

## Passing over in silences: Ideology, ideals and ideas in Thai translation

Michelle Tan

*This article explores English–Thai translations of ‘political ideology’. It traces the evolution of the Thai term *udomkān* and discusses how the complexity of the foreign discourse was reflected in its Thai counterpart. There was a conflation of ‘idea’ and ‘ideal’. *Udomkān* is a uniquely Thai word, translations of which have never been stable. The contemporary political conflict is analysed through an attempt to catalogue the points on which opposing sides pivot. While this tangled ‘pre–post–ideological’ predicament is not unique to Thailand, it exemplifies the ways in which cross-country comparisons might be wary of coding political factions along universal standards of coherence, contrast or temporal stability.*

### Introduction

Thailand has been caught in a protracted and violent state of polarisation over the last several years. That both sides claim the banner of democracy but neither claims to stake the left or the right betrays a seemingly tangled ideological history. Nonetheless, ideology, an unstable, contested but old-fashioned term, seems to have been resurrected on the airwaves and the streets. The bright, reductionist hues of red and yellow suggest coherence and contrast.

This article is not so much about what political ideologies have been propagated and absorbed by the Thai polity as how political ideology itself has been interpreted and transmogrified. It delves into *udomkān*, a problematic translation of ‘ideology’, as a Thai intellectual construct. What follows is an attempt to trace *udomkān* through the political debates of the 1970s and onward, towards an expansion of previous analyses of the ramifications of the events of 1976–83 for contemporary Thai politics. Ideology, a highly unstable term, has never found equivalents in Thai across its various incarnations. Instead of the domestication and stabilisation of the foreign term, *udomkān* has undergone a parallel evolution. In effect, there has been an ideology of *udomkān*. Yet it is not possible to map a double helix of changes in meaning across English–Thai counterparts. In many ways, this complexity is reflected in the nature of

Michelle Tan is an independent scholar. Correspondence in connection with this paper should be addressed to: michelle.tan71@gmail.com. Research for this article was conducted while the author was a postdoctoral fellow at the National University of Singapore, Southeast Asian Studies Programme. The author would like to thank Craig Reynolds for his comments on an earlier draft, as well as Kasian Tejapira for his notes on some early usages of *udomkān*.

the current conflict and in perceptions of the nature of political thought and behaviour. Ideas have been lost in the heat of battle and obscured in the pages of faded texts.

### Etymologies

As José Ortega y Gasset remarked on the challenges of philology or comparative linguistics, ‘translation is a matter of saying in a language precisely what that language tends to pass over in silence.’<sup>1</sup> Language simultaneously bestows and destabilises meaning. The complicated task of locating counterparts across Thai and English has long been further vexed by questions of Siam’s ambiguous relationship with the West. Peter Jackson writes of the need to combine ‘culturally nuanced reinterpretations of post-structuralism with the empirical findings of Thai area studies’ in order to reach a ‘genealogical understanding of Thai modernity’ that allows for comparison while simultaneously highlighting specificities.<sup>2</sup> Jackson raises the example of prominent scholar Kasian Tejapira, who saw the primary question in the history of Thai leftist thought as ‘the relationship and interaction between national culture and foreign-derived discourse’.<sup>3</sup> Kasian’s task was not the study of Thai politics *per se*, but the politics of translation.<sup>4</sup> As he concluded:

Where language is standardised and coinages need to be sanctioned by central authorities, as in modern Thailand, the translation of key foreign political and ideological words becomes a highly politicised and fiercely contested borderland in which language border patrol police try to screen newly translated lexical immigrants, discriminating against radical ones and declaring them *lexicon non grata*.<sup>5</sup>

The interaction amongst Thai and non-Thai scholarship has produced a small but critical set of word pairings that has furthered much of this genealogical understanding. From Kasian, we get communist/khommiunit (คอมมิวนิสต์). Craig Reynolds artfully traced the evolution of feudalism/*sakdina/saktina* (ศักดินา).<sup>6</sup> From Thak’s classic work on Sarit Thanarat, we get revolution/*patiawat* (การปฏิวัติ).<sup>7</sup> Also, Michael Connors has written at length about the apparent contradictions of perhaps the most problematic pairing of all — democracy/*prachathipatai* (ประชาธิปไตย).<sup>8</sup>

1 José Ortega y Gasset, *Man and people* (New York: Norton, 1957), p. 246.

2 Peter A. Jackson, ‘Semicolonality, translation and excess in Thai cultural studies’, *South East Asia Research*, 13, 1 (2005): 8–9.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18; Kasian Tejapira, *Commodifying Marxism: The formation of modern Thai radical culture, 1927–1958* (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2001), p. 1.

4 Kasian, *Commodifying Marxism*, p. 4.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 196–7.

6 Craig J. Reynolds, *Thai radical discourse: The real face of Thai feudalism today* (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program [hereafter SEAP], Cornell University, 1987); Craig J. Reynolds, ‘Feudalism as a trope for the past’, in Reynolds, *Seditious histories: Contesting Thai and Southeast Asian pasts* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2006). See also Craig J. Reynolds and Lysa Hong, ‘Marxism in Thai historical studies’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 43, 1 (1983): 77–104.

7 Thak Chaloeontiarana, *Thailand: The politics of despotic paternalism* (Ithaca, NY: SEAP, Cornell University, rev. 2007; orig. pub. Bangkok: Thai Khadi Institute, Thammasat University, 1979), pp. 167, 214.

8 Michael Kelly Connors, *Democracy and national identity in Thailand* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, rev. and updated 2007; orig. pub. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003). Arguably, possible translations of *prachathipatai* span a wide, incoherent spectrum ranging from ‘quasi-absolute monarchy’ to ‘republic’.

This article does not attempt to say anything about the theory or philosophy of ideology itself. The term has been described as pointing to a black box, peripatetic, semantically promiscuous, and much abused. Efforts to define it run the gamut of the epistemological, cognitive, behaviouralist, sociological and semiotic.<sup>9</sup> There is no general theory which can ‘specify the functions and content of ideology for different societies’;<sup>10</sup> the abstraction and complexity of the concept is such that ‘ideology is always, by definition, “ideology of ideology”’.<sup>11</sup> Kathleen Knight traces the conceptualisation of ideology in American political science over the twentieth century,<sup>12</sup> while John Gerring argues for mapping the meanings of ideology on a single, semantic grid for the social sciences more generally.<sup>13</sup> Both conclude that there is a pragmatic consensus on a core definition of ideology as one of coherence, the notion of ideology as a relatively stable set of interrelated ideas. Gerring argues, ‘Ideology, at the very least, refers to a set of idea-elements that are bound together, that belong to one another in a non-random fashion.’<sup>14</sup>

In Chai-anan Samudavanija’s 1973 textbook (reprinted in 1980) *Political ideology* [*udomkān thāng kanmūang*], he admits to the confusion and complexity of translation. He defines the term ‘ideology’ as a foreign import, but attaches it to the Thai term *udomkān*<sup>15</sup> (อุดมการณ์ or อุดมการ):

‘*Udomkān*’ is a new term. It brings a new idea to Thailand. As it is not a term that we are used to, we still do not have a clear understanding of it .... When people explain the meaning of *udomkān* from its roots, they say it is a joining of the words ‘*udom*’ which means perfection with ‘*kān*’ which means ‘action’, and we conclude that ‘*udomkān*’ means ‘perfect action’. Translating the word this way is wrong because it does not explain the history of the term ‘IDEOLOGY’ which is a Western idea which various leaders have used for various meanings.<sup>16</sup>

*Udomkān* is a very new term — the Royal Institute’s 1950 and 1962 dictionaries do not include it. It is listed in a 1958 Thai–English lexicon, but spelled without the *karan* indicating a silent letter and listed alongside *udomkhatī*.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the meaning given is ‘cause, ideal, idealism, idealistic’.

Many of the neologisms corresponding to foreign political terms, particularly those used in international relations, were coined by Prince Wan Waithayakon.

9 John Gerring, ‘Ideology: A definitional analysis’, *Political Research Quarterly*, 50, 4 (1997): 957–94; Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An introduction* (London: Verso, 1991).

10 Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill and Bryan S. Turner, ‘Determinacy and indeterminacy in the theory of ideology’, in *Mapping ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 1994), p. 164.

11 Slavoj Žižek, ‘Introduction: The spectre of ideology’, in Žižek, *Mapping ideology*, p. 19.

12 Kathleen Knight, ‘Transformations of the concept of ideology in the twentieth century’, *American Political Science Review*, 100, 4 (2006): 619–26.

13 Gerring, ‘Ideology’.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 980.

15 In this article, I will deliberately leave the Thai term *udomkān* untranslated. Where the English term ‘ideology’ appears in Thai text that I have translated into English, I am quoting the original Thai source where the term appears in upper-case letters in roman script.

16 Chai-anan Samudavanija, *Udomkān thāng kāmūang* [Political ideology] (Bangkok: Bannakit Printing House, 1973), p. 1.

17 Suthī Ēkahitānon, *Photchanānukrom Thai–Angkrit* [Thai–English dictionary] (Bangkok: Kritsanapakōn Printing House, 1958), p. 88.

His word list, which he began compiling in the 1930s, translates ideology as *udomkhatīwitthayā* (อุดมคติวิทยา), which suggests ‘study of the ideal/ideals’.<sup>18</sup> This was mostly likely the beginning of the confusion, as its root, the Pali *udom*, means to ‘to abound’ or ‘to be plentiful’, and the Pali *kathī* refers to ‘principle’ or ‘model’, in contrast to the *idea*-based root of *ideology*. It seems that Prince Wan mistakenly seized upon the ‘ideal’ in ideology, taking it to be the most important sememe, when its core sememe is actually ‘idea’. M.R. Nimitmongkol Navarat’s 1939 novel *Khwāmfan khōng nakudomkhatī* (ความฝันของนักอุดมคติ) is properly translated as *The dreams of an idealist*.<sup>19</sup> A 1947 short story by Sō Asonchinonda, a writer who would later become a film director, uses the word *nakudomkhatī* in the title to refer to an idealistic son who wishes to pursue journalism while the practical father prefers law.<sup>20</sup>

In November 1949, Supha Sirimanond, editor of *Aksōnsān* magazine (1949–52) and the first Thai-educated student to thoroughly study Marx’s *Capital*, used the term *udomkān* in his ‘Letters from the Editor’ in ways suggestive of ‘mission’ or ‘ideals’.<sup>21</sup> Another early instance of the term’s usage occurs in 1952 in the most important radical Thammasat University student publication of the time, *Thammačhak*. The word appeared in the sentence: ‘Under these conditions, we must join together and persevere in our struggle, according to our *udomkān*.’<sup>22</sup> However, by the early 1950s, with the appearance of some key communist intellectuals who knew Chinese, such as Udom Sisuwān and Sanan Woraphreuk, ideology was still being translated into Thai as *udomkhatī*, not *udomkān*. Udom, in *Life and dreams*, writes, ‘Yao (the character at issue) begins to dream and construct his own *udomkhatī*.’<sup>23</sup> The distinction between the English terms ideology and ideals is unclear.

*Udomkān* is thus an inaccurate or misinterpreted coinage for ‘ideology’, rather than an old term that has been invested with new meaning(s).<sup>24</sup> Its novelty is reflected in the fact that there is no agreement as to its proper spelling.<sup>25</sup> The 1999 Royal

18 Phontri Prāchāowōrawongthō Krommamūn Narāthipphongpraphan, *Witthayathat Phraong Wan Witthayathat Phra’ong Wan: khrop 110 pi wan prasūt 25 Singhākhom 2544* [The academic views of Prince Wan: On the 110th anniversary of his birth on 25 August 2001] (Bangkok: Narāthip Praphanphong-Wōrawan Foundation, 2001), p. 313.

19 Nimitmongkol Navarat, *The dreams of an idealist: A victim of two political purges; and The emerald’s cleavage*, trans. David Smyth (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2009).

20 Sō Asonchinonda, ‘Mū’a nakudomkatī klap bān’ [When an idealist returns home], *Mahāchon*, 111 (1947).

21 He wrote, ‘Aksōnsān will still include works of entertainment. This is because we organised the work plan as such. However, after we were able to consider printing works of fiction, it appeared that this kind of collection would be appropriate for the *udomkān* of Aksōnsān’. See Suphā Sirimānon, *Čhotmāi čhāk bannāthikān* [Letters from the editor] (Bangkok: Čhindā Sirimānon: Ngān Dī Phūčhatčhamnāi, 1988), p. 38. On *Aksōnsān* itself, see Kasian, *Commodifying Marxism*, pp. 160–76.

22 Čhāokhananitisat [Faculty of Law People], ‘Raingankhananitisat’ [Report of the Faculty of Law], *Thammačhak*, 4, 1 (1952): 118–21.

23 Udom Sisuwān, Sathīan Chanthimathorn and Suchāt Sawatsī, *Čhīwit kap khwāmfaifan* [Life and Dreams] (Bangkok: Dōk Yā, 1978), p. 15. He further describes the qualities of ideologues: ‘Udomkhatī or dreaming ... those who consume *udomkhatī* are the kind who are unconventional and like performing religious ceremonies’ (p. 20).

24 Craig J. Reynolds, personal communication, 7 Nov. 2008 [for the phrase ‘old term invested with new meaning(s)’].

25 See Chamnong Tongprasert, *Pasā thai kai kan* [The Thai language explained] (Bangkok:

Institute Dictionary lists its definition as the ‘principles that establish an order or approach to action in order to achieve the determined goal’,<sup>26</sup> which is closer in meaning to ideals than ideas, concepts or viewpoints.

What, therefore, was Prince Wan’s Thai term for what in English is connoted as ideology, particularly political ideology? In an essay titled ‘Political science vocabulary project’ (undated, republished in a 1965 volume of collected essays) he employs the term *latī kanmūang* (political doctrine) to describe the following terms he itemises in English: ‘LAISSER FAIRE, SOCIALIST, COMMUNIST, FASCIST’.<sup>27</sup> Earlier in the essay, he had cautioned:

As far as I see, articles about the academic study of politics which come out in newspapers, for the most part, refer to politics abroad and then make comparisons. This comparison is not easy and is deceptive. We should be careful in making comparisons and compare the concrete manifestations or the specific contexts.<sup>28</sup>

On the term *latī*, Prince Wan explains that it is a preferable equivalent for the English term ‘doctrine’ because the more direct translation, *anusāsani* (อนุศาสน์), he finds too long a word.<sup>29</sup> *Latī* may be interpreted as a closer approximation of ‘ideology’, but it carries both connotations of religious groupings as well as those of ‘-isms’. In Bradley’s 1873 dictionary, *latī* is listed as ‘to hold in one’s mind for a reason’ while in McFarland’s 1944 lexicon, *latī* had evolved into ‘religious beliefs, tenets, practices, faith’. *Latī* may be attached to a variety of -isms from imperialism to Hinduism. *Latī* also implies some sort of group membership. In the late 1940s, *Mahāchon*, the primary communist publication, translated ideology as *latī*. In *Aksōnsān* as well, *latī* was the most common translation of ideology. In 1950, poet Atsanī Phonlačhan, who later became a Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) central committee member, published a translation of Mao Tse-tung’s lectures in which he translated the Chinese word for ‘ideology’ as *latī*.<sup>30</sup> In the following issue, Kulab Saipradit has a piece entitled ‘Political theory: The period of socialist ideology’ (*thrisadī kanmūang: ton latī*

Phraepittiya Printing House, 1985), pp. 11–12 or <http://www.royin.go.th/th/knowledge/detail.php?ID=1187> (last accessed 22 June 2011).

26 หลักการที่วางระเบียบไว้เป็นแนวปฏิบัติเพื่อให้บรรลุเป้าหมายที่กำหนดไว้

27 Wan Waithayakon, *Chumnumphraniphon khong than wan pontri krommænthiphongphrapan* [Collected essays of Prince Wan] (Bangkok: Phadungsuksā Printing House, 1965), p. 304. In the late 1950s, Prime Minister Sarit Thanarat asked that the name of the National Socialist Party no longer be translated in English as ‘National Socialist’ because it was not socialistic. Charles F. Keyes, *Isan: Regionalism in northeastern Thailand* (Ithaca, NY: SEAP, Cornell University, 1967), p. 50. The use of this name is still banned by the Electoral Commission of Thailand. By 1950, ‘progressive thought’ (ความคิดก้าวหน้า) was accepted as a euphemism for Marxism. Somsak Jeamtheerasakul, ‘The Communist movement in Thailand’ (Ph.D. diss., Monash University, Melbourne, 1993), p. 323.

28 Wan, *Chumnumphraniphon khong than wan pontri krommænthiphongphrapan* [Collected essays of Prince Wan], pp. 298–9.

29 Phontri Prāčhāowōrawongthōe Krommamūn Narāthipphongphrapan, *Witthayathat Phraong Wan* [Academic views of Prince Wan], p. 291.

30 Intharāyut (Atsanī Phonlačhan), ‘Sinlapa læ wannakhadi’ [Art and literature, a translation of Mao Tse-tung’s lectures], *Aksōnsān*, 1, 11 (1950): 62–81.

*sochlit*)'.<sup>31</sup> Historian Somsak Jeamtheerasakul, in discussing the 1933 Anti-Communist Act, translates *latī* as 'theory'.<sup>32</sup>

During the post-war period, *udomkān* as a shortened version of Prince Wan's *udomkhatiwitthayā* began to signify — however inaccurately and confusingly — the 'ideology' that was then commonly understood abroad in Marxist terms, as opposed to those of Destutt de Tracy, although Marx was known to use the expressions 'ideas', 'ideology', 'consciousness' and 'superstructure' confusingly. Ideology was false consciousness or the system of the ideas and representations which dominated the mind of an individual or social group.<sup>33</sup> According to Sulak Sivaraksa, founding editor of the *Social Science Review* from 1963 to 1969,<sup>34</sup> in which the term appeared frequently, *udomkān* is still 'anything that captures you, and you cannot rebel against it'.<sup>35</sup>

Thai Marxist intellectuals may have been the first to introduce *udomkān* as a translation for ideology, but sometime in the late 1960s to 1970s, the term lost its moorings. It was around this period that it became fashionable in Thai urban public discourse, with students often writing about the need to have *udomkān* or *udomkhatī*,<sup>36</sup> importantly, some arguments ensued as to which of the two was the proper term to use. This reflected the continuing conflation of ideology and ideal. Used frequently in public discourse, *udomkān* has become a cliché, to the point where a closer approximation in English of the way the term is used presently would be principles or fealty to ideals, as in 'politicians lack *udomkān*'. It is a trope of distinct moral overtones. An 'ideological base' of a political party, social movement or persona is better passed over in favour of other expressions such as 'trend of thought or ideas' (แนวความคิด) or 'stance' (จุดยืน), or even *tatsanakati* (ทัศนคติ), which is roughly translated as 'attitude' or 'opinion', but may also refer to a stance or position. Sociologist Nalinee Tantuvanit, who wrote a dissertation (1994) at the University of Wisconsin entitled 'Ideology and ideological practices of the Thai peasantry', explains that she translates *udomkān* more properly as 'worldview' (โลกทัศน์), as the response she initially received when doing research was that peasants had no *udomkān*.<sup>37</sup> It is better to avoid ideology altogether.

How is the confused spectrum of Thai politics reflected in the fact that there has been no direct transference of ideology? Ideas seem to have failed to form into groupings or labels, to coalesce into policies, and interests have failed to aggregate into platforms or agendas because — it seems — of misinterpretation, misrecognition, or the

31 Kulab Saipradit, 'Thrisadi kanmūang: ton latī sochlit' [Political theory: The period of socialist doctrine], *Aksōnsān*, 1, 12 (1950): 44–51.

32 Somsak Jeamsatheerakul, 'The Communist movement in Thailand', p. 108. *Latī* socialism was associated with utopian or 'Phra Sri Arya' connotations since King Vajiravudh's 1912 satirical essays on socialism (see Kasian, *Commodifying Marxism*, pp. 14–17).

33 See Louis Althusser, *Essays on ideology* (London: Verso, 1984), p. 32.

34 On the significance of the *Social Science Review*, see Reynolds and Hong, *Marxism in Thai historical studies*, p. 86; Narong Phetprasert, *Chāk aksōnsān thūng sangkhomsāt parithat* [From *Aksōnsān* to the *Social Science Review*] (Bangkok: Political Economy Studies Centre, 2006); and Thadeus Flood, 'The Thai left wing in historical context', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 7 (1975): 61.

35 Interview, Sulak Sivaraksa, Bangkok, 15 Oct. 2009.

36 Kasian Tejapira, personal communication, 27 Dec. 2010.

37 Interview, Nalinee Tantuvanit, Bangkok, 19 Oct. 2009.

ideologisation of ideology itself. This is the hypothetical of going beyond nation, religion and king. Perhaps beneath the tripartite shibboleth, layers have been lost and re-found, or hidden and resurfacing in mutated, variegated forms. In his 1988 article, 'The origin of modern official state ideology in Thailand', Eiji Murashima does not explain how the modern official state 'ideology' is referred to in the Thai idiom.<sup>38</sup> The trinity are referred to as 'institutions' (สถาบัน, another of Prince Wan's neologisms), or 'most revered institutions'. If it is not 'national *udomkân*' but the '*udomkân* of Thai nationalism', are nation, religion, king collectively considered transcendent or not needing of a double referent? Ideology seems more a term that 'outsiders' have themselves imposed upon the trinity.

### Ideological politics and the politics of ideology

In November 1971, the Social Science Association of Thailand held a seminar at Chulalongkorn University, funded by The Asia Foundation. The papers and proceedings were published as a book edited by Chatthip Nartsupha, *Ideology and Thai society* (อุดมการณ์กับสังคมไทย, sans *karan*) (1972).<sup>39</sup> In its preface, it is already clear that *udomkân* is a foreign import, something that could be imposed or foisted from above or the outside. It is framed as a pre-existing, artificial set of attitudes that could be packaged and deployed:

[We] concluded that *udomkân* is of great importance for developing countries. It has a role in gathering the morale of the public in pushing for improvement in their country's political economy. The problem remaining is what ideology does Thailand want? The seminar 'Udomkân and Thai Society' tried to answer this question .... Several seminar participants proposed an ideology that combines liberalism (เสรีนิยม) and socialism (สังคมนิยม). At the seminar, it was concluded that the centrist (กลาง) *udomkân* would be liberal socialism (สังคมนิยมเสรี).<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, the preface describes a conflict at the seminar in which the participants could not decide on whether an *udomkân* had to be for one specific community. One side found that an *udomkân* should aid the disadvantaged, but it 'represent [ed] the interests of the classes, especially that class that has power'.<sup>41</sup> The other side argued that *udomkân* was constructed as a national ideology, in order to 'combine the power of society so that they all get along'.<sup>42</sup> The participants continue to discuss the specificities of Thai politics, including the lack of an anti-colonial struggle as an impediment to the formation of *udomkân*;<sup>43</sup> Chai-anan's view that Pridi Banomyong's economic plan led to the end of the solidarity of the 1932 coup group;<sup>44</sup> and that political *udomkân* arose with difficulty because it was an

38 See Eiji Murashima, 'The origin of modern official state ideology in Thailand', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 19, 1 (1988): 80–96.

39 Reynolds and Hong (*Marxism in Thai historical studies*) translate the book's title as *Thai ideology and society*.

40 *Udomkân kap sangkhomthai* [Ideology and Thai society], ed. Chatthip Nartsupha (Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1972), pp. 1–2.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

abstraction.<sup>45</sup> Thai society needed ‘concrete goals’ rather than something abstract. However, by pages 89 to 90 of the meeting transcript, it is clear that the participants are still arguing over the definition of *udomkān*. At one point, Sermsak Thephakham, advisor to the head of the Songkhla administrative court, interjects to request clarification:

I say that we are dependent upon the English [term]. This irksome word, ‘IDEOLOGY’—in Thai, we translate it as ‘udomkān’, but whether this is a correct translation of the *farang* meaning, I don’t know .... I have looked in the dictionaries, but the word is absent. I have consulted with linguistic experts, and they say the term is a combination of two words, one meaning ‘action’ and the other meaning ‘perfection’.<sup>46</sup>

Sermsak is in turn criticised by Kramol Thongthammachart for consulting with these linguistic experts, as they are ignorant of ideology’s definition. The seminar ends inconclusively, apart from agreement that *udomkān* is something that Thailand urgently needs.

Of the elite intellectuals<sup>47</sup> of the late twentieth century, Chai-anan Samudvanija has had the most influence on how *udomkān* has been assimilated and interpreted. He is exemplar of a class that has long been parodied for introducing English or other foreign terms.<sup>48</sup> In Chai-anan’s above-mentioned 1973 textbook, *Political ideology*, he describes the beginnings of the common use of ‘ideology’ in France as a type of method in the study of philosophy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He posits the second meaning as one in line with Karl Mannheim’s ‘particular conception’, in which ideology is a mask obscuring the real interests of the ideology’s proponents. Ideology is a tool of those seeking power to pressure opposing groups.<sup>49</sup> Chai-anan continues to portray *udomkān* as monopolistic in nature, as a set of irrational beliefs or propaganda that does not admit to alternatives.

*Udomkān thāng kānmūāng* [political ideologies], for example, communist ideology, has the character of being strict. It takes over beliefs, thoughts, and the explanation of history and social events. According to Marx’s perspective, no one is allowed to contradict it. It’s an ultimate reality (ปรมัตถธรรม). We therefore have to separate things we call *udomkān thāng kānmūāng* (POLITICAL IDEOLOGY) from politics which cling to only *udomkān* (IDEOLOGICAL POLITICS).<sup>50</sup>

Chai-anan had iterated this position on ideological politics during the 1971 seminar, adding that things like ‘love of family’ should not be political, as in Mao’s Cultural

45 Ibid., p. 51.

46 Ibid., pp. 80–1.

47 They are often referred to as ‘aristocratic intellectuals’ (ปัญญาชนขุนนาง or ขุนนางนักวิชาการ). Surapong Jayanam discusses Gramsci’s concept of organic intellectuals in ‘*Wā duay panhā udomkān* [On Thai ideology’s dilemma], *Social Science Review*, 3, 11 (1973): 43.

48 See Warin Wonghanchow, ‘*Udomkān kap sangkhom thai* [Review of *Ideology and Thai society*], *Social Science Review*, 3, 11 (1973): 52–7. He pokes fun at ideology by coming up with his own brand of ‘liberal nubism’.

49 Chai-anan, *Udomkān thāng kānmūāng* [Political ideology], p. 4.

50 Ibid., p. 20.



Revolution.<sup>51</sup> ‘We must separate politics from society’, he asserts.<sup>52</sup> For Chai-anan, liberalism (อุดมการเสรีนิยม) is ‘not used as a political tool in controlling political behaviour as much as communism (อุดมการคอมมิวนิสต์)’.<sup>53</sup> For these reasons, the only ideologies that can be considered *udomkân thāng kânmiāng* are: absolutism, constitutionalism, individualism, socialism, nationalism and elitism.<sup>54</sup> Communism is omitted from this list.

Moreover, under the section, ‘The abrupt end of *udomkân* in Thai society’,<sup>55</sup> Chai-anan attempts to address class consciousness and political economy while maintaining that *udomkân* is monopolistic in nature. He contends:

Class consciousness and the people’s way of life is the link between their life conditions, resources, and power. This expands to the economic order and politics under the state. This is the foundation for *udomkân* to be achieved.<sup>56</sup>

The primary ‘culprit’ behind the absence of *udomkân* is traditional beliefs, including short-term interests, dyadic relationships and Bhramanic principles. Because Thai society was still traditional, according to Chai-anan, ‘it is not surprising that we have *udomkân*, ideas (แนวความคิด), and beliefs (ความเชื่อ) that have more to do with religion than *udomkân thāng kanmiāng* or economics.’<sup>57</sup> Contrast this to Supha Sirimanond’s explicit Thai–English translation:

DEMOCRACY is a political science word form (เป็นรูปศัพท์รัฐศาสตร์)  
COMMUNISM is a socioeconomics word form (เป็นรูปศัพท์สังคมเศรษฐกิจ)<sup>58</sup>

One root of the trend perpetuated by Chai-anan may have been the 1927 law banning the teaching of economic thought, or, rather, the royal court’s association of economics with socialism.<sup>59</sup> The first modern economics text in Thai, *Sapphasat* (Science of wealth, 1911, 1934) was banned by the government.<sup>60</sup> Criticism of Pridi Banomyong’s economic plan could not be divorced from attacks against the anti-democratic nature of the People’s Party.<sup>61</sup> When the *Journal of Political Economy*

51 Chai-anan Samudavanija, ‘Udomkân thāng kanmiāng khong thai’ (The political ideology of Thailand), in *Udomkân kap sangkhomthai* [Ideology and Thai society], pp. 14, 94.

52 Chai-anan, *Udomkân thāng kanmiāng* [Political ideology], p. 21.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

54 *Ibid.*, pp. 22–3.

55 *Ibid.*, pp. 144–59.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 156.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

58 Supha Sirimanond, *Khambanyai khaepitalit bot wikro sangkhom sethakit amerikan* [Lectures on capitalism: Analysis of American socioeconomy] (Bangkok: Social Research Institute Book Project, Chulalongkorn University, 1951), p. 13. When I began teaching at Thammasat University in the early 2000s, I noticed that my students still employed the term ‘communist’ in a way different from Supha’s ‘socioeconomics word form’ translation. ‘Hitler was a khommiunit,’ they would tell me.

59 Ian Brown, ‘Economic thought in early twentieth-century Siam’, in *Thai constructions of knowledge*, ed. Manas Chitkasem and Andrew Turton (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1991), p. 95. See also Somsak, ‘The Communist movement in Thailand’, pp. 39, 120.

60 Brown, ‘Economic thought in early twentieth-century Siam’, p. 93.

61 Eiji Murashima, ‘The making of modern Thai political parties’, in *Democracy and the development of political parties in Thailand 1932–1945*, ed. Eiji Murashima (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1991), p. 24.

was launched in 1981, the scholars associated with it estranged themselves from those in the disciplines. As described by Lysa Hong, ‘They read a different literature, used a *different vocabulary*, and published in different journals, so distinct and uncompromising were their theories.’<sup>62</sup>

By 1976, it was clear that Chai-anan was employing *udomkân* to imply an ‘ideal’ or ‘motivational goal’. In his *Democracy, socialism, and communism*, he writes, ‘The change from absolute monarchy to democracy has not created lasting political institutions .... The administration [of the country] has had no *udomkân thāng kân-mūāng* as a goal.’<sup>63</sup> He denigrates previous rebellions and social movements as lacking *udomkân* to lead them.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, the problem for Chai-anan was that *udomkân thāng kân-mūāng* had been used to divide society into two groups of left and right.<sup>65</sup> The solution therefore lay in a single *udomkân* called DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM.<sup>66</sup> Again, in the zeitgeist of 1976, Chai-anan concludes that Thai society had only three options: liberal democracy, social democracy or civil war.<sup>67</sup> Contrast this to Kasian’s extensive list of competing individuals and groups during the period 1948 to 1957, during which the binary ideologies could be encapsulated as: ‘royalism *versus* democracy’; ‘military dictatorship *versus* civilian democracy’; ‘bourgeois democracy *versus* new democracy’; ‘patriotism *versus* imperialism’; ‘nation, religion, and monarchy *versus* communism’; and ‘communism *versus* capitalism’.<sup>68</sup>

Even more bewildering are the contributions by Surapong Jayanama in the March 1973 *Social Science Review*, the National Ideology issue.<sup>69</sup> Surapong, schooled thoroughly in non-Thai political theory and who later became an ambassador to five countries, was the first to refer to the work of Antonio Gramsci in Thailand.<sup>70</sup> In the article, ‘Who is a Leftist?’ Surapong attempts to flesh out the distinction between *latī* and *udomkatī* [although the title of his other entry in the issue is ‘On the problem of *udomkân*’, not *udomkhatī* (वादด้วยปัญญาอุดมการ)]. His view is that ideology is best translated as *latī*:

Systematic thought (*latī*) must be put in order as in a plan (SYSTEMATISED) and must be complementary to related political thought or philosophy. If not, it won’t be considered a *latī* (IDEOLOGY). This is the reason why we must translate the word IDEOLOGY as *latī*, not *udomkhatī* because *udomkhatī* is not an idea that exerts hegemony in political, economic, and social terms ....<sup>71</sup>

62 Lysa Hong, ‘Warasan Setthasat Kanmu’ang: Critical scholarship in post-1976 Thailand’, in *Thai constructions of knowledge*, p. 99, emphasis added.

63 Chai-anan Samudavanija, *Prachathipatai sangkhomniyom khommiunit* [Democracy, socialism, communism] (Bangkok: Piknet Publishing, 1976), p. 239.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 241.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 290.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 299.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 301.

68 Kasian, *Commodifying Marxism*, p. 83.

69 *Social Science Review*, 11, 3 (1973).

70 Kasian Tejapira, ‘Surapong Jayanama chak Marx læ sangkhomniyom su kōng thap kap prachāthipatai’ [Surapong Jayanama: From Marx and socialism to the military and democracy], *Matichon*, 8 Aug. 2008, p. 6.

71 Surapong Jayanam, ‘Krai ben sāi [Who is a leftist?]’, *Social Science Review*, 3, 11 (1973): 110.

Furthermore, translating ideology as *latī*, Surapong explains, means that *udomkhatī* is still nonetheless similar to Chai-anan's formulation in that it searches for the ultimate reality:

*udomkhatī* are personal beliefs about various things in society but it may not be like a plan. They are 'principles of thought' (หลักคิด) or principles through which we view the world (หลักการในการมองดูโลก) that are introduced systematically and comprehensively combine various ideas and beliefs. It is the search for *khwām čhing antīma* (ความจริงอันดีมี) (ULTIMATE REALITY), for example, how the world is, how humans are, or how we are concerned or related to the world.<sup>72</sup>

While Surapong may have had a more nuanced concern than Chai-anan for how the term 'ideology' was understood in Thai, he equally misconstrues it by concluding that *latī* or *udomkhatī* have no meaning for the right.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile, the nature of the left is that it 'denies reality', tends towards utopia and is irrational.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, the new left has failed to produce concrete results and lacks practical ideas.<sup>75</sup> The new left was a coterie to which Surapong belonged, so his critique was either a clarion call or an ironic remark on the weakness of or divisions within the intellectual circle. Surapong on the whole sees contingency within non-Thai ideological formation, but he does not make parallels or situate this within Thai politics. Reading these arguably arcane, obscurantist academic tracts (and attempting to do so without the bias of hindsight) may ultimately not shed much light on the lost spectrum. Thirty-five years later, Kasian Tejapira remarked that Surapong was still referring to 'leftist socialist/communists' (including Gramsci) to explain his support of the movement to overthrow, via military coup, the 'Thaksin system'.<sup>76</sup>

### Left and right

Nonetheless, the 1970s were a period of extreme polarisation between what were considered 'left' and 'right', although how these terms came to be defined and understood is part of a longer history of permutation. In the *Social Science Review*'s 1973 National Ideology issue, the editor, under an entry titled 'Reactions', explains that the term 'left' is a product of the French Revolution, where the side that was battling the existing system (RADICALS) sat to the left of the podium, while the conservatives sat on the right. More importantly, the editor explains that this seating arrangement 'allowed them to see the basic social differences on the issue of *udomkān* (อุดมการณ์, with *karan*) and their policy stance'.<sup>77</sup> Even more critically, the editor attempts to account for the source of variation in characterisations of left and right:

However, now people in general still use the word 'left' in an incorrect manner. They try to translate the meaning of left prematurely (at face value) or if not, accept the meaning

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid., p. 115.

74 Ibid., p. 112.

75 Ibid., p. 116.

76 Kasian Tejapira, 'Surapong Jayanama', p. 6. Both Chai-anan and Surapong became intellectual godfathers of the People's Alliance for Democracy.

77 *Social Science Review*, 3, 11 (1973): 104.

of the left assigned by the conservatives. Today, whenever there is a mention of the word 'left', regardless of whether it is 'new left' or 'old left', the authors of articles discuss more their modes of action instead of policies or programmes. They emphasise *hǒn thāng* (MEANS) without mentioning the *plāi thāng* (ENDS).<sup>78</sup>

By 1981, Chatthip Nartsupha and Montri Chenvidyakarn were able to describe the 'left' as divided into two camps: liberalism and socialism.<sup>79</sup> These two camps formed a pragmatic alliance in order to fight *sakdinā*.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, socialism split into two camps: liberal socialism and communism. The debate among the participants of the 1971 seminar thus had a mirror image in that there was an equally complex ideological fracture among the so-called leftists on Maoism and socialism without Stalin. As described by Hong, while the military had come up with a new ideology beyond 'development authoritarianism' to justify its rule, the Thai left was 'undergoing its most ideological crisis in the aftermath of its renunciation of the CPT (Communist Party of Thailand)'.<sup>81</sup> Hong describes the intellectuals (particularly Kasian Tejapira and Pichit Likhitsomboon, writing under pseudonyms at times) as having to 'return to the drawing board — the library — for a more educated, well-grounded comprehension of historical materialism that would inform praxis ...'.<sup>82</sup> For Kasian, many of the October generation never had a crisis of *udomkān* because they never held the CPT's *udomkān* in the first place.<sup>83</sup> Kanchana Kaeothep's entry in the same volume succinctly lays out a post-Marxist conception of ideology, grasping that since the inception of its use, *udomkān* has always had an ambiguous definition.<sup>84</sup> Kanchana is the translator of Althusser's *Ideology and ideological state apparatuses*.<sup>85</sup> She pairs *udomkān* with 'ideology', defining it as 'the product that is constructed from one's mental state (สภาวะทางจิต) (in the political sense)'.<sup>86</sup> This product consists of sets of ideas (ชุด ของ ความ คิด), feelings, and readiness to act (SET OF IDEA, SENTIMENT, ACTION).<sup>87</sup> Worldviews, visions of life, and attitudes, for example, are subsets of *udomkān*. Ultimately, however, the 'traumatic memory of the failure

78 Ibid.

79 Chatthip Nartsupha and Montri Chenvidyakarn, 'Wiwattanākan udomkan nai sangkhom thai' [The evolution of ideology in Thai society], in *Setthasat kap prawatsat thai* [Economics and Thai history], ed. Chatthip Nartsupha (Bangkok: Sangsan Publishing, 1981), p. 231.

80 See Reynolds, 'Feudalism as a trope for the past', and Reynolds and Hong, 'Marxism in Thai historical studies', on the terms *sakdina* and *saktina*.

81 Hong, 'Warasan Setthasat Kanmu'ang', p. 101.

82 Ibid., p. 105. Nearly 30 years later, Kasian groups Pichit along with those former Octobrists who joined Thaksin's camp. Kasian Tejapira, 'The disintegration of Octobrist ideology', *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, 8 (2007), <http://kyotoreviewsea.org/kasian.htm> (last accessed 29 Oct. 2008).

83 Kasian Tejapira, 'Sen thang kwamkhit khong krabuankān naksu'ksa thai nai rop thotsawat 14 tula: kanpatiwat krabuanthat song khrang' [The intellectual path of the Thai student movement in the decade of 14 October: Two paradigmatic revolutions], *Journal of Political Economy*, 3, 3 (1984): 43.

84 Kānchanā Kāēothēp, 'Udomkān: Naewkhīt læ naewwīkro', *Journal of Political Economy*, 3, 3 (1984): 2. *Udomkān* is spelled without the *karan*.

85 Louis Althusser, *Udomkān læ konkai thāng udomkān khōng rat* [Ideology and ideological state apparatuses], trans. Kānchanā Kāēothēp (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn Social Research Institute Book Project, 1986).

86 Ibid, p. 35.

87 Ibid.

of Thai communism' would mean that 'ideology' would be passed over in favour of the new analytical commodity, 'discourse'.<sup>88</sup>

Kanchana's work on the Frankfurt School, however, stands dislocated from a book published just a year earlier by the National Ideology Subcommittee of the National Identity Board. As Connors argues, 'As with Order 66/1980 [encouraging Communist Party of Thailand cadres to defect by offering amnesty], this development had its roots in the conflict with communism and the desperate need to re-hegemonise the social field, as well as restore state influence in the cultural field'.<sup>89</sup> As members of this subcommittee, Kramol Thongthammachart and Sippanondha Ketudat define 'political ideology' (อุดมการณ์, spelled with the *karan*) as follows:

Political ideology is a trend of thought which expresses the political wishes of the Thai people. Therefore, it is a motivating force, a faith, a shared common goal. A political ideology that is strong can be a tool to battle against and dispel political ideologies that are not in accordance with the identity and character of the Thai people.<sup>90</sup>

Interestingly, Kramol, in a section titled 'The meaning of Udomkân' lists his translations of the definitions of ideology by Marx, Engels, Parsons, Friedrich and Brzezinski. He emphasises their alien character by immediately concluding, 'As for Thai theorists and academics, they have given the definition of udomkân as follows ....'<sup>91</sup> He lists Anuch Aphaphirom, Kamol Somvichien and Chai-anan Samudavanija as having the final word. *Udomkân* must be the 'system of thought or belief that a group sees as right and good'.<sup>92</sup> Thus, even as a post-Marxist conception of ideology was being advanced, *udomkân* was being channelled into a completely different direction. Kramol and others desired to cast *udomkân* with positive, benign connotations. While the political economy school tried to unravel the 'ideology of ideology', *udomkân* as a concept was becoming ever more 'Thaified'. *Udomkân* in this second sense, suggesting 'ideals', thus declines in relevance to political parties. The first meaning — a system of ideas and representations that dominate the mind of an individual or group — led to a debate over the very system itself, and hence Thai elites never agreed upon a democratic or broadly liberal system in which political parties have meaning.

Thai intellectual history has been considered the domain of the middle class and the descendants of the villagers who entered its ranks. According to Gramsci, under 'passive revolution', the bourgeoisie simply follows the leadership of the state, and 'transformism' leads to a larger and larger ruling class resulting from the absorption of elements from other social groups. As a result, left and right tend to converge. Reflecting this convergence, by the late 1970s, *udomkân* had been thoroughly

88 Thanee Wongyannava, 'Wathakam: The Thai appropriation of Foucault's "discourse"', in *The ambiguous allure of the west: Traces of the colonial in Thailand*, ed. Rachel V. Harrison and Peter A. Jackson (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), p. 160.

89 Michael K. Connors, *Democracy and national identity*, p. 135.

90 Samnakngân sœmsāng êkkalak khōng chāt, *Udomkân khong chat* [National ideology] (Bangkok: Khana Anukammakân Udommakân khōng Chāt, 1983), p. 12.

91 *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30, emphasis added.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

transformed back into Prince Wan's Pali root of 'ideal' or 'perfection'. Even if the term in the early 1980s was still perceived as strange as a 'late-season mango', *udomkân*, according to the National Ideology Subcommittee, had the potential to unite people and make them loyal, which arose from the awareness of being born on the same soil, sharing the same history, and accepting the legitimacy of the same rule.<sup>93</sup> As Turton noted (translating *udomkân* as ideology):

The word *udomkân* (ideology) is frequently used, in a positive sense, as in the statement that VS [Village Scouts] 'have the united ideology of the nation' (*mī udomkân ruam khōng chāt*) or 'Village Scouts were able to unite on one occasion when there was a clear potential appropriate to their *udomkân*, namely 6 October 1976 (Village Scout Centre 1979).<sup>94</sup>

The fate of *udomkân* appeared to be similar to that of *khommiunit*. Both terms — modifier and referent — in the phrase 'communist ideology' were distorted and jumbled. As 'communist' was being transformed to *khommiunit*, it lost the capacity to signify a distinctive, particular ideology. *Udomkân*, however, was allowed to remain amorphous enough to avoid the stigma of *khommiunit*. As Chai-anan explains nearly 40 years after the 1971 seminar: 'There are many words like *muanchon* (the people) which was a Marxist concept and had a bad connotation or bad meaning. *Udomkân*, after it had been used for a while, became a neutral term so now *udomkân* means that you have principles.'<sup>95</sup> *Udomkân* was transformed from an ominous agent of thought control to the positive, inspirational banner of ideals. It never had the potential to indicate spatial location, a continuum along left and right, or a coherent, internally consistent set of ideas, beliefs, or symbols. One could not reject both the official royalist national ideology and the CPT. This led to a kind of warped, illiberal spectrum. In its abstractness, *udomkân* became flexible, almost practical, but in the process, articulations of ideas were lost.

### Money politics reconsidered

The advent of money politics — the cycle of the use of patronage-based networks of vote canvassers and bureaucratic corruption to recoup electoral investment — began in 1969, after a decade of political parties being explicitly banned under military rule. The period 1978 to the present saw the exacerbation of non-ideological money politics. Many who had joined the *maquis* in the 1970s ceased to use the terms left and right in describing Thai politics, as these labels had lost all descriptive content. Whereas before Sarit's 1958 declaration of martial law, one could speak of a 'left-wing MP', the post-Sarit frame saw the rise to parliamentary politics of so-called

93 Sangkhom Srirat, 'Udomkân-Udomkatī' [Ideology-idealism], in *Udomkân khong chāt* [National ideology] (Bangkok: Khana anukammakân udomkân khong chāt nai khanakammakan soemsang ekkalak khong chat [Subcommittee on National Ideology, National Identity Board], Samnakngān naiyok rathamntri [Office of the Prime Minister]), pp. 98–9. It is this conception of *udomkân* that is reflected in the seminar proceedings collected in the volume *Udomkänniyomthai* [Popularising Thai ideology], also published in 1983 by the Subcommittee on National Ideology.

94 Andrew Turton, 'Limits of ideological domination and the formation of social consciousness', in *History and peasant consciousness in Southeast Asia*, ed. Andrew Turton and Shigeharu Tanabe (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1984), p. 54.

95 Interview, Chai-anan Samudavanija, Bangkok, 10 Mar. 2010.

right-wing representatives who entered politics to have greater control over state resources.<sup>96</sup> In 1974 the Chart Thai Party was founded by a group of retired generals and backed by a number of prominent industrialists. Aggressively anti-communist, Chart Thai's slogan was 'Right Destroy Left'. It was led by Chatichai Choonhavan, whose son Kraisak considered himself a leftist.<sup>97</sup> Somchai Phatharathananunth most aptly states the significance of this post-Sarit period for contemporary Thai politics: 'the current domination of the region [the Northeast] by corrupt money politics is not a result of long-standing traditions of patron–client relationships, but more a result of the destruction of the left.'<sup>98</sup> The leftists had no choice but to support the rightists they thought were the most progressive; failing that, they had to start exiling themselves from Thai society.

This post-Sarit period could be interpreted as the 'end of ideology' and a new beginning for Thai political parties, but *udomkān* had already been appropriated to serve new purposes. In 1974 the Chulalongkorn University Political Science Student Committee had published a manual on political parties.<sup>99</sup> In its analysis, the textbook finds that there are few authentic interest groups in Thai society. Interest groups set up on behalf of merchants, rice-mill owners, bankers and factory owners 'enter politics for *udomkān thāng kānmūang*; we see that these groups can get close to whoever has political power'.<sup>100</sup> The character of Thai political parties is that they lack popular support bases and *udomkān thāng kānmūang* that are clear and therefore are easily set up and disbanded.<sup>101</sup> At the same time, the 'opposition parties oppose the government beyond their writ' and are in a state of 'vehement opposition'.<sup>102</sup> It is unclear whether there can be a multiplicity of *udomkān* or not. What would it mean for members of a political party to be held together by a common stance?

It becomes clear that *udomkān* is ultimately something which should provoke suspicion and is something distinct from economic policy stance in Preecha Hongkraitert's 1980 *The political party system and problems of Thai political parties*.<sup>103</sup> He lists nine different ways to categorise political parties. The first is to divide

96 However, see Somsak, 'The communist movement in Thailand' for a discussion of left-wing support for Sarit (p. 21) and left-wing Free Democrat Party member support for Thanom's party (p. 81).

97 The Choonhavan clan was part of a larger political clique called the Soi Rachakru group. Although it initially dominated the Chart Thai Party, another Choonhavan relative, Korn Chartikavanij, is a member of the Democrat Party, as is Kraisak. For those who would label the Democrat Party as essentially conservative, it is interesting to recall that Chuan Leekpai and Surin Masadit were accused of being communists and that half of the Communist Party of Thailand's (CPT) members were Southerners; Chai-anan Samudavanija and David Morell, *Political conflict in Thailand: Reform, reaction, revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, 1979), p. 330.

98 Somchai Phatharathananunth, 'Isan political tradition', in *Radicalising Thailand: New political perspectives*, ed. Ji Giles Ungpakorn (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2003), p. 152. See also Ji, 'Challenges to the Thai N.G.O. movement from the dawn of a new opposition to global capital', in *Radicalising Thailand*, p. 218.

99 Political Science Student Committee, Chulalongkorn University, *Pak kanmūang* [Political Parties] (Bangkok: Aksorn Sampan Printing House, 1974).

100 *Ibid.*, p. 172.

101 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

102 *Ibid.*

103 Preecha Hongkraitert, *Rabop kanmūang læ panhā pak kānmūang thai* [The political system and the problems of Thai political parties] (Bangkok: Democrat Party, 1980).

them ‘by the type of *udomkân* of the party’ and the seventh is by ‘ideas according to their economic and social lati’ (แนวความคิดในลัทธิเศรษฐกิจแล้วสังคม).<sup>104</sup> The latter is in a sense a closer approximation to the English ‘ideological base’ or the behaviouralist interpretation of ideology. Tellingly, Preecha describes the Republican and Democrat American political parties as devoid of *udomkân*, as the only political parties that do seem to have *udomkân* are communist ones.<sup>105</sup> The Labour and Conservative Parties in Britain ‘uphold certain types of *udomkân* but not very strictly’.<sup>106</sup> Countries where the same ‘*udomkân hæng chât* (NATIONAL IDEOLOGY)’ prevails have political parties that only focus on ‘*pradên khõng panhã* (ISSUES)’.<sup>107</sup> Preecha acknowledges the problem of party discipline, but seems to offer a contradictory solution. Stating the obvious without reconciling the issue of *udomkân*, he remarks: ‘Apart from the problem of party organisation, there is the problem of party *udomkân*. Most Thai political parties lack a clear *udomkân* so they lack a unifying point in their operation. Thai political parties are only political parties in name.’<sup>108</sup>

At the same time, the *Popular dictionary of politics [Phochananukromkanmuang chabap chao bân]* by Supot Dantrakul (1985) attempts to clear away the aristocratic intellectuals’ obfuscation in ‘plain’ terms.<sup>109</sup> Referring to *udomkatī*, not *udomkân*, Supot holds that *latī kanmuāng* follows from *udomkatī*. He reduces political parties into two types according to *latī*:

The first supports exploitation and the other fights against exploitation. And we will know which *latī* is the side which exploits and which *latī* is the side of the exploited through education, which will help us understand that *latī* very clearly. Therefore, the people will support the party by carefully considering the policies (นโยบาย) and *udomkatī* or *lāi kanmuāng* that are manifested first .... The principle used to analyse the *udomkatī* of political parties is to consider them through their policies. But every party will write beautiful policies .... In this case, we should be suspicious and have doubts.<sup>110</sup>

Indeed, every party into the late 1980s and 1990s wrote beautiful policies, but implemented very few of them. By the late 1990s, the official prescription, such as that listed in Chaowana Traimas’ *Policy framework for a new generation of political parties* (1998) was to ‘uphold and honour the principles and *udomkân* principles (หลักอุดมการ) of politics and rule of the democratic system with the king as the head of state’.<sup>111</sup> Specific policies are eschewed in favour of vague, anodyne principles

104 Ibid., p. 34.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid., p. 36.

107 Ibid., p. 37.

108 Ibid., p. 91.

109 Supot Dantrakul, *Phochananukromkanmuang chabap chao bân* [Popular dictionary of politics] (Bangkok: Santhitham Printing House, 1985). The CPT newspaper *Mahāchon* in the late 1940s ran a column called ‘Vocabulary Notes’ giving definitions of communism, imperialism, feudalism (Somsak, ‘The Communist movement in Thailand’, p. 267).

110 Supot, *Phochananukromkanmuang chabap chao bân* [Popular dictionary of politics], p. 300.

111 Chaowana Traimas, *Krop nayobai maebot khong phak kanmuāng thai yuk mai* [Policy framework for a new generation of political parties] (Bangkok: Institute for Policy Studies, Chulalongkorn University Book Centre, 1998), p. 15.



upon which all parties can agree such as ‘stability’, ‘effectiveness’, ‘appropriateness’ and ‘competitiveness’.<sup>112</sup> Unsurprisingly, it is Chai-anan who offers the book’s back cover blurb, claiming that there is no better organisation or institution that can allow the people to participate in the political process better than political parties.<sup>113</sup> As for civil society, Kevin Hewison and Garry Rodan describe the position of post-Cold War non-governmental organisations as non-ideological by necessity.<sup>114</sup>

In his study of the contemporary Democrat Party, Marc Askew touches on the ambiguous status of *udomkān* in Thai political language, noting that it is poorly translated into English as ideology.<sup>115</sup> It is something that the Democrat Party claims to possess, distinguishing the party from its rivals. However, under the evolution of electoral politics, *udomkān*, while still better approximated as ‘principles’, became a floating signifier of a curious sort. Askew provides an anecdote illustrating *udomkān*’s lack of ‘formal analytical properties’.<sup>116</sup>

When I mentioned to one of [the ordinary voters] that few ordinary Democrat voters could ever delineate Democrat *udomkān* to me, he explained that, ‘Thai people don’t like thinking on too many levels—you have to make the message simple.’ To MP and party activists alike, the most effective way to explain the *udomkān* of the Democrats is to personify it and evoke an enemy who had no *udomkān*.<sup>117</sup>

Askew adds that *udomkān* has become relegated to a mere performative role, and not as the ultimate ground of party commitment.<sup>118</sup>

Economist Adis Israngkul Na Ayutthaya faults ‘Thai voters’ for Thailand’s ‘weak democracy’ and for the lack of clear policy prescriptions.<sup>119</sup> The lack of differentiation in political party platforms or policy packages can be attributed to the Thai people who are naive in seeking ‘good’ men and women instead of ‘insisting that the political candidates express their views on some controversial issues’.<sup>120</sup> He adds, ‘Thai policy markets have also been weak. *Thai voters do not realise that they have a say about controversial public choices*; thus, politicians are not willing to take sides on controversial public policy issues.’<sup>121</sup> This conflation of cause and effect reflects the long domination of money politics and even longer estrangement of economics from politics. More fundamentally, the development of an ideological continuum along which single issues such as land reform, progressive taxation, free trade agreements and environmental protection coalesce around philosophical groupings assumes that a

112 Ibid., pp. 22–3.

113 Ibid., back cover.

114 Kevin Hewison and Garry Rodan, ‘The ebb and flow of civil society and the decline of the Left in Southeast Asia’, in *Political oppositions in industrializing Asia*, ed. Garry Rodan (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 61.

115 Marc Askew, *Performing political identity: The Democrat Party in southern Thailand* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2008), pp. 42, 347.

116 Ibid., p. 239.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid., p. 302.

119 Adis Israngkul Na Ayutthaya, ‘How does democracy shape economic policies in Thailand?’, *TDRI Quarterly Review*, 22, 4 (2007): 10–14.

120 Ibid., p. 11.

121 Ibid. Emphasis added.

liberal system exists. For Adis, King Bhumipol best explained the reason for this policy vacuum when the King remarked, ‘Thai people are too poor to be involved in politics.’<sup>122</sup> In this view, the electorate are either ‘too poor to know’ and thus elect ‘good’ or ‘attractive’ representatives, or ‘too uneducated’ to know not to sell their votes to ‘bad’ people.

In sum, *udomkān* has undergone a convoluted evolution from Prince Wan’s initial confused translation of ‘ideology’ to a Marxist interpretation, and on to a Gramscian slant, before taking on a popular connotation of ‘idealism’, thus transformed into an ideological resource itself to delineate the principled from the dissolute. In its present form, it is largely meaningless and incoherent, obscuring more than elucidating. Because *udomkān* never emerged from the menacing ‘something that captures you’, Thais were confronted with two false choices: authoritarianism of the right or the left. The system never offered a set of socioeconomic policies (along a liberal socialist–liberal conservative continuum, for example) under a broadly liberal political system. And because *udomkān* was something dangerous because of its association with communism, it had to be neutered and transformed to the positive but meaningless connotation of ‘idealism’, becoming hitched to nation, religion and king. Parliamentary politics, civil society and intellectual movements, and the military-bureaucracy long operated in separate, isolated spheres. When Thai Gramscians (whether under the guise of the New Left, the People’s Alliance for Democracy [PAD], or Pridi-style socialism) rail against the system of patron–client relationships as represented by Thaksin Shinawatra, they are reacting to the effect rather than the cause of the destruction of the left.<sup>123</sup>

### Pragmatists and ‘ideologues’

As mentioned above, the Octobrists returned to the drawing board in the late 1970s to early 1980s and have remained there ever since. In the 1986 election, the first in which some Octobrists decided to take part in electoral politics, several prominent activists joined the Democrat Party, including Chaturon Chaisaeng (who later switched to the New Aspiration and Thai Rak Thai [TRT] parties) and Phumtham Wechayachai (who later joined the TRT). In the late 1990s, Octobrists such as Prapat Panyachatrak and Prommin Lertsuridej began consulting with ‘right-wing capitalist’ Thaksin. By the late 1990s, therefore, the ‘October people’ were considered ‘dead’, as the title of a book compiling *Nation Weekend* profiles of prominent Octobrists suggested.<sup>124</sup> By then, *udomkān* had come to mean ‘idealism’ or ‘principles’, but the fact that the author recognises some contradiction in the life histories of these various ‘democracy activists’ implies that some ideologies that once had a kind of coherence have been somehow betrayed. Kriengkamol Laohapairote, who became an advisor to the TRT, is able to impose a distinction upon those who joined the party for strategic reasons, a distinction between means and ends, remarking: ‘If some Octobrists have turned out bad, it’s a pity. But others

122 Interview, Adis Israngkul Na Ayutthaya, Bangkok, 16 Oct. 2009.

123 This is not to downplay the role of the Thaksin administration in fundamentally changing the nature of money politics and patronage networks by re-centralising them.

124 Khaen Sarika (pseud.), *Khontula t̄ai l̄eo* [The Octobrists are dead] (Nonthaburi: Sarika Publishing House, 2007).

still do good; they still have *udomkân*.<sup>125</sup> In this case, *udomkân* thus signifies the ends, not the means. Phumtham went so far as to claim that Thaksin was influenced by and ‘received *udomkân*’ from this clique of Octobrists.<sup>126</sup> The focus of the debate became the delineation between pragmatists and ideologues. The pro-Thaksin politicians were accused of losing their *udomkân* for allying themselves with a vulgar capitalist and the anti-Thaksinites were accused of losing their *udomkân* for condoning or implicitly acquiescing to the coup removing Thaksin from power.<sup>127</sup> Thongchai Winichakul asserts, ‘It has been said for a long time amongst those who have taken an interest and studied Thailand that PRAGMATISM is a characteristic of Thais. Thai society therefore does not strictly adhere to laws and regulations or *udomkân*, concepts or moral principles.’<sup>128</sup> A younger generation academic attempts to reinsert a liberal conception of *udomkân*, but it may be too late: ‘I want to emphasise that when we speak of *udomkân thāng kanmūang*, we don’t mean the elevated, majestic *udomkân* but the set of ideas and beliefs that each party tries to advance as the things they hold in common as right or wrong and as the common goal.’<sup>129</sup> In time, *udomkân* underwent a transformation from a dangerous tool in the battle for hearts and minds to a lofty, grandiose goal far from the messy, mundane but pluralistic world of policy debates.

### Pivot points

Regardless of the analytical properties of *udomkân*, the Thai polity continues to fracture along various loyalties and biases, and these biases may not necessarily be characterised in terms of spatial location or symbolic grids. It is perhaps as the participants of the 1971 seminar feared: a war between competing *udomkân* has erupted. ‘Red shirt *udomkân*’ and ‘yellow shirt *udomkân*’ have entered the national lexicon, suggesting coherent and contrasting sets of ideas. *Udomkân* is used in opposition to strange bedfellows of the political arena, to demarcate protestors who turn out for ‘*udomkân*’ as opposed to money, to describe the ideals for which the martyrs of the crackdowns have died. What is the axis on which the divide between red and yellow and their variations turn?

Somsak Jeamsatheerakul suggests that the first and most important pivot point is ‘reconciliation with the monarchy’ and, by association, the military.<sup>130</sup> For example, Niramit Mai, the pen name of a CPT ‘comrade’ who fought at Phu Hin Rongkla and is now a businessman in the lower North, in a column titled, ‘A critique of right-wing leftism: On non-feudal feudalism’, writes:

125 ‘Khondūantula nū’a fā sī thong?’ [Octobrists above a golden sky?], *Thai Post Tabloid*, 7–13 Oct. 2001, pp. 2–3.

126 Khaen, *Khontula t̄ai laew* [The Octobrists are dead], p. 36.

127 Thongchai Winichakul, ‘Somreutphonniyom (PRAGMATISM) khōng panyāchon thai kap kan ratthaprahan 19 kanyayon por sor 2549’ [The pragmatism of Thai intellectuals and the 19 September 2006 coup], *Krungthep Thurakit*, 8 Nov. 2006.

128 Ibid.

129 Pitch Pongsawat, ‘Udomkân nayobai læ prachathipatai’ kāmūang bæp prachāthipatai’ [Ideology, policy, and democratic politics], *Kom Chat Luk*, 5 Nov. 2009.

130 Somsak Jeamtheerasakul, ‘Chaichana panyāchon 14 tula’ [The triumph of the 14 October intellectuals], <http://somsakcoup postings.blogspot.com/2006/09/14-2-2-14-2547-2-14.html> (last accessed 5 Feb. 2010).

The present monarch is not *sakdina*. Look at the relations of production. If they are *sakdina*, they have to control the factors of production, rice fields (land) rank, estate, title. And production must rely on slave labour.<sup>131</sup>

The feudalism trope, as elucidated by Reynolds, is still very much alive, and an additional layer of permutation has been added.<sup>132</sup> For Sondhi Limthongkul, the fact that many Sino-Thais were linked to the Chinese Communist Party did not mean that they were ‘evil’ people.<sup>133</sup> The question is whether this monarch represents retrogressive or progressive *sakdina*.<sup>134</sup> More cynically, however, Sondhi’s PAD, lacking alternative ideological resources, used the ‘grease’ of the monarchy, even knowing that it would damage the institution (another abstraction) they claimed to respect.<sup>135</sup>

For Ji Ungphakorn, the axis revolves around socialism. In Ji’s view, because of the ‘Stalinist politics of the CPT’ that focused on nationalism and class alliance with ‘progressive capitalists’, the divide emerged:

On the one hand, the vast majority of ex-CPT sympathisers firmly believed that socialism died along with the Cold War and therefore they have managed to put their previous beliefs behind them. On the other hand, those who still believed in some form of socialist society were just as comfortable working alongside a party run by nationalist businessmen as those who no longer believed in socialism.<sup>136</sup>

Again, the vocabulary to describe Thai social formation and the various economicisms is missing. For Amorn Amornrattanan, an Octobrist who joined the PAD, the essential problem of Thai society is that it is faced with ‘capitalism’ but there is no consensus on how to confront it. Echoing the jumbled anti-capitalist, anti-statist, and pro-self-reliance slogans of the community culture school that grew prominent after the demise of the left, Amorn is anti-IMF (International Monetary Fund), pro-land reform (land is still in the hands of a few capitalists), but there is no agreement on ‘revolt’ or ‘reform’, as the ‘old theories of revolution were not enough to give us a clear approach to put into practice’.<sup>137</sup> Also typical of the paradox of left conservatism is the debate on privatisation. Using the standard of present-day conservatism in the United States to gauge the political philosophy of senator and former activist Rossana Tositrakul, television anchorman M.L. Nattakorn Devakula accused the senator of being against privatisation and therefore a leftist. Rossana replied that she was not anti-free market, only anti-‘bad governance and shady privatisation deals’, before

131 Niramit Mai (pseud.), ‘Wiphak “sai thi iang khwa” wa duai sakdina thi mai sakdina’ [A critique of right-wing leftism: On non-feudal feudalism], *Nation Weekend*, 15 Aug. 2008.

132 The discourse of *amat versus prai* could be interpreted as a contemporary form of the *sakdina* trope. See Kasian Tejapira, ‘Prai kap amat: Pisātwatthakam’ [Commoner and aristocrat: Discourse demon], *Matichon Daily*, 4 Apr. 2010, [http://www.matichon.co.th/news\\_detail.php?news-id=1270363289&grp-id=&cat-id=02](http://www.matichon.co.th/news_detail.php?news-id=1270363289&grp-id=&cat-id=02) (last accessed 5 Apr. 2010).

133 Sondhi Limthongkul, ‘Udomkân mai kuey plian: mithi ti faengren khōng rabop thaksin’ [Their ideology has never changed: The hidden dimension of the Thaksin system], *Manager Daily*, 11 Sept. 2006.

134 Ibid.

135 Suphalak Ganjanakhundee, ‘Kwa thai’ [The Thai right], *Samesky*, 6, 2 (2008): 30.

136 Ji, *Radicalising Thailand*, pp. 32–3.

137 ‘Khondūantula phor sor nī dern naew thang pathīwat ru pathīrup’ [Do the Octobrists this year choose revolution or reform?], *Nation Weekend*, 14–20 Oct. 1999.

praising the anchorman's blue-blooded ancestors for saving Siam from imperialism.<sup>138</sup>

Indeed, as historian and Octobrist Thongchai Winichakul summed up, 'Debates over the nature of the Thai social formation faded away without a conclusion.'<sup>139</sup> In explaining the phenomenon of what he terms 'left nationalism', Thongchai found, after interviewing many Octobrist intelligentsia, that the pivot points were nationalism and globalised capitalism. Nationalism has become a matter of 'life and death' and a type of ideology (identity as a subset of ideology). Again, there is fundamental disagreement over Thaksin's or TRT's version of capitalism — was it globalised capital, crony A domestic capital or crony B domestic capital? As Kasian remarked, even though there was 'overlap and similarities between the crony-capitalist agenda's call for the reversal of globalist/neo-liberalist reform and the radical populist reformist agenda's call for restoration of economic sovereignty', the two agendas desired two disparate visions for the country.<sup>140</sup> These vociferous debates on old and new capital, progressive and regressive capital, and progressive and regressive *sakdina* were more characteristic of Chai-anan's 'ideological politics' than political ideology. Thongchai pronounces the Thai left, which he divides into 'communist' and 'radical', as dead altogether. Instead of Chatthip and Montri's 1981 classification of left into liberal and socialist left, with socialism splitting into two camps, it is the liberals who split into the two camps of left nationalism (never mind that the PAD have been labelled rightist or fascist) and right global capitalists.

For Kasian Tejapira, the Octobrist ideology boiled down to rights and freedoms and social justice. A major pivot point is the state, or, more specifically, the bureaucracy. At the 14 October commemoration in 2007, Kasian proposed in his lecture, 'From the Thaksin system to the 19 September coup: Crisis of Thai democracy', that Thai society, the so-called progressives in particular, chose to walk diverging paths by dismissing one of two forces. The first path was capitalism by ignoring the power of the conservative bureaucracy. The other path was fighting the power of the conservative bureaucracy by choosing to ignore the evils of capitalism. For the former communists, this was the 'reconciliation with the state', with one faction now relying on the state to protect rights and freedoms. For Kasian, this amounted to 'convoluted double false consciousness in one and the same polity'.<sup>141</sup> But he places the blame on Thaksin, concluding that it was his premiership that drove the country's 'bourgeois revolution' back by ten years.<sup>142</sup> If Thaksin's red shirt supporters are neither on the left or the right, it is because they lack the 'political ideological language' (ภาษาทางอุดมการณ์ทางการเมือง) beyond the mere incantation of Thaksin Shinawatra to articulate their position.<sup>143</sup> Meanwhile, the question of how Thais

138 Rossana Tositrakul, 'Who's kidding whom?', *Bangkok Post*, 13 Mar. 2008.

139 Thongchai Winichakul, 'Nationalism and the radical intelligentsia in Thailand', *Third World Quarterly*, 29, 3 (2008): 579.

140 Kasian Tejapira, 'Post-crisis economic impasse and political recovery in Thailand: The resurgence of economic nationalism', *Critical Asian Studies*, 34, 3 (2002): 338.

141 Kasian, 'The disintegration of Octobrist ideology'.

142 Ibid.

143 Sampat Yukti Mukdāwīchit: khon sū'a daeng kap thaksin nai tana 'pasa' thāng udomkān [Interview with Yukti Mukdawichit: The Red Shirts and Thaksin in terms of ideological language], *Prachatai*, 17 Dec. 2009, <http://www.prachatai.com/journal/2009/12/27028> (accessed 12 Jan. 2011).

interpret the English term ‘ideology’ persisted, as evidenced by the *Bangkok Post*’s translation of Democrat member of parliament Attaporn Ponlaboot’s remark: ‘If Thaksin carries half the *ideology* of Mrs Suu Kyi, he might not be deposed but it is unfortunate that they are like heaven and hell.’<sup>144</sup>

It is no accident that Octobrist intelligentsia are both subjects and objects in this debate over Thai ideology; they have been intermediaries in the translation of this ‘irk-some’ foreign-derived discourse. Kasian is still writing in his voice as Arkhom Chanangkul, seeking a post-1979 praxis of sorts. Thai society is stuck at Gramsci’s third stage, waiting for both elite oligarchy and Thaksin to dissolve. However, the political crisis has moved beyond a question of false consciousness. The subaltern ‘reconstruction and subversion’ has splintered once again with the turn of the kaleidoscope. In the end, however, the 2006 coup was not the ‘triumph of the 14 October intellectuals’, but the second triumph of the 1976 rightists who had destroyed the left and 30 years later, indirectly divided the liberals who remained. Instead of praxis, Thai society was trapped in the stasis of a new version of its old catch-22: ‘Thailand can never have real democracy until it is safe from communism, and it can never be safe from communism until it has a real democracy.’<sup>145</sup>

### Conclusion

The confused translation of ideology has generated an ideology of *udomkān*. Imported by the Marxists, ideology is understood in utopian, messianic terms, shaping perceptions of the nature of political thought and action. A narrower, post-End of Ideology sense of ‘political ideology’ within a broad liberal framework never emerged. While not unique to Thailand, it is the foreignness of these ideas that has created the perception that Thailand is alone in lacking a set of axes around which political ideas pivot. As described by one journalist,

The problem of the political spectrum, of which is right and which is left, is an issue that is extremely dynamic. We never grasp it because it constantly changes according to appropriateness (กาลและเทศะ) .... Those who used to be left are now on the right. Those who used to be on the right divided up and went with people who used to be on the left .... In other countries, we have never seen this happen. But in Thailand, it’s something strange.<sup>146</sup>

The root ‘idea’ seems to have been severed from the English ‘ideology’. Despite his early years studying Destutt de Tracy, Marx and Mannheim, Chai-anan claims paternity for the birth of *udomkān*. His recollection is that: ‘[Udomkān] comes from *udomkatī*, meaning idealism. But *udomkatī* has a connotation of personal feeling, not group or collective thinking. That’s why *udomkān* replaced *udomkatī*.’<sup>147</sup> *Udomkān* refers to a kind of ‘collective idealism’ that does not admit to a multiplicity of *udomkān*. According to Chai-anan and others, only one *udomkān* is possible for Thailand. This suggests that the nature of political competition and conflict tends

144 *Bangkok Post*, 14 Nov. 2010, emphasis added.

145 Quote by ‘one prominent figure’, in Michael L. Mezey, ‘The 1971 coup in Thailand: Understanding why the legislature fails’, *Asian Survey*, 13, 3 (1973): 309.

146 Suphaluck, ‘*Kwa thai*’ [The Thai right], pp. 26, 28.

147 Interview, Chai-anan Samudavanija, Bangkok, 10 Mar. 2010.

toward zero-sum fights to the death, as it is the very system at stake. Thus, for Octobrist Thirayuth Boonmee, Thaksin was not a rightist or leftist, but represented an entire system, ‘*rabop Thaksin*’.<sup>148</sup> The Thai meta-ideology that weds democracy and kingship has meant that Thai democracy has been stunted by its insistence on a political role for the monarchy. The failure of democracy to arise has been reflected in the fundamental disagreement over the system itself, reflected in part in *udomkân*’s usage over the years. *Udomkân* is now meant to unify and promote loyalty to the central Thai state, not further competing ideas on the proper role and scope of the state. As a theme of political struggles, it is a powerful mobilising device, but only serves to maintain the disconnect between social movements and formal institutions.

Modern Thai ideological formation has been a refractory process. Money politics (non-ideological, non-competitive politics) is a result of royalist conservatism reacting against perceived radicalisation. The intellectual split is both a reaction to money politics and a cause of the weakness of a left that might result in income redistribution or increased social equity. Was 2001 the beginning of a new frame in modern Thai political history? The TRT Party was a catalyst but not a new ideology in itself *per se*. Thaksin was epiphenomenal to the destruction of the left post-1976. The party — not only Thaksin but the Octobrists who had joined his camp — triggered a long-festering debate between competing ideologies of increased consumption and equity on the one hand, and plutocracy or governance by the elite and sufficiency economy on the other hand. There may be multiple shades of red and yellow (including ‘Thaksin red’, ‘Pridi red’, ‘PAD yellow’, and ‘*sakdina* yellow’), but the populace is tarred with only polarities of *udomkân amat* and *udomkân Thaksin*. *Udomkân* never had moorings and took on its own voice, its own particularised discourse, after passing over many silences. It remains a destabilised term. The necessity of parentheses reflects its insecure foothold: **อุดมการณ์** (ideology). Yongyuth Yuthawong, perhaps representative of today’s ‘rightist’ elite oligarchy, writing in the *Social Science Review* in 1970 on ‘Conservatism in the eyes of a young person’, provides this final ‘future-past’ in which it was possible to imagine some sort of spectrum of ideas:

If we allow social change to occur by itself and allow the political system to fall behind, and only to try to resist change, it will be dangerous. Change will mostly likely occur violently, as we saw in the case of the revolution (การปฏิวัติ) in France or in Russia. Therefore, it’s appropriate that those who have political power to pave the way for political development in Thailand by having a sufficiently open mind to allow those who are interested in *leftist* politics to have a chance to survive.<sup>149</sup>

148 ‘Thirayut wipak Thaksin mung phadetkân-samphanchat’ [Thirayuth criticizes Thaksin as aiming for an authoritarian-concessionaire nation], *ASTV Phūchatkân Online*, 28 July 2004, <http://www.manager.co.th/Politics/ViewNews.aspx?NewsID=9470000028495> (last accessed 26 Sept. 2011). See also Kasian Tejapira, ‘rabop Thaksin’ [The Thaksin system], *Fā dīeo kan* [Same Sky], 2, 1 (2004): 75.

149 Yongyuth Yuthawong, ‘Anurakniyom nai thatsana khōng num’ [Conservatism in the eyes of a young person], *Social Science Review*, 2, 8 (1970): 54. Emphasis added.