

# Opinion: 2 Parallel Thailand's Are Headed For A Collision

Saturday 2 January 2021, by [ROJANAPHRUK Pravit](#) (Date first published: 15 August 2020).

**Less than 24 hours after Prime Minister Gen [Prayut Chan-ocha](#) told the country not to perceive anti-government protesters as enemies, Parit "Penguin" Chiwarak, a prominent student activist was [arrested for sedition](#) and nine other charges.**

This is a symptom of Thailand increasingly splitting into two parallel universes. Instead of Thailand, we now have two, contradicting Thailand's.

In one version, university and high-school students, some as young as 15, have taken to anti-government protest stages calling for a new election, new constitution, and a monarchy institution more closely resembling those in countries like the United Kingdom.

Read some of their increasingly influential Twitter hashtags and you will get the ideas.

Among the numerous Thai-language hashtags that became popular are: "We won't put up with it any longer" of [Thammasat University students](#) who issued 10-point demands to reform the monarchy.

(Sorry, due to the lese majeste law and company's policy, I have to censor myself here on the details of the demands in order to get this column out. But I would like to assure you dear readers that we are trying to do what we can and do more with fortitude.)

"Free Youth" is another popular hashtag and needs no elaboration. Some slogans are in English, such as this from Chulalongkorn University student protesters on Friday after they learned that the university administrators disapprove of them holding protests inside the campus: "You can cut all the flowers but you cannot keep spring from coming."

The students persisted and held a demonstration with around 500 attending inside Chulalongkorn University on Friday evening.

By Thursday, as more student activists were threatened and harassed, young Thai Twitter users became increasingly upset with the vast majority of the mainstream mass media.

They say the majority of the media provided inadequate coverage of what's happening, engage in self-censorship on anything mildly critical of the monarchy, and even distort facts, branding them essentially as republicans.

Thai-language Twitter hashtag "condemn the mass media" soon became popular.

"All Thailand's deserve impartial information, not one-sided information. Now, you should perform your duty. You are the biggest mouthpiece as of now. When there is harassment, Thai media instead do not do their duty, letting people pity themselves," tweeted user @butterclub\_th on Thursday. By

Saturday morning, it was retweeted 12,800 times.

“Do ur fnkin job,” Twitter user @pesceameanme fired on Friday.

“What is the role of the media again? Distort the truth?” asked another Twitter in English.

Demands by students can be divided into two different groups, the Thammasat University which called for monarchy reforms and Free Youth group which calls for fresh general elections, a new constitution, and an end to political harassment.

The gap between what you read and watch on the majority of the mainstream mass media and on social media is now ocean wide.

In another Thailand, this one populated by more of the older generations, students are naïve and being manipulated and used by some political groups for their political ends. Even some of the adults who are sympathetic to the student demands are concerned about a repeat of a violent and tragic past followed by another military coup.

Four decades ago, on Oct 6, 1976, Thailand’s worst political tragedy in the modern time occurred. Police and paramilitary forces, cheered on by rightwing mobs, shot and lynched dozens of people, mostly university students, at Thammasat University. The students were accused of being Communists or sympathizing with the Communists, and plotting to overthrow the monarchy.

Official death count was 46 although some put it at a hundred. Shortly after that, a military coup took place and many university students fled into the jungles to join the Community Party of Thailand.

Now, some adults and rightwing media are accusing students of pushing for republicanisms, even though students demand made at Thammasat University on Monday essentially seeks a limited monarchy operating strictly under the constitution, similar to that of the the United Kingdom.

Are these adults a prisoner of the past? Are they too afraid to let the students, the youth, to try to carve a different, more democratic, equal and liberal future for Thailand?

This contrast with a call on Friday by a Chulalongkorn University protester on stage for adults, including university lecturers, celebrities and mainstream press to have moral courage to do what is right, quoting the exiled historian Somsak Jeamteerasakul.

Which Thailand do you inhabit? Can the two Thailands have an honest conversation and deliberation?

These are urgent questions that need to be answered before the two parallel Thailands meet in a bloody collision.

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**Pravit Rojanaphruk**

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