

Street Politics in Thailand During 2019 To 2022

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Abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic was adversely affecting Thailand amidst strong attacks especially by the youth groups on the government. The main force of Thai youth protests has made street politics in Thailand different from those of the past. By problematizing this emerging phenomenon, this paper proposes to tackle two research questions. *How are the protests in Thailand during the Covid-19 pandemic different from those the past? How does the massive outbreak of protests generate implications for present and future Thailand?* Therefore, this paper combines the theories of Radical Politics, Digital Activism and Contentious Politics, adopts qualitative research, mainly through documentary analysis, interviews and questionnaires to conduct a constructive research, to explore the development, changes and implications of street politics in Thailand during 2019 to 2022. This paper argues that the youth protests which took place in recent years have had a huge impact on many aspects of Thailand, but also had their shortcomings which, coupled with the strength of the government's counter-measures to protests, led to continued but ineffective activities, with multiple conditions ultimately triggering a new period of deadlock in Thai political modernization. The paper tries to explain new methods of protest and counter-measures to protests, illustrating the impacts of social media on protests under the pandemic, and hoping in this way to enrich research on the development of street politics in Thailand and completes the research on the political participation of contemporary youth and its impact.

Keywords: *Covid-19; Protest; Student Movement; Thai Democracy; Thailand Politics*

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Questions and Hypothesis

Unlike in the past, this wave of student-led protests in recent years was concentrated in Bangkok but spread across the country in unprecedented numbers and scale. Therefore, the author proposed two research questions. *How are the protests in Thailand during the Covid-19 pandemic different from those the past? How does the massive outbreak of protests generate implications for present and future Thailand?* Then author proposed the hypothesis that the Covid-19 pandemic led to massive anti-government protests in Thailand, and because of the pandemic, the way people gathered and protested had changed. Moreover, the frequent protests have had a tremendous impact on Thailand, causing not only a reversal of the young generation's attitude of the government and the royal family, but also a shift in the

strength of political parties.

1.2 Objectives

Based on the research questions and hypotheses proposed by the author, the initiation year of this research on street politics in Thailand in recent years is set to be 2019, the year of the gradual increase of political activities in Thailand after the coup in 2014. The author will collect data from a large amount of literature to explore the process of street politics from 2019 to 2022, analyze how these protests in street politics are affected by youth and the Covid-19 pandemic, and explore the multifaceted impacts of protests on Thailand through surveys.

1.3 Previous Advancements in Related Fields

Previous advancements in this topic can be divided into

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three fields, mainly from research papers about street politics and political modernization in Thailand. Field 1, research on Thailand historical political events [1-6]. Field 2, research on the Thai political modernization. The research in this field is distinctive, but some concepts are no longer entirely appropriate at now [7-10]. Field 3, recent research on street politics around the world [11-14]. The results in this field have greatly inspired the author to understand protests in recent years, however, the process and groups of Thailand protests have not been well reviewed, and the link between the Covid-19 pandemic and the protests has not been carefully studied, the author would like to fill these gaps to some extent in this research.

2. The New Period of Deadlock in Thai Political Modernization Framework

Marco Giuni and Maria T. Grasso's book *Street Citizens* narrates that Radical Politics [15] is on the rise globally and more individuals are moving from traditional modes of political participation to street politics [14]. Thailand is no exception, with street protests already taking place in the country since 2019, followed by a rapid increase in protests with students and youth as the main participants, influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic and political events. Thailand has seen numerous street protests and movements since 1932, and this historical tradition of a tendency to take dissatisfaction with the government and the system to street protests, fueled by Digital Activism [16] catalyzed by social media, eventually evolved in 2020 into a street political movement focused on opposition to the Prayuth government and the existing monarchy, mainly in the form of sit-ins, rallies, and marches. In the movement this time, protests were too frequent and radical, and were accompanied by numerous acts of violence. The movement did have an impact on the political situation and social order in Thailand, but due to the government's deliberate avoidance of the demands of the protesters and its avoidance of confrontation with them, the protests were held continuously but with little substantive effect. Also, the mentalities of the protesters gradually changed from militancy to depression and disappointment under this situation. A combination of factors eventually led to the decline of the protests since 2022. According Contentious Politics from Charles Tilly [17], the protesters were at this point barely unable to use protests to involve political events or decisions, and democratization was also could not be promoted to move further by the protests, it meant the Contentious gradually ineffective. However, the street protests in Thailand still cannot be stopped as a result of the unrealized demands of the protesters and the radicalization of the new generation of young protesters.

Ultimately, the author believes that the main cause of street politics in Thailand in recent years has been values divergence and the forces conflict. The values divergence was triggered by the conflict between the youth, who generally embraced Western democratic values, and their

royalist elders over the reform of the monarchy. The forces conflict was created by the New Forces led by the Move Forward Party and the Old Forces such as Prayuth and the military, fighting for power. The New Forces are widely supported by the public but still face the threat of military intervention from the Old Forces. Finally, they led street politics in Thailand into an impasse at this stage, where the scale and number of protests have decreased significantly but cannot be stopped, and are occasionally accompanied by violent protests. Meanwhile, values divergence and the forces conflict have continued to influence the development of street politics. With the street politics at an impasse, the irreconcilable differences in intergenerational values, and the unmitigated conflict between old and new forces, Thailand's politics modernization has reached a deadlock.

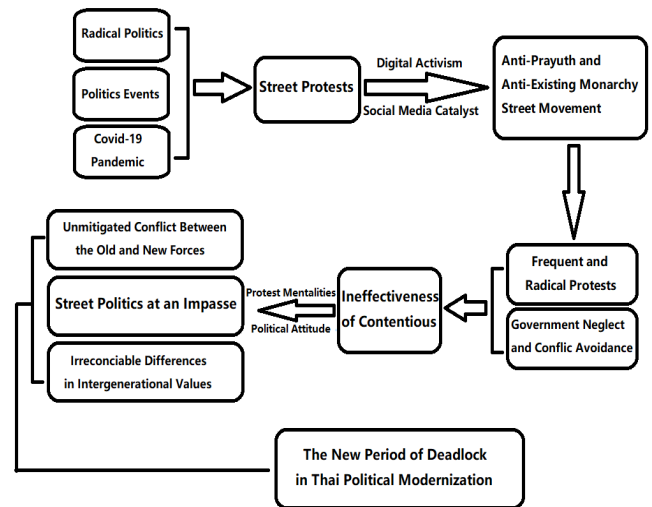


Figure 1. The New Period of Deadlock in Thai Political Modernization Framework

3. Materials and Methods

In addition to academic papers in previous advancements, the author also obtained a large amount of data through two other sources. First, official announcements of the protests issued by Thai government and the statistics of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Thailand from Johns Hopkins University [18]. A large amount of official data from this source, which allowed the author to not only know the exact information of protests, but also to identify the link between the pandemic and the protests. The second is from media reports and commentaries on the Internet, official accounts of protest groups, and private websites. These data are less authoritative but not completely inaccurate, which improve this research a lot.

In overviewing the process of protests and its changes in recent year, the main research method was the documentary analysis. As mentioned above, the author collected a huge amount of data about the protests in Thailand from academic papers, media reports (e.g., *Bangkok Post* and *Prachatai*), government announcements, reports on private websites (e.g., *Mob Data Thailand* [19]), and other

literature. For example, through the information obtained from media reports and reports on the websites of human rights organizations (e.g., *Thai Lawyers for Human Rights*), the author outlined the process of protests in Thailand from 2019-2022, and counted the protests during 2020 to 2022 from the number and themes month by month; through the analysis of academic papers, official accounts of protest groups(e.g., *Free Youth* [20] and *Draconis Revolution* [21]) and government announcements, to found the changes in the way protesters organized protests and the government prevented them under the pandemic. In addition, the activities or platforms of these main youth groups joined the protests recent years were also listed. In examining the impact of protests during 2019 to 2022, the author employed various methods in qualitative analysis. To explore the public perceptions of street politics over the four years, documentary analysis was first used to obtain public opinion surveys and statistics from official Thai institutions (e.g., National Institute of Development Administration [22]). Then, due to the lack of primary data, the author chose the interviews, questionnaires, and participant observation as research methods. When visited the universities in Bangkok to find students to interview, the author started with a brief exchange of views if the respondents were non-protesters, then the interviews about 10 minutes for each respondent or group of respondents were conducted if they were interested, the main content and results of the interview recorded on cellphone; if the respondent was a protester, the author gave him or her an electronic questionnaire created on Google Form after a brief information inquiry. Ultimately, four weeks in total, the author interacted with nearly 500 Thai students (200 of them were interviewed) and received 103 valid questionnaire responses, obtained both protesters and non-protesters views. The author’s application of the participant observation method was to go to the protests site and collect information by observing the protesters’ behavior, the flow, and the atmosphere of the protests.

The author adopted documentary analysis method to collect data from multiple sources to ensure that provides more complete information of Thailand protests during 2019 to 2022 than other extant literature. To decrease research bias, the author used interviews and questionnaires to explore the real thoughts of the youth. 200 respondents were interviewed from the Thai student population, covering four education levels: high school, undergraduate, graduate, and doctor. The large number of respondents provided a good indication of the thoughts of the contemporary Thai youth. Due to the Bangkok undergraduates made up a large portion of the protesters during 2019 to 2022, it was also reasonable that the author chose to find respondents from universities, such as Thammasat University, Silpakorn University, Kasetsart Univeristy and other more 2 universities in Bangkok. Also, the questionnaire had a combination of simple multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions to ensure that protesters could express as many honest opinions as possible. Moreover, the author distributed the questionnaire on Twitter and Facebook to further expand the

range of respondents beyond Bangkok. figures.

4. Results

4.1 The Development of Thailand Street Politics from 2019 to 2022

The street politics in 2019 had not yet developed into large-scale protests, consisting mainly of anti-Prayuth protests, it can be divided into two phases: Prior to the 2019 general election, the protests were aimed at the Prayuth government’s lack of democracy and repeated postponement of election. After the 2019 general election, the protests were mainly against Prayuth’s continuation as prime minister. Red Shirts and supporters of the Future Forward Party [23, 24] were the main protesters.

Street politics in 2020 began in January with anti-Prayuth events [25] in many provinces on the same theme. Subsequently, in solidarity with the disbanded Future Forward Party, Thai youth held several protests since February, but the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic temporarily halted the protests. After the pandemic was under control, Free Youth group led this phase of protests by lunching the *FreeYouth Movement* and made *Three Demand*. Meanwhile, the influential young protesters “Roong” and “Penguin” demanded not only the resignation of Prayuth but called for reform of the current monarchy. As royalists opposed to the monarchy’s reforms took to the streets, Bangkok erupted in alternating protests and counter-protests accompanied by street clashes and arrests of protesters [26]. The protests continued until December of the same year and tapered off after the protest leader of United Front of Thammasat and Demonstration announced that they would stop protest until the next year.

Table 1: Information on Protests in Thailand from May 2020 to December 2020

Month	Number of Protests	Main Protests Themes or Purposes
May	8	Commemorated the 2010 Thai Military Crackdown
June	24	Commemorated Siamese Revolution of 1932
July	55	Free Youth Movement/ “ไม่ทนเผด็จการ” Anti-Dictatorship Protests
August	66	“ไม่ทนเผด็จการ”/ Release of protestor leaders
September	25	Release of protestor leaders/ “19กันยาทางอำนาจคืนราษฎร”
October	200	Release of Protestor Leaders/ “ไม่ทนเผด็จการ”
November	71	“ไม่ทนเผด็จการ”/ Bad Student Protest
December	23	Bad Student Protest/ Calls for Penal Code Section 112

Source: Combined with data from the Mob Data Thailand website and the author’s own data collection

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, protests in early 2021 were dominated against the government’s anti-pandemic measures. In February, the Thai government issued a 3rd edition of the “Ban on Rallies, Activities” announcement, but this did not stop the protests, and clashes between police and protesters intensified [27]. In the following months, the “Ban on Rallies, Activities” announcement was reissued, however, the number of protests remained high, and more groups joined the protests. At the end of 2021, the “Thalu Gas”, a youth group advocating violent protests, joined the protests and continued to create chaos in the streets of Bangkok [28]. The number of protests remained high due to the outcome of the no-confidence debate, historical events, and the Constitutional Court ruling. It was not until December that the number of protests began to decrease because of the resurgence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the government’s reissue of the “Ban on Rallies, Activities” announcement.

Table 2: Information on Protests in Thailand throughout 2021

Month	Number of Protests	Main Protests Themes or Purposes
January	47	Cancel “112”/ Protested the government’s measures
February	73	“Save Myanmar”/ “คืนอำนาจประชาชน”(Return People’s power)
March	86	“ไว้อาลัยความยุติธรรม” (Mourning for Justice)/ “ราษฎรเฮ้ย”(People)
April	180	“รำลึก 11 ปีศาลทหารขุนนวมประช”/ “ยืนหยุดขัง [29]” (Stand Stop Imprison).
May	259	“ยืนหยุดขัง” (Stand Stop Imprison)/ “เปิดไฟให้ดาว” (Light Up the Stars)
June	125	“ไทยไม่ทน” (Thais Won’t Tolerate)/ Line Man called for fair wages
July	56	“หล่อเทียนทำบุญประเทศ” (Casting Candles)
August	100	Car Mob (Anti-Prayut Protests)/ Violent Protests by Thalu Gas
September	141	“ไล่ประยุทธ์” (Chase Prayuth)
October	110	Anniversaries of 1976 massacre and 1973 Thai popular uprising
November	106	“ปฏิรูปไม่เท่ากับล้มล้าง” (Reform isn’t overthrow)
December	17	Cancel “112”/ Protested the Constitutional Court

Source: Combined with data from the Mob Data Thailand website and the author’s own data collection

Protests resurfaced as it entered 2022, with anti-government and anti-royal protests accompanied by rallies calling for peace. Before Chartchat was elected mayor of Bangkok, protests were mainly aimed at demand the release of protesters and the memory of major political events. After Chartchat was elected mayor of Bangkok, the main demands of the protesters shifted to opposition to the continuation of Prayuth as prime minister, which led to several protests until Prayuth was suspended by the Constitutional Court. Subsequently, the scale of the protests

gradually decreased but the number of protests did not decline significantly and continued until 2023 [30].

Table 3: Information on Protests in Thailand throughout 2022

Month	Number of Protests	Main Protests Themes or Purposes
January	99	“ยกเลิก112” (Cancel 112)/ Protests by P-move
February	104	“Saveบางกอก” Protests by P-move/ “ยกเลิก112” (Cancel 112)
March	32	Protested Russia’s invasion of Ukraine
April	35	“ยุติธรรมไม่มี 12 ปีเราไม่ลืม” (2010 Thai military crackdown)
May	52	Commemorated the NCPO Coup/ “No NPO bill” Protest
June	86	“ราษฎรไล่ตุ” (Residents Lai Tu)/ Solidarity with arrested protesters
July	94	Protested “no confidence debate” results/ Solidarity Myanmar
August	83	Protests to pressure the legal system/ Anti-Prayuth Protests
September	45	Anniversaries of the 2006 coup/ Anti-Prayuth Protests
October	55	Anniversaries of 6 Oct 1976 massacre
November	65	Anti-APEC Protests
December	40	“ยืนหยุดขัง” (Stand Stop Imprison)/ Protest of Solidarity Myanmar

Source: Combined with data from the Mob Data Thailand website and the author’s own data collection

4.2 Changes in Thailand’s Street Politics from 2019 to 2022

4.2.1 Protests Turned Dominated by Students and Youth Groups

Students again became major participants in street politics since the student movement in 1973. However, urban-rural rivalry was no longer the main reason to protest, but rather the disillusionment of youth with the government and legal system. More crucially, the changes and repercussions of the student-led protests this time are unparalleled in the past.

Table 4: Major Youth Protest Groups in Bangkok from 2019 to 2022

Group Name	New Group (or not)	Main Leaders	Main Activities or Features
The Students Union of Thailand (SUT)	No	Jutatip Sirikhan	Campus flash mob protests in 2020.
Bad Student	No	Laponpat Wangpaisit, Benjamaporn	Mostly high school students, against the Thai

		(Ploy)	education system.
United Front of Thammasat and Demonstration (UFTD)	Yes	Panusaya (Rainbow), Parit (Penguin)	Large-scale student protest rallies such as “8.18” and “9.19”.
Free Youth (later also called Free People)	Yes	Tattep (Ford), Panumas (James)	United UFTD organized most of the protests in Bangkok landmarks.
REDEM	Yes	No Main Leader	Expectation of a “Republic”; Multiple “leaderless” protests.
Thalu Fah	Yes	No Main Leader	Creative protests, such as cross-province hiking.
Thalu Gas	Yes	No Main Leader	Against non-violent protests, often violent protests at Din Daeng.
Thalu Wang/ Chicken Feet Revolution	Yes	Natthanit Duangmusit/ “Toey” and “Pom”	Fewer members, “Street Polls” as main method of protest.
Free Arts [31]	Yes	“Sina”, “First” and other four members	Support protests with artistic creations.
Mok Luang Rim Nam	Yes	Sopon Surarithamrong (Gate)	A youth group dedicated to promoting human rights protection.

Source: Author’s collection of data

The main protest group in Thailand’s street politics 2019 was the *Red Shirts*, with the main demands focused on the “Ouster of Prayuth.” However, since 2020, youth protest groups continued to innovate and grow in Bangkok, each with different demands, goals, and methods of protest [32]. Besides, data shows hundreds of protests in both Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen during 2020 to 2022. *Draconis Revolution*, *กาวกั้น* and *Modindaeng Revolutionary Party* as the influential youth groups outside of Bangkok led most protests.

4.2.2 Changes in the Way Protesters Gather and the Way They Communication

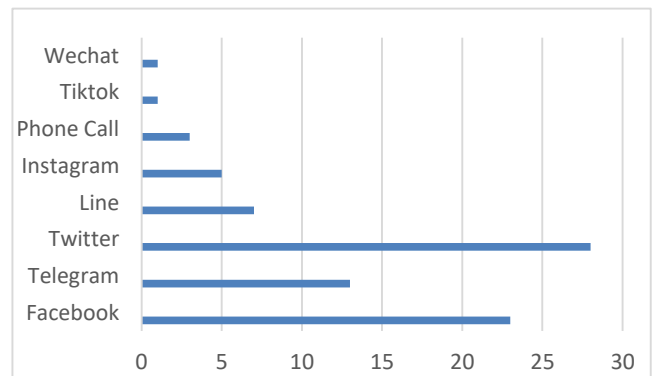
The National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) and government issued several policies and laws after the 2014 coup, which banned freedom of rallies and marches. The ban on political activities was lifted in late 2018, but it was still subject to laws [33]. Political activities in early 2019 were largely in compliance with laws, however, the

dissolution of Future Forward Party led the protesters escalated defiance from determining their own venues to not reporting rallies to the authorities before holding, resulting in a rapid increase in gatherings defined by the government as illegal during 2020 to 2021.

In fact, it was social media greatly contributed to the rise of such non-institutionalized political participation. Before 2019, groups involved and information dissemination about protests were limited, but the rapid increase in young Thai social media users changed this situation. Protest groups and leaders frequently used social media to mobilize people after 2019, posting information of protests that received a wide response from youth, which not only increased the efficiency of rallies and expanded the dissemination of information, but also attracted more groups to join. For example, 8 million people watched the *7.18 Protest* initiated by *Free Youth* via live webcast in 2020, and a total of hundreds of thousands of people participated in the *Free Youth Movement* in the same year.

Social media also made the organization of protests more flexible, convenient, and private. In addition to posting information about the rally in advance, social activists in Thailand also used social media to vote to make decisions. *Free Youth* had based their decision on the number of responses to different emojis in Facebook posts to decide whether to continue the protest. As protest leaders were arrested and jailed one after another, to avoid advance preparation by police based on online rally teasers, protest groups have increasingly adopted the Leaderless Protest format, in addition to using Twitter, which has more privacy than Facebook [34]. Moreover, instead of posting advance information a week or a day in advance, protest leaders use the encrypted instant messaging application Telegram to implement strategies through groups. For example, only announced the location of the rally in the group 15 minutes in advance, and the group would keep the location of the police updated to avoid conflicts.

Figure 2. Social media (Method) for communication within the protest groups



Source: Author’s collection of data from online questionnaire

4.2.3 Changes in the Way Protesters Gather and the Way They Communication

The government was changing the counter-measures to

protests as well. The familiar measure was the police used social media to obtain information about protests, then arrested protest leaders in advance or set up roadblocks. Indeed, the restructuring of laws and regulations is equally noteworthy. From the 2014 coup until the Covid-19 outbreak in Thailand, in addition to the *Decree No.3/2558* issued by the NCPO and *The Public Assembly Act* of 2015, hundreds of activists and dissidents were prosecuted on serious criminal charges such as Sedition and *lese majesté* (insulting the monarchy). After the Covid-19 outbreak, Thai government announced a *State of Emergency Decree (Emergency Decree)* to control the pandemic by restricting assembly of people. As the protests continued, the government also imposed *Severe State of Emergency* [35], which banned gatherings of five or more people, and not only granted the Thai government and police broad powers but placed many restrictions on the media to release information. The *Severe State of Emergency* was lifted at later, but the *Emergency Decree* was expanded. By the time the *Emergency Decree* was completely lifted on September 30, 2022, it was expanded totally 19 times [36]. According to the *Thai Lawyers for Human Rights*, at least 900 protesters were charged under the *Emergency Decree* between May and August 31, 2020, and in August 2021 alone, at least 260 people were arrested [37]. Related to this, court rulings have gradually changed following the arrests of protesters to limit the organization of protests. For example, since late 2021, more influential protest leaders have been repeatedly denied bail after their arrests, and some of them have been required to wear electronic monitoring bracelets and set curfews after being released on bail.

4.3 The Implications of Street Politics in Thailand from 2019 to 2022

4.3.1 Traditional Values and Regulations were Strongly Challenged by Youth

The royal family has always been supreme and unassailable in Thailand, but the protests under the pandemic were accompanied by increasing calls for reform of the monarchy. The anti-monarchy protests had repeatedly and strongly impacted the notion of Royal Supremacy in the minds of young Thais. In addition, according to the author's interviews, comments and articles on the Internet questioning the monarchy also continue to appear, leading to a further shaking of the traditional values of some respondents. A combination of interviews and questionnaires revealed that 80% of respondents (both protesters and non-protesters) often or sometimes discuss political or national current affairs with their parents or elders, but these discussions are often accompanied by differences of opinion, and 95% of these differences between respondents and their parents or elders focus on the views of the royal family. Over the four-year period, differences in political views and changing values led to confrontations between young Thais and their elders, especially royalist elders, which evolved into family

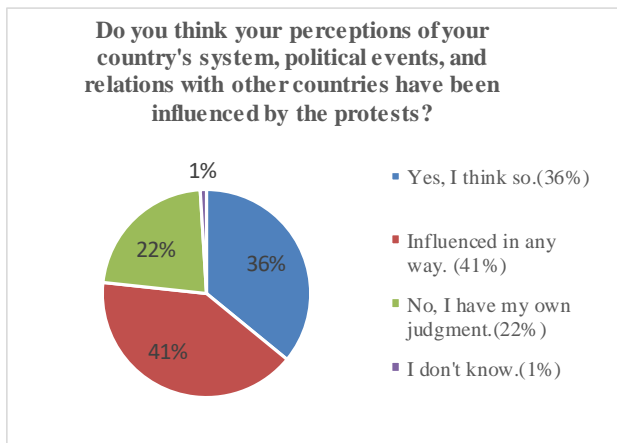
conflicts.

Secondly, the young generation's questioning and breaking of traditional was also evident in the education field. The similar *No School Uniform Movement* in the Thai drama *Hormones* was borrowed by *Bad Student* as part of their protest to demand gender-specific dress codes in schools since 2020. Meanwhile, other traditional school rules regarding grooming, even respect for teachers, were seen as old-fashioned dogma by some youth who chose not to enforce them. As the *Bad Student's* protests spread, there were reports that the Education Ministry had relaxed restrictions on grooming in revised norms. In interviews with students, the author also learned that Thai secondary schools had largely eliminated strict restrictions on normal hair and makeup, what's more, in some schools, students can choose to wear school uniforms according to their self-identified gender. In addition, as youth groups have been calling for more "gender equality" on campus through protests in recent years, some universities have announced that students can dress according to their self-identified gender [38].

4.3.2 Influenced the Public's Perceptions of Political Affairs

Protests in recent years were not only limited to protest the Thai government or political events but were also related to other countries and international affairs. Following the Myanmar 2021 coup, some Myanmar nationals held protests in Bangkok to oppose the coup [39]. In Thailand's subsequent solidarity with Myanmar, there were many artists who put the leaders of China, Myanmar, and Thailand together in art, portraying all three as anti-democrats and dictators. In addition to guiding the Thai protesters in organizing protests and maneuvering with the police, anti-China activists in Hong Kong and Taiwan have questioned and rejected *One China* policy both online and in Thailand after the mass protests in Thailand, such as the protest in Bangkok on 3 June 2020 to commemorate *Tiananmen Square Protest* and another one on 1 Oct 2020 to against China's National Day. This has largely influenced Thais who know little about China and then deepened the negative influence of the Chinese and the Chinese government, thus amplifying the impact of protests such as the one that erupted during the 2022 APEC conference [40]. In addition, some protests in solidarity with Ukraine and against Russia and Pugin have also taken place in front of the Russian Embassy in Bangkok, influenced by the Russia-Ukraine war. All these protests have, to some extent, guided or influenced Thais (especially those who followed or directly participated in the protests), shaped, or changed their perceptions of international affairs and international relations. As Figure 3 shows, that almost 80% of the respondents said that their views on national systems, political events and interstate relations were affected by the protests, while only 22% denied it.

Figure 3. The Extent to How Protesters Were Affected by Protests

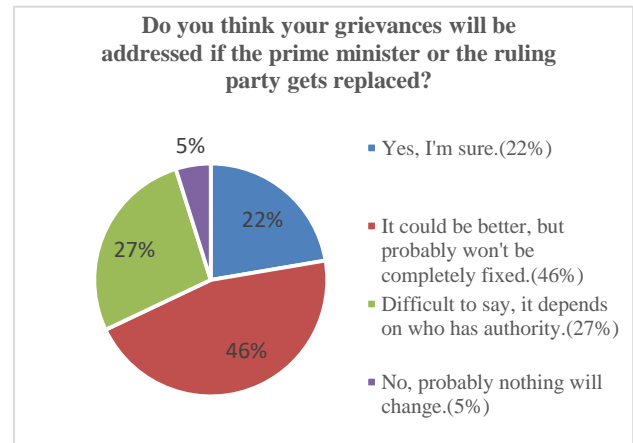


Source: Author's collection of data from online questionnaire

4.3.3 Political Factional Power Waxing and Waning

The ongoing protests have continued to take a toll on the Prayuth's support and the government's credibility, while the stability of the Prayuth government itself was also shaken by several incidents of power struggles in the cabinet. This was directly reflected in the results of the 2022 Bangkok governor election, where Chadchart, former transport minister under Yingluck's government, won more than 1.3 million votes to become governor of Bangkok [41]. Wiroj, who from Move Forward Party received more than 240,000 votes. However, both the pro-government and pro-royal candidates received fewer votes. In addition, the Pheu Thai Party and the Move Forward Party also took the lead in the Bangkok parliamentary elections. The change in the political factional power was also seen in public opinion polls. In July 2022, a project called *Voice of the People* to allow Thai people to vote on the cabinet members online, which was held in parallel with the vote on the no-confidence motion debate. A total of 520,000 people participated in, and the results showed that about 97% of people voted no confidence in Prayuth and the other cabinet members in this online project. On December 25, 2022, the results of National Institute of Development Administration's annual poll on the support of political figures this year, showed that Move Forward Party candidate Pita was the most popular candidate and Pheu Thai Party candidate Paetongtarn also received a high support rating. In addition, the most popular party among voters is Pheu Thai Party, with Move Forward Party second, followed by Ruam Thai Sang Chart Party and Democrat Party. The support of Prime Minister Prayut has been declining until the fourth time, when it has increased. Figure 4 shows that 22% of the respondents answered positively to the question "Do you think your grievances will be addressed if the prime minister or the ruling party gets replaced?", 46% said that their grievances will be addressed in some ways but not completely, and the remaining 5% answered negatively.

Figure 4. Satisfaction with the Current Prime Minister and the Ruling Party



Source: Author's collection of data from online questionnaire

5. Discussion

5.1 Brief Summary of the Results

The results show that street politics in Thailand during 2019 to 2022 mixed with partisan struggles and foreign guidance, but mainly consisted of spontaneous anti-royal and anti-Prayuth protests by youth. The Covid-19 pandemic catalyzed some of the youth protests, while protests and government counter-measures to protests changed as the pandemic developed and youth took the lead. The emergence of several influential anti-government youth leaders and groups over the past four years had simultaneously shaken the stability of the Prayuth government and the existing monarchy. As the conflict between the youth and the unelected government deepened, the gap between the youth and their elders and the old system grew, leading to a rapid resurgence of bourgeois democracy.

5.2 Future Implications of Street Politics During 2019 To 2022

The impact of the four years of protests is not only current. The change in power of the political parties will first affect the next prime ministerial election, from which the Move Forward Party and Pheu Thai Party are expected to emerge as the next prime minister, due to the great public support they have received, if a candidate from them is elected prime minister but unable to reconcile class conflicts, protests by groups, such as middle class and royalists are likely to break out, or even another military coup. If a candidate from the old faction led by Prayuth is elected prime minister, the anti-government and anti-royal protests are expected to reach a climax again. Also, as the demands of the protesters remain unanswered, there would

be more violent protests following the example of Thalu Gas, endangering social order and public safety. In addition, as youth values of the royal family and the nation have changed dramatically, the protests led by the youth for the rights will not stop in the future, more of Thailand old traditions and systems will be challenged and even changed. Finally, as public's views on international events and affairs were affected by the protests, it is likely that someone will have a negative impression of the countries involved in the protests, which may indirectly affect Thailand's trade relations and cooperation in international affairs.

5.3 Answers to Research Questions and Corroboration of Hypotheses

By overviewing the development of street politics from 2019 to 2022 in Results and analyzing the changes in the protests over the past four years, the author believes that the first Research Question is answered. The second Research Question is answered by the author incorporating the implications of street protests in Results for the present, and the implications of the past four years of protests for the future, as analyzed in the previous section.

However, the author ultimately found that the hypothesis of this study is still insufficient by collecting and analyzing the data. Because in fact, street politics was present in Thailand before the Covid-19 outbreak, the pandemic was not the entire reason that drove protesters to the streets. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic did lead to some changes in protesters' behavior in terms of gathering and protesting, but it was more the development and use of social media that played a key role.

5.4 Theoretical Development and Suggestions

This paper contributes to the theory by establishing a framework for the New Period of Deadlock in Thai Political Modernization based on the *Radical Politics*, *Digital Activism* and *Contentious Politics*. The potential negative impact of the recent protests on the future, as mentioned above, is in fact triggered by this new period of deadlock, which will inevitably have a serious impact on Thailand's development if not properly addressed. Therefore, based on the framework, the author proposes suggestions to the government and protesters with the aim of alleviating the new period of deadlock. The results show that protesters' dissatisfaction in recent years focused on the government policies and the Prayuth faction's impropriety political struggle methods. On this basis, for any faction to become prime minister or lead government, the focus should be on implementing measures to revive the economy and improve the quality of life of the citizens [42]. When protests occur, it is necessary to understand the protesters' demands then respond appropriately, and to refrain from using violence if stability is to be maintained. In addition, parties should use legal and legitimate methods in political participation, as inappropriate methods of struggle will only lose the public's support and create great resistance to subsequent

governance.

For protesters and protest groups, it is important to maintain moderate protests, ensure that public safety and order are not affected, especially reject violent protests. In addition, developing the viable methods and platforms for struggle, avoid creating more hostile forces and external pressure. Finally, protester must own the independent consciousness, rather than blindly following individual political parties or groups. Throughout Thai history, the further development of democracy required persistent popular struggle, but compromise was also a significant part of it. When protesters fight for legitimate rights and make more realistic demands, the government should respond positively and even make concessions to the satisfaction of the protesters. The prime minister and the ruling party should reconcile the interests of most forces and maintain healthy competition between political parties.

All sides, including protesters, political parties, and the government, should remain calm and restrained. Only mutual compromise and concessions can stabilize Thai society and give the nation an opportunity to move further along the road to democratization.

5.5 Contributions and Shortcomings

In addition to the theoretical part, this research also contributes other results. First, the number and main themes of protests in Thailand between 2020 and 2022 are shown using the tables. Secondly, the main protest groups and their main activities or characteristics are listed. Third, linking the Covid-19 pandemic to the protests, explaining the government counter-measures to protests and the impact of social media on the protests under the pandemic. Finally, surveys at universities and online questionnaires were conducted to understand Thai students' real opinions.

There are shortcomings in the study. The first is the weakness in the hypothesis, which the author argues is due to insufficient initial data and information collection, however, through the research, the author not only discovered his weakness, but also was able to gain a more in-depth understanding of the street politics in Thailand in recent years. Then, the data on protests during 2019 to 2022 are incomplete to fully confirm the number of protests and count the youth groups that participated, but this did not affect too much the overview of the protest's development. Also, the geographic area where the author distributed the questionnaire was primarily focused on Bangkok, and the questionnaire was largely filled out by Bangkok undergraduates, but since most participants in the recent protests were undergraduates in Bangkok, the author was still able to obtain that how most of the protesters perceived the protests, the protest groups, and the government.

6. Conclusion

Street politics in Thailand during 2019 to 2022 mainly erupted in Bangkok from 2020 to 2022, with students as the

main participants. This wave of street politics was strongly influenced by the thinking and behavior patterns of the younger generation, with far-reaching implications for Thailand's current and future. However, due to the limitations of the protesters, the overpowering counter-measures to protests of those in power and other factors, this wave of street politics led to the new period of deadlock in Thai political modernization. Under this new period, the street movement will continue, while only compromises and concessions from all sides will bring Thailand's democratization a step further.

By reviewing the protests development in recent years and listing the main youth groups, together with a survey of Bangkok students, this paper not only shows the changes in the participants, the way they gather, the government's counter-measures to protests, but also explores the implications of the protests on public order, traditional values, and the political direction of Thailand. While the research questions on the changes in street politics and their impacts during 2019 to 2022 were resolved, the author's hypothesis of a link between the pandemic and the protests of recent years has been improved. More importantly, the author obtained the real thoughts of Thai youth through numerous interviews and meticulous questions from questionnaire. Based on this, this study enriches the research on the development of street politics in Thailand and completes the research on the political participation of contemporary youth and its impact. A feasible study thereafter would be an exploration of the reasons why frequent and large-scale protests have not made substantial progress in Thailand in recent years.

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