



The Use of Strategic Non-Violence By Political Movements : Case Studies of the People's Alliance for Democracy in Thailand And the People Power Revolution in the Philippines

การใช้ยุทธศาสตร์แบบไม่ใช้ความรุนแรงโดยกลุ่มเคลื่อนไหวทางการเมือง
กรณีศึกษาของกลุ่มพันธมิตรประชาชนเพื่อประชาธิปไตย ในประเทศไทย
และกลุ่มพลังปฏิวัติประชาชนในฟิลิปปินส์

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความชิ้นนี้มุ่งที่จะทำความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับกลุ่มพันธมิตรประชาชนเพื่อประชาธิปไตยในประเทศไทยและขบวนการปฏิวัติประชาชนในประเทศฟิลิปปินส์ โดยวิเคราะห์ถึงปัจจัยและสถานการณ์ที่นำมาสู่การระดมคนจำนวนมากและการไม่ใช้ความรุนแรงในฐานะยุทธศาสตร์การเคลื่อนไหวทางการเมือง ผลจากการศึกษาพบว่า การเปลี่ยนแปลงของสภาพแวดล้อมทางการเมือง เศรษฐกิจและสังคมมีผลต่อการสร้างพฤติกรรมร่วมที่นำไปสู่การระดมมวลชน สถานการณ์และปัจจัยกระตุ้นในทางการเมืองมีส่วนช่วยในการปลุกระดมมวลชนและสร้างเหตุผลรองรับในการเคลื่อนไหวทางการเมือง ซึ่งทำให้เข้าใจได้ว่าทำไมทั้งสองกลุ่มจึงสามารถระดมผู้คนได้เป็นจำนวนมาก และเลือกใช้แนวทางการไม่ใช้ความรุนแรงก็เพราะเนื่องมาจากความสามารถในการสร้างสถานการณ์ทางการเมืองให้เป็นโอกาสทางการเมืองเชิงบวกต่อตนเองและการสร้างแนวร่วมสนับสนุนได้เป็นจำนวนมาก

คำสำคัญ: การไม่ใช้ความรุนแรง, พันธมิตรประชาชนเพื่อประชาธิปไตย,
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Abstract

This paper intends to understand more about The People's Alliance for Democracy in Thailand and The People Power Revolution in the Philippines by analyzing those factors and circumstances which led to their ability to mobilize large numbers of people, and also those factors that led to the use of non-violence as a strategy. The study finds that changes in the political, social and economic environments in both countries resulted in a frame of collective action conducive to the mobilization of people as part of political movements. The study also shows that political situations and triggering factors can mobilize people and justify their political movements. In the cases described here, the key reasons why the groups were able to commit to large-scale, non-violent action, was that they were able to create a positive and conducive environment within the existing political sphere as well as gain huge political support, and this situation led to the development of political opportunity.

Keywords: Non-violent action, People's Alliance for Democracy,
People Power Revolution

Introduction

The People Power Movement in the Philippines, also known as the EDSA Revolution), and the People's Alliance for Democracy movement (known as the PAD or yellow shirts movement) in Thailand, both arose from the tensions that existed in their respective countries in response to the existence of an exclusive polity, and also due to social and economic disparity. The two movements were political, and both resisted their governments at the national level. Although these two organizations existed at different times, they shared some similarities in terms of their contexts and motivating factors.

Changes in the political and socio-economic environment, and politically oppressive structures, both led to the mobilization of political movements in Thailand and the Philippines during the study periods. In Thailand, the PAD was formed in 2005 and stayed in place for three years, until 2008, in order to resist the incumbent Thaksin government and call for political reform. Those who joined the movement were from civil society groups (phak prachachon), NGOs, the middle class, the business sector, labor unions, conservative Buddhists and the Thai elite. The PAD was also considered a royalist-nationalist movement.

In the Philippines; meanwhile, the People's Power Movement was formed in central Philippines, mostly by those from the middle classes, the business sector, the church, and also students, workers, social and political activists, and moderate democratic politicians. It was formed in 1986, its aim being to oppose the Marcos dictatorship. The People Power

movement was formed out of an alliance between anti-Marcos movements which had developed in the late 1960s. These movements included the Communist Party in the Philippines (CPP), the New People's Army (NPA), the National Democratic Front (NDF) and the social democrats, who moved into both urban and rural areas in order to oppose Marcos's dictatorship. Their agendas also included opposition to US imperialism and feudalism. However, these movements were unsuccessful when attempting to use violence to oppose Marcos, and the CPP was riddled with internal conflict, and this situation led to it seeking another strategy in order to oppose Marcos. In addition, economic problems and Marcos's increasingly dictatorial actions resulted in heightened anger among the populace, including the Church and the middle-classes, who although opposed to Marcos preferred to use non-violent actions as part of EDSA revolution's strategy.

Therefore, the aims of this study are, first, to understand the background to these two political movements in Thailand and the Republic of the Philippines, by analyzing the factors and contexts which led to the large-scale mobilization of people, and second, to examine those factors that led to their use of non-violent action as a political strategy.

Objectives

1. To study political, social and economic contexts and factors that lead to the emergence of political movements in Thailand during 2006 – 2008s and the Philippines during 1984 – 1986s.

2. To analyze the patterns of political movements in Thailand and in the Philippines.

3. To study factors that relate to committing non – violence actions of political movements in Thailand and the Philippines.

Scope

This research guided by the political opportunity structure concept to analyze the occurring of political movements in Thailand (during 2006 – 2008s) and the Philippines (during 1984 – 1986s.), included their patterns or strategies of movements and the conditions that lead to committing a nonviolent actions, Besides, this study will apply the nonviolence theory of Gene Sharp to analyze the mobilization character of mass political movements in Thailand and the Philippines.

Research Methodology

This research project will use a comparative design and qualitative research methods to conduct the study of political movements in Thailand and in the Philippines by comparing between the People's Alliances for Democracy and the People Power Revolution as a comparative case study. This research will include a fieldwork study to interview the people related to the movements. So, this research consists of five stages;

1. Conduct a literature review on academic text books, researches and documents that related with the research subject.

2. Documents research which focus on study contexts, historical document of political movements that happened in the Philippines and Thailand during the period of studies.

3. Fieldwork study: this research will use the individual interviews to interview of leaders or followers who had ever participated in People Power Revolution during 1986 in the Philippines. And in case of Thailand, I had interview some of leaders and persons who participated in the Yellow Shirts movement during 2006 – 2008s by using a semi - structured interview.

4. Undertake a situational analysis of the field notes and interview notes, guided by the political opportunity structure and nonviolence theory to analysis of the political movements in Thailand and the Philippines.

5. Write a research report that combines my understanding of the relevant theory and previous researches with the results of my empirical research.

Formation of the movement: an overview

The EDSA Revolution movement in the Philippines was founded in the late 1960s, as youth activism developed into a highly organized political force feeding off the issue of student rights, economic equality (the redistribution of land; from landlords to tenants) and nationalism.

Accompanied by the spread of communism, students in this movement became aware of political values and liberalism through the US higher education system, but were also partly influenced by Marxism, as self-taught Marxists spearheaded an anti-clerical and nationalist campaign at the University of the Philippines (UP). This led to the formation of a student organization called the Kabataang Makabayan, or KM Nationalist Youth on November 30th 1964 (Montiel and Chiongbian, 1991: 760).

On the other hand, the influence of the post-Vatican II period influenced the Philippines' church in its role within modern society, as it began to stress the need for human liberation within a faith that seeks justice and demands preference be given to the poor. At the same time, students from private, Catholic schools created a framework for the activism to follow, in particular students from the Anteneo, La Salle and Holy Spirit Catholic schools, among others. Meanwhile, the Young Christian Socialist Movement (CSM) and the Young Christian Socialists of the Philippines (YCSP) formed 'The Laymen's Association for Post Vatican II Reforms' (LAPVIR) (Tolosa, 2011: 4), and this began a movement involving moderate students.

The activities of this movement led to a series of violent confrontations between police and the students, particularly during January 1970, which became known as the 'First Quarter Storm' (FQS), and which invoked a sympathetic reaction from many in the Manila media, including the Manila Times, the Manila Chronicle and the Philippines Free Press, which all criticized Marcos and helped raise awareness among the general population at that time. Around the same time as the formation

of the CPP and the New People's Army, an armed revolt was called for involving the redistribution of wealth and land reform in the country. The Communist Party then grew at its fastest rate ever during the mid- to late-1970s, particularly in areas where the military's presence had led to human rights violations and student arrests. As part of this, labor organizers and people in general who were suspected of being communists were detained and tortured. As a result, some people became supporters of the New People's Army (NPA). Moreover, a bloody Muslim separatist movement formed in the southern island of Mindanao led by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and this led to political instability and President Marcos declaring the imposition of martial law in 1972. During the early years of martial law, thousands of Filipinos were thrown into prison or killed; most being leaders of the movements, including those from the lower classes, journalists, students and religious leaders from the middle classes, as well as a few anti-Marcos politicians from the upper classes. Some student leaders escaped and decided to join an underground network.

However, other, more radical movements developed during this period, and most of these were associated with the CPP. These groups strengthened the NPA and followed the Maoist approach of building armed forces outside of cities. Meanwhile, more moderate groups connected to the nebulous Social/ Christian Democratic movement organized semi-legal activities such as political seminars and prayer rallies in opposition to Marcos's dictatorship.

The economic downturn was affected by Marcos's form of crony-capitalism, and after martial law was introduced human rights violations, controls on press freedom and political conflicts emerged, with the urban middle classes significantly impacted. The assassination of Benigno Aquino Jr. in 1983 aroused extremely unpleasant feelings among Filipinos, since he was a moderate and democratic opposition leader. His assassination shocked and outraged many Filipinos, and led to a rapid loss of confidence in the Marcos government. It also caused the country's economy to deteriorate even further, and the government was plunged further into debt (Torres, 2006). In light of Benigno Aquino Jr's assassination, protest rallies were held against Marcos's rule.

From the above it can be seen that a range of factors led to people taking up the fight against Marcos as part of the EDSA Revolution. The conflicts began based on ideological and political differences, but were then exacerbated by the abuse of power displayed by Marcos, so as to maintain his political ascendancy. His abuses of power reached into all corners of society, and caused a wide range of people to experience shared losses. The press lost its freedom of expression, meaning ordinary people lost their ability to criticize, and opposition to the government had no chance to express itself due to Marcos's monopoly on power. As a result of all this, most people no longer trusted the government, and this came to a head with the assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino. These shared experiences eventually acted as the political glue needed to bring people together within the EDSA Revolution movement.

Similar to the situation in the Philippines, the PAD movement in Thailand was driven by a shared loss of interest. In the case of Thailand; however, it was the political opportunity that had been lost, as a result of the changing political system brought in by the 1997 Constitution, and the subsequent dominance of the Thai Rak Thai party within the new election system. Thai Rak Thai has become the country's leading party, and dominated the parliament from 2001 to 2006. Thaksin, the leader of the party, became a very strong prime minister in the sense of monopolizing power. He successfully introduced populist policies in terms of public projects and also brought-in neo-liberal economic policies, which were seen as expanding the patronage system. Moreover, Thaksin received strong support from the grassroots. With his series of populist policies, Thaksin was criticized for abusing human rights principles, particularly in the case of his war on drugs, in his approach to the problems faced in the far south of Thailand, and also in terms of media freedom. The personal and hidden interests reflected in his policies led to them being widely criticized by people in society as a whole, and in the opposition parties.

The deal which solidified people's distrust in Thaksin was the case in which his family sold shares in Ship Crop Company to Temasek Holdings of Singapore, as it was felt the deal took place to avoid paying tax. Moreover, his privatization of the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) was opposed by an anti-privatization group led by the State Enterprise Labour Union, which expanded its connections to include other social and private organizations. However, there were other factors

that drove people to oppose Thaksin, such as the lack of openness within the political opportunity structure, and violations of the constitution and royal prerogatives (pharrachaamnag). His situation seemed to get worse when he decided to close ‘Muang Thai Rai Subda’, the only TV program opposed to him. This behavior emphasized his lack of political morality, his undermining of democracy and his monopoly over political power in the country. His government was referred to as the ‘Thaksin regime’ and was accused of operating ‘elected capitalist absolutism’ by many, and especially by those among the middle class.

Moreover, another important factor that led to the gathering of an alliance against Thaksin was the serious conflict that took place between the government and political- social activists, known as the ‘people sector’ or in Thai phak prachachon. This group included academic scholars, who were concerned particularly with Thaksin’s approach to dealing with poverty, human rights and groups opposed to development projects, such as the villagers opposed to the Thai- Malaysia gas pipeline project, among whom 12 were arrested on December 20, 2002. Thaksin was also suspected of killing innocent people as part of his war on drugs policy. All these actions led to a group of NGOs, social- political activists and academic scholars banding together to oppose government policies and work together to protect human rights (Uchane, 2013: 283).

So, these were the factors which gave rise to the opportunity for an anti- Thaksin alliance to form; one which eventually evolved into the PAD, ‘Thaksin Out’ or ‘yellow shirts’ movement. The PAD played a key

role in Thailand's political crisis over the period 2005 to 2008. The rapid expansion of the PAD movement was facilitated by the political situation at the time, and in particular by the selling of shares in the Ship Crop Company by Thaksin's family to Temasek Holdings of Singapore on January 23, 2006. The lack of moral and political legitimacy held by the Thaksin government eventually led to a conflict between a people's movement and the government, during which Thaksin dissolved the parliament, on February 24, 2006, and announced that a new general election would be held on April 2, 2006, in order to underline his government's political legitimacy and take advantage of the short notice period (only 36 days). However, the opposition parties: the Democrat Party, Chart Thai Party and Mahachon Party, all withdrew from the election process, and asked for social groups to take up a 'no vote' stance. This led to an electoral crisis, opening the way for intervention by the Thai military into the political arena once again.

In Thailand, the monarchy was used decisively to mobilize the PAD movement, as the Church was used in the Philippines. The two institutions were instrumental in their respective countries, though in the Philippines the Church was more active since the monarchy in Thailand is confined by law. Not only were these two key agencies used to mobilize the opposition movements, but also helped determine their non-violent nature, particularly in the case of the Philippines, as EDSA Revolution was ostensibly a Christian community, large Catholic-influenced, in which people non-violently confronted soldiers and tanks (Hornedo, 1987: 23-26).

Means used by the ‘Peaceful’ Yellows

The PAD of Thailand and EDSA Revolution in the Philippines were both non-violent movements, as defined by Gene Sharp (Sharp 1973). Non-violent protest is a generic term covering dozens of specific methods of protest, non-cooperation and intervention, in all of which the actionists conduct the conflict by doing or refusing to do certain things, but without using physical violence.

For the movements in Thailand and the Philippines, the non-violent actions involved the use of formal statements, such as public speeches, letters of opposition or support, and declarations by organizations, institutions, indictments and intentions.

To communicate with a wider audience, several methods were used by the groups in both Thailand and Philippines to communicate their ideas and points of view, and to disseminate information. The objectives of this were multiple; to influence the opposition groups, to gain sympathy and support from third parties, and to gain new members and/or assistance for other non-violent groups.

In the Philippines, to communicate ideas several calls to march were made by EDSA Revolution leaders through Radio Veritas, which was also used to disseminate important information. In Thailand, the PAD used sympathetic media outlets to mobilize support, such as the ASTV satellite station, newspapers and local radio stations. Also, banners and posters, and new social media forms such as Facebook, Twitter, manager online and web blogs were used. The activities of the PAD movement were

broadcast live for 24 hours each day through the ASTV satellite station, so the audience could follow protests live at home, as though they were watching a reality television show. The media sector had a big influence on people's perceptions in both countries. However, different technologies and media forms were used by the PAD and EDSA, because they occurred at different times and, in Thailand, not all the media was controlled, as was the case in the Philippines under martial law.

In the case of symbols, both movements used the same color, yellow. Yellow is a significant color in Thailand, as it represents Buddhism and also the King himself, because he was born on a Monday, and the protestors in Thailand saw themselves as the King's protectors. On the other hand, yellow was adopted by EDSA Revolution because it appeared in a popular song at the time, 'Tie a Yellow Ribbon round the Old Oak tree', and allies of senator Benigno Ninoy Aquino used it to show they still thought of him as their leader, in opposition to President Ferdinand Marcos. However, banners, posters, leaflets, pamphlets, books and others forms of displayed communication were not heavily used by the EDSA; it used newspapers, journals, records, the radio and television instead. Moreover, EDSA used one of the most recognized gestures globally; the laban (fight) sign, an 'L' formed with the supporters' thumbs and index fingers (Crisostomo, 1987).

As both were national movements, they needed to incorporate and represent the interests of a wide range of groups in order to operate effectively. In the PAD, the leaders were established administrators; Sondhi Limtongkul was a media mogul, Major General Chamlong Srimuang was an

ex-leader of the Palang Dharma Party and was supported by the Santi Asoke group, Phiphob Thongchai was a well-known activist, Somsak Kosaisuuk was a state enterprise union leader, and Somkiat Pongpaibon was a retired university lecturer and activist from the Assembly of the Poor. Meanwhile, inside EDSA Revolution the most prominent leader was Corazon Aquino – the widow of Benigno Aquino who eventually became the ‘icon’ of the democracy movement. It also had Salvador Laurel – a prominent leader from the United Nationalist Democratic Organization (UNIDO), Juan Ponce Enrile – a Justice Secretary and Defense Minister under the Marcos regime who later defected and joined the movement, Fidel V. Ramos – Chief of the Philippines Constabulary, Gringo Honasan – a Filipino politician, Jaime Cardinal Sin – the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila and de facto Primate of the Philippines, the former Senator Jose Diokno and Lorenzo Tañada – leader of Justice for Aquino, Justice for All (JAJA) (Thompson, 1995: 123).

One of the popular methods used when conducting a peaceful movement is to pressure individuals from the opposition group, whether it be officials or ordinary military personnel. The PAD went to the NBT and government offices, and to Government House, sometimes taking over these offices to prevent people from going to work. Most prominently they seized Don Muang Airport and then Suvarnabhumi Airport, as well as other, provincial airports in Phuket, Krabi and Hat Yai, and also blocked major roads and highways to force the Prime Minister to resign. The same was true of the EDSA, as the protesters went to Juan Ponce Enrile and Fidel V. Ramos, demanding they switch sides.

In the Philippines, Corazon Aquino, the widow of Benigno Aquino and opposition leader, announced a seven- point program of civil disobedience, to force Marcos to step down, such as holding prayer meetings and rallies and persuading people to fight against the “forces of evil”. The group also boycotted newspapers and television stations which were seen as spreading misinformation, and withdrew advertisements from the entire media. EDSA also boycotted products produced by Marcos supporters. It also withdrew its deposits from Marcos controlled banks and refused to deposit in these banks (Macaraya, 1988: 48 -51).

EDSA Revolution regarded the martial law authorized by Marcos as illegitimate, so their civil disobedience was justified based on a moral will to fight injustice and dictatorship; that is, to fight evil. Their commitment to a non-violent form of civil disobedience was related to their moral and religious beliefs, whereas the PAD used civil disobedience as part of an anti-government strategy, by seizing crucial spaces in order to pressure the government/Thaksin regime to accept their conditions.

Making sense of non-violent movements

According to Gene Sharp (1973), non-violent action is used to fight; its power drawn from the will of the people to withdraw support for and disobey the government. So, the use of non-violent action is based on two views: (i) a government depends on people, which means its power is pluralistic. This makes its political power fragile, because it depends on many groups to reinforce it, and (ii) that non-violence has its own power base and that this threatens the ‘hard’ power held by the state’s efficiency (Sharp, 1973: 8).

The actions of the PAD and EDSA Revolution allow us to examine whether a movement tends to be non-violent or not, and the type of group needed for non-violence to be considered. Non-violent action is used as a means to fight, but here I need to explore who tends to use this tool. Knowing what kind of group uses non-violent is useful when predicting what drives such movements. Even though both the study movements consisted of a variety of groups, it is not too hard to identify their key constituents. Both movements were mostly populated by those from the middle classes, and this social group played an interesting role in their organization. Those from the middle class in Thailand are mostly royalist, while in the Philippines they are predominantly Roman Catholic. Even though the Philippines is a secular nation, with a constitutional separation of the church and state, the Catholic Church has a strong influence on almost every aspect of life. It is clear that the PAD in Thailand was driven mainly by a loyalty to the King, while the EDSA revolution ran using God's path. The King of Thailand is supreme, almost akin to God in the Philippines; therefore, people in both countries were seen as acting on behalf of these figures. As a result, it would not have been easy or appropriate to tar their reputations with violent action, meaning non-violent actions was seen as the appropriate way to move in the name of these supreme figures. Especially for EDSA Revolution, non-violent action was carried out to directly oppose Marcos's violent actions, as a strategic tool to win the hearts of the masses. However, this does not mean violent action is never conducted within religious movements; the means used by these movements tend to vary dynamically, depending upon how each

movement gains from their use. For the PAD and EDSA Revolution, both of which were organized by the middle class, non-violent action legitimated their cause more than other forms of action would have done.

Conclusion

The structure of political opportunities in place was very important in helping to form the political movements in Thailand and Philippines studied here. Changes in the political, social and economic environment affected the collective actions of people and helped mobilize them into political movement, plus helped justify their movements. However, resistance to the political legitimacy of the authorities can be expressed in both violent and non-violent forms. The main reason why people in the movements explored here committed to non-violent action was it that it helped justify the meanings of their political movements and gave them the legitimacy to fight against their respective governments. In addition, within their political sphere, the political opportunity structure and the alliances they formed helped bolster their counter movements.

In this sense, people in both countries chose non-violent action as a strategy to react against their opponents, and to acquire both legitimacy and support for their movements. Even though the outcome of non-violent action is unpredictable, it can encourage solidarity among protestors, plus can give people the courage and power to strike against the authorities. In the case of EDSA Revolution, its members boycotted

media agencies, which had been spreading misinformation. The protestors even managed to prevent advertisements being aired by government controlled media outlets; boycotting Marcos' s crony capitalists. Meanwhile, the PAD and its partners carried out a long march to seize control of significant government locations.

The power of non-violent action comes from the will people have to withdraw support and disobey the government. First of all, governments depend on people; therefore, their power is pluralistic, and also fragile, because the sources of this power depend on support coming from many groups within the general population (Sharp 1973: 8). Second, and in the right circumstances, non-violent movements have the 'soft' power at their disposal to very effectively threaten the 'hard' power of the state.

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