convention elected 299 members of the National Assembly to draft a new constitution. The National Assembly was comprised mainly of liberal and conservative civilian bureaucrats, businessmen, and university professors. The new constitution was finally promulgated on 7 October 1974. It was the most
progressive constitution of Thailand since the 1932 revolution. There were many sections that guaranteed civil rights and liberties, above all the rights to organize, demonstrate, and strike. More significantly, this new constitution was designed to exclude the military from the political process, strengthen the power of the legislature, and bring the widest spectrum of society into the parliament through free and fair elections.\textsuperscript{44}

The new constitution and flourishing political freedom after 1973 created a political opportunity for poor people who had been suppressed for years under the authoritarian regime. A large number of people formed movements and were involved in protests, strikes, and demonstrations. These post-1973 movements were quite different from the party-based political opposition military leaders had faced in earlier decades. These movements had the capacity to become an effective mass force to block or overturn a military coup. Most importantly, the army became increasingly unpopular after the 1973 uprising. Therefore, old techniques of military repression hardly seemed appropriate to confront the new potent form of popular movements. Military repression would have been highly illegitimate in the new context. Moreover, and perhaps more significantly, the Thai army was internally disorganized after the fall of the military absolutist regime of Thanom-Praphat.\textsuperscript{45} It was divided into many factions with no leaders charismatic enough to control these conflicting cliques. General Krit Sivara, who headed the army after 1973, was a moderate soldier who wanted to pursue a political career after his retirement in 1976. He was building his political links with the Democrat party. All in all, internal fragmentation seriously weakened the army's ability to stage a coup.

The military and rightist elites had to find a new way to suppress and thwart the student movement in the post-authoritarian situation. Eventually, they discovered that it was advantageous to them to work within the democratic rules set by the new constitution. The new constitution and flourishing political freedom provided an opportunity for people of all ideologies, including the right, to mobilize and utilize civil disobedience. However, as Leigh Payne argues in her study on uncivil movements in Latin America, the rise of right-wing movements is usually facilitated by transitional situations.
Transitions are a conducive condition rather than an explanation for the emergence of right-wing movements. This explanation for their emergence lies in the interaction between the movement's agency and the conditional opportunities. What is crucial is "the capacity of movements to exploit political and cultural contexts" of transitional periods to their advantage. In the Thai case, the rightist groups accepted and participated in the new democratic system. They mimicked the existing social movements by mobilizing around conservative national identity and using unconventional political action. They claimed to represent a constituency that was excluded from mainstream politics. They launched a movement mobilized around important political issues and employed unconventional political tactics.

The Thai elite exploited the democratic rule and context of mass politics in order to eliminate the threatening left-wing movements. Under these circumstances, the right-wing mass mobilized in the form of a counter-movement.

To summarize, the emergence of a right-wing counter-movement during 1973–1976 is a result of the confluence of three factors that occurred in the post-authoritarian period: the success of the student movement; the environment of democratic rule and mass mobilization that facilitated the right wing's populist tactics; and the inability of the Thai elite, particularly the military, to employ a military coup to thwart the leftist movement.

We have now explored the reason why a social-mobilization style of politics was employed by rightists to compete against the coalition of peasants, labors, and students. Another related issue that merits close examination is the timing of the right-wing emergence. There is historical evidence which clearly shows that the rightists had begun to form organizations and mobilize people for the purpose of countering the student movement by mid 1975. Around this time, many rightist organizations appeared simultaneously. Why did they emerge in mid 1975? In order to answer the question of timing, the political opportunity structure approach is helpful. Either domestic or external political opportunities can contribute to the birth of movements and counter-movements. Significantly, there were two critical events that took place at almost the same time in mid 1975. One was
domestic, the other was external and related to international affairs in neighboring countries. First, in May 1975 students, workers, and peasants announced the formation of a “tripartite alliance” to fight for social and economic justice. This announcement was widely publicized by the media. Second, one month prior to this coalition’s emergence, all three Indochinese neighbors of Thailand (Lao, Cambodia, and Vietnam) were effectively conquered by communist forces. The communist victory in these neighboring countries shocked the Thai elite and the middle class. Newspapers carried pictures of US troops fleeing as communist youths armed with AK-47s took over the cities of Saigon and Phnom Penh. As a result, middle class and elites feared a potential alliance among the radical student-peasant-labor movements, the Thai communist insurgency in the countryside, and the newly established communist regimes in neighboring countries. They feared that Thailand would follow the fate of her Indochinese neighbors. This fear was intensified in March 1975 when the Kukrit government announced to the House that it would push US troops out within twelve months and abolish the anti-communist law.

These critical events in mid 1975 altered the environment in which both the student movements and the right-wing movements operated. The new political opportunity was beneficial to the right-wing movements’ framing and mobilization. They were convinced that the students’ ideology and activities were extremely dangerous, and that the existence of a progressive coalition of peasants, workers, and students might become a solid base for communist forces. The rightists decided to eliminate the left-wing movement before the left could achieve more radical objectives. This case study demonstrates that external political events can provide opportunities not just for social movements opposing the state, but also for counter-movements against such social movements. Moreover, I found that the level of mobilization and the tactics of the counter-movement varied with the external political situation.

The success of right-wing counter-movements

In this section I will explain the success of the right-wing movements in post-1973 Thailand by exploring the organization,
tactics, and framing processes of the three most prominent right-wing groups which played a vital role in the suppression of the coalition of peasants, labors, and students. I will also analyze the role of the state in their success.

Organization, tactics, framings, and the role of the Thai state

By mid 1975, many right-wing groups had formed. Among them, Krathing Daeng (Red Gours), Nawaphon (ninth power), and the Luk Sua Chaoban (Village Scouts) were the best organized and most powerful. Krathing Daeng and Nawaphon emerged simultaneously in mid 1975. The Village Scouts had been founded in 1971, initially for reasons other than suppression of the student movement, but after 1975 shifted its activity towards attacking the student movement. All three groups were supported by leading members of the military and police as well as prominent businessmen. While Nawaphon and Krathing Daeng did not receive open and official support from state agencies, the Village Scouts movement was created by and received official support from the Border Patrol Police (BPP), a paramilitary force.

State support, however, is not an unusual aspect of a counter-movement; and it should not be regarded as the key factor that determines whether a group is a social movement or a counter-movement. Actually, there are numerous cases in various political regimes, both democratic and authoritarian, in which government authorities sponsor or heavily support counter-movements. The more important point is that in this transitional period to democracy, all sides in the conflict utilized "social mobilization" as a tactic. Social mobilization became a popular, effective, and legitimate way of doing politics. No matter how closely counter-movements were linked to the state, they operated under the cloak of an autonomous social movement in order to obtain legitimacy. Although Nawaphon and Krathing Daeng received financial and material support from individual officers within the army, police, and anti-communist agencies, they carefully kept this support secret from the public. Despite the fact that the Village Scouts movement was created by a government organization, it managed to build its image as a grassroots movement. Nawaphon, Krathing Daeng, and the Village Scouts were allied in the same way as the
student, peasant, and labor movements. They worked together as a loose network of rightists against the “tripartite alliance” of students, peasants, and labor. Although they shared organizational similarities, there were crucial political distinctions between these two sides. The tripartite alliance’s goal was to extend civil and political rights and improve the welfare of the poor through non-violence. The right-wing movement, on the other hand, had the sole goal of eliminating the student movement using illegal and violent tactics.57

Nawaphon58

Nawaphon, meaning “New Force” or “Ninth Power” (in reference to the reign of King Bhumibol of the Chakri Dynasty), was organized mainly to mobilize conservative elements in provincial government agencies and business community. The leaders included conservative intellectuals, ex-military officers, and Buddhist monks. The coordinator and spokesman of the group was Wattana Kiewvimon, a former head of the Thai Students Association in the US, who returned to Thailand in 1974.

Noticing that most Thai people still viewed politics as a dirty activity and political parties as a tainted institution, Nawaphon’s leaders chose to call their group a movement rather than a political party. They constantly emphasized that their group was involved in extra-institutional politics, not mainstream politics. They even differentiated their group from the rightist elite. According to Wattana:

The “establishment right” is connected only with money and status; they are selfish. Nawaphon is on the “ideological right.” We are concerned with justice and democracy, through stability with change. We don’t have to destroy the rich or the “establishment right”; we can find ways to work with them.59

In terms of mobilization and organization, Nawaphon was interestingly similar to the student and peasant movements. Nawaphon reached beyond Bangkok, but its main targets were residents of provincial and district towns, not villages. The group’s organizers used mass meetings to run group activities. Furthermore they intriguingly employed an organizational cell structure parallel
to that of the communists. Each member was responsible for recruiting ten or more members. Members in one group might not know those in another. Ideally, each local area was to have fifty members, each tambon (group of villages) 1,000 members, each sub-district (ten tambon) 10,000 members, and so on. Members identified as potential leaders were trained in political ideology through courses given at district and provincial towns. By late 1975, the organization claimed to have over one million members. Using the organizational tactics of their opponents in the service of the ideology of the right, Nawaphon became a very powerful and successful new ultranationalist movement.

The source of financial support for Nawaphon was not clearly known, but clearly was able to meet a high level of expenses. Many scholars have suggested that Nawaphon was assisted unofficially by senior military officers and by members of the civilian bureaucracy, particularly those from the Ministry of the Interior. Nawaphon also received financial and material support from a prime anti-communist agency, the Internal Security Operations Command. This agency was established under US auspices in the mid 1960s as the Communist Suppression Operation Command to coordinate counter-insurgency, and placed directly under the prime minister. In 1969, the unit was transferred to the military, and after October 1973, it was renamed as the Internal Security Operation Command (ISOC) to denote a wider role. Divisions within the army in general and within ISOC in particular expanded opportunities for right-wing movement mobilization. ISOC officers who advocated “psychological” methods to control insurgency were accused of being soft on communism.  

Hard-liners in ISOC insisted on violent methods. Nawaphon leaders exploited this situation by persuading some hard-line ISOC officers to secretly support their movement's activities. ISOC later discontinued most of its support for Nawaphon, although some of its officers still contributed time and money to it as private individuals. This situation supports the proposition of the political process model, which contends that institutional differentiation and ideological conflicts between authorities provide the ground for political opportunity.

The religious establishment also gave support to the counter-movement during a time of political crisis. Nawaphon was
supported by a famous Buddhist monk, Phra Kittivuttho, who had built his monastic career through involvement in conservative politics within religious organizations. He preached a conservative interpretation of Buddhism which justified centralized authoritarian rule. Kittivuttho apparently began to play an active role in \textit{Nawaphon} after the communist victories in South Vietnam and Cambodia in April 1975. By the end of that year he had openly declared himself a leader of \textit{Nawaphon}. His leadership role helped legitimize the group in the eyes of people who otherwise might have been reluctant to join the movement. He hosted \textit{Nawaphon} meetings at his Buddhist college, and urged people to support \textit{Nawaphon} in his sermons broadcast over army-owned radio stations. He also helped collect funds for the movement and collaborated with \textit{Nawaphon} on a series of propaganda courses for village leaders. In January 1976, Kittivuttho and \textit{Nawaphon} held a meeting with 15,000 village heads. The outcome of this meeting included resolutions demanding the suppression of left-wing movements and the expulsion of liberals and socialists from the Cabinet. Kittivuttho attacked leftists as the enemy of the nation, religion, and monarchy. He used his interpretation of Buddhist doctrine to justify violence against leftists. In mid June 1976, he gave an interview saying it was right for Buddhists to kill communists.

I think we must do this, even though we are Buddhists. But such killings are not the killing of persons. Because whoever destroys the nation, religion and monarchy are not a whole person, but, evil. Our intention must be not to kill people but to kill the Devil. It is the duty of all Thai... It is like when we kill a fish to make curry to place in the alms bowl for a monk. There is certainly demerit in killing the fish, but when we place it in the alms bowl of a monk we gain much greater merit.

This statement was given wide publicity and became the famous dictum of the right: "Killing a communist is not a sin." In addition, political change in Indochina was effectively exploited by right-wing activists. Kittivuttho pointed to alleged massacres of Khmer monks by the Khmer Rouge during the final stages of the Cambodian civil war to justify his anti-communist militancy. The role Kittivuttho and his disciples played in \textit{Nawaphon} highlights the
role of religion in legitimizing a struggle. As sociologists have explained, religion can have a "double function" as both an "apology and legitimation of the status quo and its culture of injustice on the one hand, and as a means of protest, change, and liberation on the other hand." During times of political turbulence in Thailand, religion was used to legitimize the status quo.

In general, *Nawaphon* and other right-wing groups labeled the student movement as "evil," "communist," "anarchist," "un-Thai," "traitor," "worm," and hostile to "nation, religion and the monarchy," the three pillars of Thai national identity. From August 1975 to late 1976, radio stations controlled by rightists regularly played violent songs such as "Nak Phaendin" (Heavy on the Earth) and "Rok Phaendin" (Scum of the Earth). There was an increasing public acceptance of violent suppression of such "scum on the face of Thailand."

There are those who use the name Thai, and their appearance is Thai,
and they live on the land, from the land; but in their hearts they would destroy it.
Selling themselves, selling their nation, insulting and demeaning the Thai race,
they depend upon Thailand, gain sustenance from it, yet hate their countrymen.
They are a weight upon the face of the earth, scum on the face of Thailand.

After April 1975, *Nawaphon* aligned itself with the right-wing alliance and began attacking the leaders of the Farmers Federation of Thailand (FFT). From early April until August 1975, leaders of the FFT were murdered at a rate of one per week. The regularity of these murders suggested that they were carefully planned. Eighteen FFT members were assassinated during this period. After this series of assassinations stopped, the remaining FFT leaders continued to be intimidated and accused by *Nawaphon* members of being communist and anti-Buddhist. As a result, the FFT was severely weakened.
While *Nawaphon* mainly operated in provincial and district towns, the Red Gaurs (*Krathing Daeng*) was an organization formed to counter labor strikes and student protests in the city. Their members were mainly vocational students. They also recruited high-school dropouts, unemployed street urchins, and a few ex-mercenaries discharged from the army for undisciplined behavior. The Red Gaurs received material and financial support from some cliques within ISOC, and also obtained support from other agencies related to police and intelligence work. The proclaimed purpose of the Red Gaurs, according to its vocational student leaders, was to defend the honor of the nation and the king and to prevent the spread of communism in the kingdom. The Red Gaurs adopted the counter-insurgency strategy of setting villagers against one another in rural areas and adapted it to an urban environment. Red Gaurs organizers also emulated the decentralized structure and collective leadership of the student movement.

Though the Red Gaurs used the ultranationalist frame of protecting the nation-religion-king triplet in the same way as *Nawaphon*, they created a specific identity for their group by claiming to represent underprivileged students and adolescents, and thereby were able to mobilize new and diverse members into their ranks. In the October 1973 demonstration, vocational students played a crucial and courageous role as security brigades protecting demonstrators from the police. They were willing to act as self-sacrificing assistants and foot soldiers who carried out strategies planned by the university students. They thus bore the brunt of police repression, enduring far greater losses than university students. One common slogan in October 1973 was: “the older brother (university students) provides the brains, the younger brother (vocational students) provides the brawn.” Their experience in the historic popular uprising of 1973 gave them a new-found sense of their own importance. However, after October 1973, people regarded university students, not vocational students, as their heroes university in the victory against dictatorship. This differentiation prompted a sense of alienation of vocational students from their university counterparts. Their attacks on university students can be seen as an expression of their genuine resentment.
against the high-status, privileged university students.

There was also a socio-psychological underpinning to the political role-reversal of these vocational-school students and high-school dropouts. Many of them had once dreamed of becoming university students too, but had failed to pass the highly competitive entrance examination. They were children of a new and vulnerable petty bourgeoisie, and had difficulty finding a job in the public and private sector in the period of economic recession and widespread unemployment after 1973. Faced with an uncertain future, they gradually began to blame their misfortunes on those in their own age group who were born into wealthier families, managed to pass the university entrance examinations, and consequently obtained good jobs. Unsurprisingly, they were easy targets for the right-wing counter-movements’ mobilization.

Disruption of progressive university student’s demonstrations and labor strikes were the Red Gaurs’ most visible acts. The Red Gaurs overtly employed violent tactics. During 1975 and 1976, they became the most notorious group employing terrorist tactics in urban politics. For example, on 20 August 1975, the Red Gaurs broke into Thammasat University, a bastion of student radicalism, and torched a university building. On 15 February 1976, they firebombed the Bangkok headquarters of the progressive New Force Party. On 21 March of the same year, Red Gaur cadres threw two bombs at a mass demonstration led by the National Student Centre of Thailand (NSCT) to demand the full withdrawal of the American military presence from the country. Four people were killed and many others badly wounded in that incident. In August 1976, a student demonstration against the return of an exiled former military dictator was attacked by the Red Gaurs, leaving two demonstrators dead. One of the Red Gaurs’ advisors explicitly told journalists about their group’s strategy: “we need to use bombs as a vital tool to protect the Thai democratic regime.”

Members of the Red Gaurs (and other right-wing movements) who committed these serious crimes have never been brought to justice. Even when one member had his arm blown off in the process of throwing a bomb on 15 February 1976, he was simply released by the police for lack of evidence. Such rightist groups were able to terrorize the student movement and its allies with
complete impunity.

The Thai state did not properly enforce the law during this period. Right-wing groups used various kinds of violence, including carrying guns in public, setting fire to a university building, throwing bombs at demonstrations, and assassinating leaders of the people's movements and left-wing politicians. State inaction not only permitted rightist political violence to continue but also indirectly encouraged it. As many theorists have demonstrated, both conceptually and empirically, state responses play a crucial role in the success or failure of certain tactics.\footnote{72}

In the Thai case, the state failed to act against the counter-movement. Owing to the lack of law enforcement by the state, right-wing movements continued to engage in terrorist violence against progressive movements because they had little fear of legal punishment. The Thai state during this transitional period in effect abdicated its responsibility for law enforcement and thereby adopted a de facto policy of intimidation and violence toward the student movements and their allies, even though the state may not have been directly involved in the planning and execution of the right-wing movements' strategies.

The confrontational and violent tactics of the right, combined with government inaction, had a great effect on the student movement that had to divert part of its resources into reacting to its opponents and defending itself. Students could no longer trust the state to protect their rights and freedom. They had to resort to extra-institutional tactics that led them to greater confrontation with right-wing movements. Their demands and rhetoric became increasingly radicalized. The escalation of violence led to political turmoil and crisis, and ultimately, paved the way for the military coup of 6 October 1976, allegedly launched to restore law and order. Therefore, it was not the radicalization of the student movement and its allies alone that was responsible for the failure of democracy but the complex if manipulated interaction between the student movement, the right-wing movements, and the state.

\textit{Village Scouts}\footnote{73}

The Village Scout movement was founded in 1971 by Major General Somkhuan Harikul, an officer of the Border Patrol Police
(BPP). The genesis of the movement lay in the anti-communist campaign of the Thai government in the 1960s and 1970s. Since 1965, there had been increasingly serious fighting between government forces and communist guerrillas around the country, particularly in the northern and northeastern regions. The military capacity of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) increased gradually over time. By the end of 1968, the CPT had shown significant military strength. The situation deteriorated further in the early 1970s as the number of communist guerrillas expanded. According to the Communist Suppression Operations Command (CSOC), the number of clashes between guerrillas and government forces rose from 154 in 1965 to 680 by 1972. The number of government casualties also increased from 87 killed and 72 wounded in 1965 to 592 killed and 1,296 wounded in 1972. By then, there was a growing consensus among high-ranking government officials in charge of counter-insurgency that new approaches were needed. They believed that the communists' success came from their ability to infiltrate villages and gain support from villagers. A counterinsurgency strategy was needed to tackle the CPT's popular support. Somkhuan Harikul was an official who shared these views. He developed the idea of creating a paramilitary, anti-communist rural security organization in critical areas. The main function of the Village Scout movement was "to organize villagers in ritual displays of loyalty to nation and king. Recruits attended camps where they trained in scouting activities, listened to nationalist lectures, played team games, and sang patriotic songs. At the end, they received ritual insignia, a neckscarf and pin, usually presented by the King himself."\(^74\)

The dynamics of Thai politics at the national level after the student uprising in 1973 and the communist victories in Indochina in 1975 had an enormous effect on the Village Scout movement. Both critical events shaped and shifted the goal and character of the Village Scout movement from a peasant-based anti-communist rural movement to an urban one funded by panicky fractions of the middle and upper classes. As a result, the ideology and mobilization of the movement were reoriented from fighting communist insurgency to opposing the student and peasant movement. During the era of political turmoil, the Village Scouts were one of the most
prominent counter-movements. They played a crucial role in intimidat\-ing liberal and left-wing elements during the 1976 election campaign. They expelled student activists attempting to organize peasant and tenants' union from the villages, and disrupted peasant organization meetings in the countryside as well as rallies in urban areas. On 6 October 1976, hundreds of Village Scouts members, together with BPP troops, Red Gars, and Nawaphon members, massed outside Thammasat University and attacked the student demonstrators inside.

The Village Scout membership was drawn heavily from middle-aged people. In January 1976, the Village Scouts held their first training program in Bangkok. Within nine months, "36 groups with almost 20,000 members had been recruited in the city. In up-country towns, 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" and supported the movement. These well-to-do people were not only ideologically amenable to the movement's ideas, but had the private economic resources to enable the organization to develop rapidly and independently of the state bureaucracy. Thus the Village Scouts movement was able to spread rapidly throughout the country.

Although the location and the membership base of the movement had shifted to urban areas, the Village Scouts still kept the same name and even increasingly emphasized the word "Village" in its title. In the fierce competition for political popularity and legitimacy between them and the FFT in many provinces, they were intent on using the word "village" to identify themselves as a grassroots movement. Moreover, they employed the organizational cell structure of the communists, as did Nawaphon. After completion of the training program, each Village Scout was responsible for recruiting three more people for the movement. Scouts were told to keep in touch with members of their training group to maintain group solidarity. Much of this mobilization was assisted by conservative local authorities frustrated with peasant and student mobilization in their areas. In 1976, about two million Thais (5 percent of the total population), of both sexes, became Village Scouts members.

The primary focus of Village Scout training was the inculcation
of traditional nationalistic values, particularly the three ideological
principles of nation, religion, and the king. In the training program,
Scouts spent five days living together as equal partners. The
program usually took place at a monastery or on public school
grounds, traditionally the site of village meetings. Training involved
first-aid techniques, songs, cooking, physical exercise, and political
lectures. Each day, a group of trainees was responsible for
organizing a presentation or play in front of the evening campfire.
The play was to be based on Thai historic events that showed
nationalism and patriotism. The Village Scouts, in concert with
other right-wing groups, asserted a very narrow definition of Thai
nationalism. In response to the radical challenges of the “tripartite
alliance,” right-wing organizers politicized and activated the
ideology of nation, religion, and king. Village Scouts claimed
legitimacy by framing their role as defenders of the nation against
communism, and labeled the “tripartite alliance” as enemies of the
nation, religion, and king. Students’ demands such as the
withdrawal of US troops, a drastic cultural overhaul, and radical
economic reform were labeled “communist projects” by the right-
wing movement. They “pitched ‘communism’ and ‘nation, religion,
and king’ in absolute two-way opposition with no possibility for a
middle ground.”

Nawaphon, Red Gaurs, and Village Scouts succeeded in
framing the current political conflict in very broad terms. They
presented themselves as acting in the name of public interest and
national security, and were thus able to attract a very broad range of
the Thai population, even though they were to a certain degree
initiated or supported by the elites and authorities. By early 1976,
they had gained greater popular support and political strength than
the “tripartite alliance.” Since late 1975, the “tripartite alliance” had
been crippled because the FFT had been paralyzed by the
Nawaphon and the Village Scouts’ intimidation and suppression.
Through 1976, the labor and student movements were crumbling.
On many occasions, they had to cancel their planned activities in
order to avoid violent attacks by the rightist movement. One
business leader aptly observed that 1973 and 1974 were “the years
of the students, workers, and farmers,” whereas 1975 and 1976
were “the years of the Village Scouts.”
From mid 1976, there were rumors that the military was going to stage a coup. The student movement tried to build up strength to pre-empt it. But by late 1976, the polarization had reached the point of no return. The student movement's capability to mobilize people against a coup had been substantially weakened while the rightist movements had become highly effective. On the evening of 6 October 1976, an army faction led by Admiral Sangad Chaloryu, a former Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and the then Minister of Defense, carried out a coup. The coup leaders claimed that they seized power in order to restore stability, law and order to the country after three years of an unsuccessful flirtation with democracy. The elected civilian government was ousted; the constitution, parliament, and political parties were abolished; and all political gatherings, including social movements, were banned.

Nawaphon, the Red Gaurs, and the Village Scouts stopped their counter-mobilization against the student movement and its allies since the latter no longer existed.

To summarize, I found three crucial factors that explain the success of rightist movements: 1) appropriate framing and organization; 2) fragmentation of authority; and 3) state inaction. Right-wing counter-movements succeeded in imitating the organizational structure of their opponents, framing their issue in very broad terms, and constructing the communist threat to justify use of violence. Moreover, their framing of the issues resonated with traditional nationalistic values—the triplet of nation, religion, and king—and was relevant to the current political situation in Indochina. The fragmentation of authority provided the opportunity for right-wing movements to obtain resources and political protection from some factions within the Thai state. Finally, the absence of law enforcement by the Thai state during this time significantly reduced the cost of violent tactics. Right-wing movements thus employed various violent actions against the progressive movement with little fear of legal punishment.

Conclusion

Study of the right-wing counter-movements in Thailand during the 1973–1976 democratic transition contributes a comparative
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perspective to the study of the interactions between social movements and counter-movements. In this paper, I have shown how the success of a social movement is limited by counter-movements; and how and when counter-movements succeed. In addition, I argue for the importance of the state in influencing the conflict between social movements and their counter-movements.

In this article, I employed the political process model and the counter-movement–movement interaction model to explain the rise of counter-movements. The success of a social movement, changing rules, and the incapacity of the elite to employ other means created critical conditions for a counter-movements to mobilize. These conditions created the counter-movements but did not guarantee their success. The explanation for the counter-movements’ success lies in the dynamic interaction between the primary social movement, its counter-movement, and the state. Thai right-wing movements learned from the initial student and leftist social movements. They emulated the effective organizational forms of their opponents, while framing their own identities and the political situation from their perspective. In the interaction with the state, the counter-movements were capable of exploiting the fragmentation of authority and the state’s inaction to their advantage. These factors explain their success.

I disagree with an argument of democratization theorists who inadvertently point the finger at progressive reformers for the collapse of democracy in periods of transition. These theorists primarily focus on stability and attempt to find a moderate and cautious way toward liberalization and democratization. They fear the threat and possibility of some players overturning the rules of the game. They believe that the democratic system can survive the transition only if circumspection and moderation prevail. They caution reformist political parties, interest groups, or social movements to move conservatively and not threaten the interests of the dominant class and military. In some instances, they even suggest that it is necessary for liberal and progressive forces to collaborate tacitly in maintaining the center-right in power.79 The experience of the Thai case suggests, on the contrary, that it was not the radicalization of the student movement and its allies alone that was responsible for the failure of democracy but the complex if
manipulated interaction between them, the right-wing movements, and the state.

Notes

1 The author wishes to thank Leigh Payne for her invaluable comments and suggestions on earlier drafts, Paul Hutchcroft, Thongchai Winichakul, and Alasdair Bowie for their comments, and Sudarat Musikawong and Dacil Keo for careful editing. The paper also benefited greatly from a careful reading and meticulous editing by Kasian Tejapira.

2 Somsak Kwanmongkol, former leader of the right-wing Krating Daeng group, said in an interview with the *Sarakadi Magazine* on the twentieth anniversary of the 6 October 1976 massacre, see *Sarakadi Magazine* 12, 140, October 1996, p. 161 (in Thai).

3 Maj Gen Sudsai Thephassadin, the notorious founder of Krating Daeng, said in an interview with the *Sarakadi Magazine* on the twentieth anniversary of the 6 October 1976 massacre, see *Sarakadi Magazine*, op. cit., p. 169 (in Thai).


11 For the case of institutional form of counter-mobilization, see for example Kenneth T. Andrews, ‘Movement–countermovement dynamics and the emergence of new institutions: the case of “white flight” schools in Mississippi,’ *Social Forces*
Military coups are normal phenomenon in modern Thai history. They were an effective means to suppress political adversaries. There were eight successful, and many more unsuccessful coups from 1932 to 1960. See David Wilson, *Politics in Thailand* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967).


David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, 'Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization,' *International Social Movement Research* 1, 1988, pp. 197–217.

Meyer and Staggenborg, 'Movements,' p. 1639.

Meyer and Staggenborg, 'Movements,' p. 1640.

Meyer and Staggenborg, 'Movements,' p. 1637.

See Meyer and Staggenborg, 'Movements,' p. 1637; and see the pluralistic government model in Zald and Useem, 'Movement and countermovement interaction,' pp. 266–69.


O'Donnell et al., 'Tentative conclusions,' p. 4.

Meyer and Staggenborg, 'Movements,' p. 1650.

Luders, 'Countermovements,' p. 28. Luders demonstrates clearly that the contrasting behavior of state and local authorities in the American South determined a differing degree of counter-movement violence.


Khanuengnit Tangjaitrong, 'Khwam khit ruang kan phlianplaeng sangkhom khong khong khabuankan nak seuksa thai rawang pho so 2516–2519: seuksa korani sun klang nisit nak seuksa haeng prathet thai (Social change in the thought of the Thai student movement from 1973 to 1976: case study of the National Student Centre of Thailand,' MA thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Chulalongkorn University, 1987.


35 During the Vietnam War, Thailand was America’s most secure ally in mainland Southeast Asia. Thailand was also the most active and important “gigantic immobile aircraft carrier” for American bomber and fighter planes, with 80 percent of all American bombs dropped in Indochina during the war being flown there from Thai soil. The number of American soldiers stationed in Thailand during the war reached nearly 50,000. In 1973, there were twelve US military bases and 550 US war planes in the country. See Sean Randolph, *The United States and Thailand: Alliance Dynamics 1950–85* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1986), pp. 53–9.


44 David Morell, ‘Alternative to Military Rule in Thailand,’ *Armed Forces and
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*Society* 1, 3, 1975, p. 287–301. The first election under the new constitution in January 1975 returned an Assembly with 35 percent businessmen, 30 percent professionals, and only 12 percent ex-bureaucrats and soldiers.


46 See this argument in Payne, *Uncivil Movement*, p. 36.

47 Leigh Payne (*Uncivil Movement*, p. 2) separated “uncivil movements” from authoritarian movements on the basis that “uncivil movements” neither philosophically oppose democracy nor promote authoritarian ends.

48 Though one important right-wing group, the Village Scouts, had already emerged before this time, its goals, tactics, and speed of membership recruitment were obviously transformed after mid 1975. I will explain this point below.

49 For an overview of the political opportunity structure approach in general, see Dough McAdam, ‘Conceptual origins, current problems, future directions,’ in Doug McAdam et al., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 23–37. For the use of this approach to explain movement-counter-movement interaction, see Meyer and Staggenborg, *Movements*.

50 See for instance, Anthony Oberschall, ‘Opportunities and framing in the Eastern European revolts of 1989,’ in McAdam et al., *Comparative Perspectives*, pp. 93–121. This article shows clearly how social movements in Eastern Europe were driven by international and domestic political opportunities.


52 External political events signaling the rise of communism contributed to the rightist reactionary force in Thailand. On 2 December 1975, the long-established Laotian monarchy was abolished by the Lao communist force. This event led to an increasing intensity of rightists’ mass mobilization effort and violent tactics.

53 The initial objective of the Village Scout movement was to mobilize the rural masses as a bulwark against the Communist Party of Thailand’s insurgency.


55 Meyer and Staggenborg, ‘Movements,’ p. 1642. Moreover, state involvement in movement-counter-movement conflict can vary. The state can be neutral; openly or tacitly support the movement or counter-movement; intervene minimally; or act as a counter-movement itself. See various models of interaction between state, movement, and counter-movement in Zald and Useem, ‘Movement and countermovement interaction,’ pp. 265–9.

56 This is similar to the counter-movement receiving support from established interests and organizations. The counter-movement’s ties to the established social order tend to both help and hinder the provision of the requisition of resources. On the one hand, it will gain abundant resources. On the other hand, its ties to the elite may preclude the use of these resources for non-institutionalized acts. One strategy the elite may use to solve this problem is to disassociate itself. This is the
strategy many Thai authorities used during the years 1973–76. They provided resources but disassociated themselves from actions taken by the movement, especially the violent ones.

57 I realized this distinction through the conceptual framework of Leigh Payne’s "uncivil movement." See Payne, Uncivil Movement, p. 43.


59 Chai-Anan and Morell, Political Conflict, p. 240.

60 In mid 1975, after the Indochinese collapse, the then director of ISOC who was a soft-liner and headed this organization for nine years was branded a communist and forced to resign. See Pasuk and Baker, Thailand: Economy and Politics, p. 308.

61 Sidney Tarrow, ‘States and opportunities: the political structuring of social movements,’ in McAdam et al., Comparative Perspectives, pp. 41–61.


64 Anderson, ‘Withdrawal symptoms,’ p. 171.


67 Translation from Chai-Anan and Morell, Political Conflict, p. 235.


69 Chai-Anan and Morell, Political Conflict, p. 241.

70 Siam Chronicle 1, 1976, p. 152 (in Thai).

71 ‘Withdrawal symptoms,’ p. 141.

72 See for instance, Luders, ‘Countermovements,’ pp. 27–44.


74 Pasuk and Baker, Thailand: Economy and Politics, p. 327.

75 Pasuk and Baker, Thailand: Economy and Politics, p. 327.
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77 Quote from Chai-Anan and Morell, *Political Conflict*, p. 245.
79 See for instance, O'Donnell and Schmitter, 'Tentative conclusions.'